

Annual Academic Assessment Report
Juris Doctor and Law Certificate Programs
University of Arkansas School of Law
June 18, 2018

Report annually to the Dean of the college/school the following:

- **Results of analysis of assessment of Student Learning Outcome**

The strategic planning committee continued its systematic curriculum assessment process. This year the committee focused on the ways in which various assessment techniques are used across the curriculum. Data collection focused on the employment of midterms, quizzes, in-class performances, simulation or real-client exercises/interactions, and various other forms of examination questions used to assess student learning. Full-time faculty members were asked to provide information about which stated programmatic outcomes and learning objectives were assessed in each of their courses taught. Data obtained suggest all learning objectives are assessed with both formative and summative assessments. Writing and experience based classes tend to use the most varied assessment methods.

Relevant to all program goals and learning outcomes, we continue to monitor bar exam performance and report our graduates' passage rates according to the American Bar Association's approach of monitoring calendar year graduates over a two-year cycle (four opportunities to sit for the bar). For our 2016 graduating class, 91 of 100 (91%) passed a bar exam within two years of graduation. Our pass rate for all first time takers (including those in other states) was 80.7% in July 2016 and 84.8% in July 2017.

- **Any changes to degree/certificate planned or made on the basis of the assessment and analysis**

In furtherance of our desire to ensure student success, work load expectations are now communicated more consistently to students. This communication begins with orientation and continues on through course syllabi and student advising. Faculty possess a more comprehensive and consistent appreciation of the minimum workload expectation for credits awarded and this knowledge is shared during the advising process. In addition, students advised by our Director of Academic Excellence and Bar Skills are now given frequent reminders of these expectations.

Based on the 2017-18 Report from the Strategic Planning Committee, the faculty approved in principle long-term contracts for positions to continually develop student assessments. We are currently waiting for the University to finalize revisions to University policies and guidelines; however, the Director of Academic Excellence and Bar Skills and the Director of Externships were both offered sufficient assurance of reappointment based on our commitment.

Also relevant to our programmatic goals and consistent with last year's Strategic Planning Committee Report, the Director of Academic Excellence and Bar Skills presented a

concurrent Bar Success Program in June and July of 2017 and January and February of 2018. The Bar Success program focuses on techniques for the written portion of the bar exam (the MEEs and MPTs). In addition, she taught two sections of Mastering Legal Analysis (MLA) in the spring semester with the assistance of a lecturer. This course focuses on essay and performance test writing for the bar exam and addresses legal analysis and writing skills in general. Enrollment increased to 54 students from 18 the previous year.

- **Any changes to the assessment process made or planned.**

There will be a change in the composition and leadership of the Strategic Planning Committee for 2018-19. The committee will continue its work to evaluate how well our program of legal education continues to meet the student learning objectives that the law school has set out as our programmatic objectives.

The information collected by the 2017-2018 Strategic Planning Committee led to an informational report detailing the assessment value of midterms in first year courses. The data show the majority of first year mid-terms given “did not count” towards the final grade. Faculty indicated they would reconsider whether to use the midterm examination as part of the student’s final grade.

A number of faculty teaching upper-level doctrinal classes also indicated a willingness to consider graded quizzes or written exercises, although these have yet to be implemented.

- **Plans for the 2018-19 Academic Year**

The Strategic Planning Committee will continue its focus on assessing faculty identified programmatic learning objectives. Under consideration for the 2018-19 is the assessment of effective oral and written communication teaching efforts in the context of predictive, persuasive, and prescriptive application of the law (programmatic learning outcome #3).

Student Performance and Improvement Measures. Our strategic planning committee (or a separate assessment committee) will review commonly employed approaches to assessing student learning in law schools and make recommendations to the faculty regarding a more robust plan to quantify the performance of our students in each of the programmatic learning outcomes.

Joint Degree Programs. We are currently considering revisions to the J.D./M.B.A. program which we expect require additional approvals from outside the law school. The law faculty has approved in principle, subject to receipt of all other necessary approvals, a plan to accept 12-credits earned as part of a student’s M.B.A toward the J.D., while the Business School is expected to approve 12-credits of law school credit to count towards the M.B.A.

Certificates. We amended both certificate programs this year to make our Criminal Law and Business Law certificate programs consistent in terms of the general scope of requirements. For the Business Law Certificate, we narrowed the available courses that will satisfy the certificate requirements to focus specifically on the core subject. For the Criminal Law

Certificate, we revised the course offerings to reflect our current classes. Learning objectives were included in the Faculty Policies Manual for the Business Law Certificate (included below) and the criminal law faculty circulated drafts of learning objectives for that program. We also set consistent admission and completion requirements for participation in both certificates to ensure the rigor of both programs is maintained.

§ 5-1509. Learning Objectives.

Students who successfully complete the requirements for the Business Law Certificate will:

- (a) demonstrate proficiency in explaining and analyzing the legal and regulatory implications of common business matters;
- (b) be able to draft documents relevant to typical business formations and basic transactions;
and
- (c) demonstrate an understanding of the role of counsel to businesses, business owners, or business management, as well as an appreciation of the ethical implications of representing each discrete group.