

AALS COMMITTEE ON CURRICULUM ISSUES PROGRAM

Topic: The Importance of Student Assessment

PART I: Why Student Assessment Matters

NATIONAL GOVERNORS REPORT 1986

- (1) Clear definitions of institutional missions
- (2) Reemphasis on undergraduate instruction
- (3) Multiple measures to assess student learning(used to assess inst. & program)
- (4) Use of student outcomes as one basis for accreditation

NOTABLE CALLS FOR LAW SCHOOL REFORM

- 1921 Carnegie report
- 1979 Cramton report
- 1994 MacCrate
- 2007 Carnegie Report
- 2007 CLEA Best Practice for Legal Education Project

IMPACT OF UNIVERSITY ACCREDITING BODIES

Requiring of all units:

- Statement of the law school's mission
- Outcomes for student learning and program
- Teaching method
- Assessment of outcomes
- Tie-back: Assessment to improvement

ABA STANDARDS

**Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the
Bar**

Standards Review Committee

Nov. 8, 2010 (draft seven)

Standard 301. OBJECTIVES

A law school shall maintain a rigorous educational program that prepares its students for admission to the bar and effective, ethical and responsible participation in the legal profession.

Standard 302.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- (a) A law school shall identify, define, and disseminate each of the learning outcomes it seeks for its graduating students and for its program of legal education.**
- (b) The learning outcomes shall include competency as an entry-level practitioner in the following areas:**
 - (1) knowledge and understanding of substantive law, legal theory and procedure.
 - (2) the professional skills of:
 - (i) legal analysis and reasoning, critical thinking, legal research, problem solving, written and oral communication in a legal context; and
 - (ii) the exercise of professional judgment consistent with the values of the legal profession and professional duties to society, including recognizing and resolving ethical and other professional dilemma.

- (1) a depth and breadth of other professional skills sufficient for effective, responsible, self-reflective and ethical participation in the legal profession.
- (2) knowledge and understanding of the following values:
 - (i) ethical responsibilities as representatives of clients, officers of the courts, and public citizens responsible for the quality and availability of justice;
 - (ii) the legal profession's values of justice, fairness, candor, honesty, integrity, professionalism, respect for diversity and respect for the rule of law; and
 - (iii) responsibility to ensure that adequate legal services are provided to those who cannot afford to pay for them.
- (1) any other learning outcomes the school identifies as necessary or important to meet the needs of its students and to accomplish the school's mission and goals.

Standard 303. CURRICULUM

- (A) A law school shall offer a curriculum that is designed to produce graduates who have attained competency in the learning outcomes identified in Standard 302 and which, in addition, requires every student to complete satisfactorily at least:
- (1) one course in professional responsibility that includes substantial instruction in the history, goals, structure, values, rules and responsibilities of the legal profession and its members;
 - (2) one rigorous writing experience in the first year and at least one additional rigorous writing experience after the first year, both of which are faculty supervised; and
 - (3) one faculty-supervised, rigorous course after the first year that engages students in performances of one or more of the professional skills identified in Standard 302(b).

(b) A law school shall provide substantial opportunities to students for:

- (1) live-client clinics or other real-life practice experiences, appropriately supervised and designed to encourage reflection by students on their experiences and on the values and responsibilities of the legal profession, and the development of one's ability to assess his or her performance and level of competence; and**
- (2) participation in pro bono legal services or law-related public service activities.**

Standard 304. ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

A law school shall apply a variety of formative and summative assessment methods across the curriculum to provide meaningful feedback to students.

Standard 305. INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

In measuring its institutional effectiveness pursuant to Standards 202 and the rigor of its education program pursuant to Standard 301, the dean and faculty of a law school shall:

- (a) periodically review whether its learning outcomes, curriculum and delivery, assessment methods and the degree of student attainment of competency in the learning outcomes are sufficient to ensure that its students are prepared to participate effectively, ethically, and responsibly as entry level practitioners in the legal profession; and**
- (b) use the results of the review in subsection (a) to improve its curriculum and its delivery with the goal that all students attain competency in the learning outcomes.**