

Standing Requirements

Outcomes Library

BA/BS in Political Science - Legal Studies Outcome Set - Sep. 2012

Core Skills and Values

The following plan is based on the guidelines of the American Bar Association and the American Bar Foundation

Outcome

Mapping

1. Analytic / Problem Solving Skills

Students will develop and demonstrate analytic and problem solving skills.

Foundational Studies: 10. Express themselves effectively, professionally, and persuasively both orally and in writing., 2. Critically evaluate the ideas of others.

Students should seek courses and other experiences that will engage them in critical thinking about important issues, challenge their beliefs and improve their tolerance for uncertainty. Legal education will demand that students structure and evaluate arguments for and against propositions that are susceptible to reasoned debate. Good legal education will teach the student to "think like a lawyer", but the analytic and problem solving skills required of lawyers are not fundamentally different from those employed by other professionals. The law school experience will develop and refine those crucial skills, but students must enter law school with a reasonably well-developed set of analytic and problem solving abilities.

2. Critical Reading

No Mapping

Preparation for legal education should include substantial experience with close reading and critical analysis of complex textual material –much of what the law student does involves careful reading and comprehension of judicial opinions, statutes, documents, and other written materials. As with the other skills discussed in this Statement, students must develop the ability to effectively read and interpret complex material in literature, political and economic theory, philosophy, and history. The particular nature of the materials examined is not crucial - what is important is that law school should not be the first time that one is rigorously engaged in the enterprise of carefully reading and understanding, and critically analyzing, complex written material of substantial length.

3. Writing and Research Skills

Foundational Studies: 10. Express themselves effectively, professionally, and persuasively both orally and in writing.

As one prepares for a legal education, one should develop a high degree of skill at written communication. Language is the most important tool of the lawyer, who must learn to express themselves clearly and concisely in writing.

Fundamental writing skills must be acquired and refined before entering law school. The pre-law student should seek as many experiences as possible that will require rigorous and analytical writing, including preparing original pieces of substantial length and revising written work in response to constructive criticism.

Although there are many research sources and techniques that are specific to the law, one need not have developed a strong familiarity with these specific skills or materials before entering law school. However, it would be to the student's advantage to enter law school having had the experience of undertaking a project that requires significant library research and the analysis of large amounts of information obtained from that research.

4. Oral Communication / Listening Skills

Foundational Studies: 10. Express themselves effectively, professionally, and persuasively both orally and in writing.

The ability to speak clearly and persuasively is another skill that is

essential to success in law school and beyond. Excellent listening skills are also required if one is to understand clients and others.

5. Task Organization / Management Skills

No Mapping

To study and practice law, one must be able to organize large amounts of information, identify objectives, and create a structure for applying that information in an efficient way in order to achieve desired results. Many law school courses, for example, are graded primarily on the basis of one examination at the end of the course, and many projects in the practice of law require the compilation of large amounts of information from a wide variety of sources. The law student will need to be able to prepare and assimilate large amounts of information in an effective and efficient manner. Some of the requisite experience here can be obtained through undertaking school projects that require substantial research and writing, or through the preparation of major reports for an employer, a school, or a civic organization.

6. Public Service / Promotion of Justice

No Mapping

Each member of the legal profession should be dedicated both to the objectives of serving others honestly, competently, and responsibly, and to the goals of improving fairness and the quality of justice in the legal system. If you are thinking of entering the legal profession, you should seek some significant experience, before coming to law school, in which you may devote substantial effort toward assisting others. Participation in public service projects or similar efforts at achieving objectives established for common purposes can be particularly helpful.

7. Substantive Knowledge of the Law

No Mapping

There are some basic areas of knowledge that are helpful to a legal education and to the development of a competent lawyer. Some of the types of knowledge that would maximize your ability to benefit from a legal education include:

- * A broad understanding of history, including the various factors (social, political, economic, and cultural) that have influenced the development of our society in the United States.
 - * A fundamental understanding of political thought and of the contemporary American political system.
 - * Some basic mathematical and financial skills, such as an understanding of basic pre-calculus mathematics and an ability to analyze financial data.
 - * A basic understanding of human behavior and social interaction.
 - * An understanding of diverse cultures within and beyond the United States, of international institutions and issues, of world events, and of the increasing interdependence of the nations and communities within our world.
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