

Northern Illinois University
College of Law
Report to the University Assessment Panel
October 2010

Program: J.D.

The primary educational goals of the College of Law and the paramount tenets of the American Bar Association (its accrediting body) are to prepare students to enter the profession (be admitted to a state bar) and to obtain employment. Consequently, bar passage and job placement are the two principal measures of success used by the College. In order to achieve these primary objectives, students must acquire and develop specific knowledge and skills. This knowledge and these skills are set out below as a set of learning outcomes that are measured by the College to assess its effectiveness in meeting its educational goals.

1. Learning Outcomes

Graduates of the program will be prepared for successful careers in the practice of law in an ever changing legal environment by meeting the following learning outcomes:

1. Having knowledge and understanding of the substantive law generally regarded as necessary to effective and responsible participation in the legal profession;
2. Having the ability to apply appropriate legal analysis to contemporary legal issues;
3. Having the ability to communicate legal positions both orally and in writing;
4. Having a sufficient depth and breadth of other professional skills including trial advocacy, appellate advocacy, alternative methods of dispute resolution, counseling, interviewing, and negotiating; and
5. Having the ability to recognize and resolve ethical and other professional issues.

2. Explanation of Methods

Method	Description/Target	Timeline	Responsibility	Objectives
First Year Final Memorandum of Law	At the end of the first semester all students submit their Final Memorandum of Law. This method assesses the program's success in teaching 1) critical reading skills; 2) organization of legal arguments; and 3) fact pattern analysis to make legal arguments by analogy. (A copy of the assessment rubric is attached.) Target: 90% of students will meet all course standards.	Fall semester of every student's first year	Legal Writing Instructors	1,2,3

Appellate Advocacy Program	All first year students are required to write an appellate brief and then make a formal argument from it before an appellate bench. This method assesses the success in teaching 1) organization and analytical skills; 2) how to integrate policy into legal arguments; 3) how to make legal determinations based on existing rules of law; 4) oral presentation skills; and 5) the ability to defend legal positions. (A copy of the assessment rubric is attached.) Target: 90% of students will meet all course standards.	Spring semester of every student's first year	Legal Writing Instructors	1,2,3,4
Upper Level Writing Requirement	Every student must write a significant, well-researched paper demonstrating the ability to perform a sophisticated legal analysis of a complex legal issue. Target: 90% of students will meet course standards.	Fourth or fifth semester of the student's law school career	Faculty teaching seminars, directed research, and Law Review Advisor	1,2,3
Multi-State Professional Responsibility Exam	Every student must pass this exam in order to become licensed to practice law in Illinois. Almost every other jurisdiction imposes the same requirement. Target: meet or exceed state average pass rate.	Any time after the first year and prior to admission to a state bar	Dean	5
The Illinois State Bar Exam	A licensing exam determining whether applicants meet the minimum requirements for entrance into the profession. Every graduate must pass this exam to become licensed to practice law in Illinois. Target: meet or exceed the state average pass rate for first time takers.	Any time after graduation, but usually within three months of receiving the J.D. degree	Dean	1,2,3
Lawyering Skills Course	All students matriculating in Fall 2009 or later are required to take the course in Lawyering Skills. This method assesses the success in teaching skills such as counseling, interviewing, and negotiating. Target: 90% of students will meet all course standards.	Any time after the end of the student's first year and before graduation	Faculty teaching the Lawyering Skills Course	1,2,3,4
Job Placement	Because a principal reason for attending law school is to enter the profession, success in securing employment is an important measure of the program's success. Target: 90% of graduates secure employment within 9 months of graduation.	Within 9 months of graduation from law school	Director of Career Opportunities and Development	1,2,3,4,5
Board of Visitors	Alumni, employers, and other professionals meet at the school annually to visit classes and discuss how the College is meeting the changing needs of the profession. Suggestions for improvement and innovation may be made.	Every spring	Dean, Faculty	1,2,3,4,5

Outcomes-by-Methods. Table demonstrating which outcomes are addressed by each method of assessment.

	First Year Final Memorandum of Law	Appellate Advocacy Program	Upper Level Writing Requirement	Multi- State Prof. Resp. Exam	IL State Bar Exam	Lawyering Skills Course	Job Placement	Bd. Of Visitors
knowledge of substantive law	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
legal analysis	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
communicate legal positions both orally and in writing	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
other professional skills		X				X	X	X
ethical and professional issues				X			X	X