

## AALS COMMITTEE ON CURRICULUM

### SURVEY OF INNOVATIONS IN LAW SCHOOL CURRICULA

The AALS has decided to focus on the issue of curriculum reform in American Law Schools, and would like to set up a process that enables law schools to share information about what is being done, help each other develop new initiatives, and generally catalyze the effort to bring law teaching into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The first step in this process is a survey of current curriculum reform efforts. We understand that surveys come thick and fast these days, but we promise that this is not an effort to collect information that will then sit on someone's shelf, or in someone's hard drive. First, you'll receive information in return, information about new ideas and implementation strategies that other law schools have developed. Second, we'll use the results of the survey to design various settings where law school faculty and administrators can come together to share ideas and develop plans about reforming the law school curriculum.

The following questions are designed to be answered by brief statements, sometimes one or two words, sometimes one or two sentences. We would be delighted if you want to attach a longer description of any program or plan that you regard as particularly worth sharing. In addition, feel free to attach documents you've already prepared for other purposes.

#### I. First Year

##### 1. Do you have an elective in the first year? **No**

If so, what does it consist of?

A limited number of courses specially designed for the first year

A limited number of upper division courses

Any upper division course the student chooses to take

Something else (please describe)

**Students enrolled in a number of our joint-degree programs may elect one course (typically in their joint disciplines) in each semester of the first year.**

2. Do you offer or require any skills courses or training in the first year other than legal writing and/or Legal Research? If so, please describe.

**We do offer some skills training in the first year, including training and programs in the following areas: leadership, oral advocacy, interviewing, practice efficiencies, and curricular and career development.**

If you offer or require legal writing, is it something other than a separate class taught by specially-hired, non-tenure track instructors? If so, please describe.

**Our first-year Legal Analysis, Research and Writing Course is enriched by the co-teaching arrangement between our writing faculty and our professional reference librarians. The reference librarians teach the research sections of the course, but they also help in the design of the writing problems. Our first-year program also utilizes the services of Dr. George Gopen, a JD/PhD writing specialist, who presents a series of separate lectures on Writing and Reader Expectation Theory and with whom students meet for individual writing consultation.**

3. Aside from the electives and skills courses described above, do you require any course other than Torts, Contracts, Civil Procedure, Criminal Law, Property and Constitutional Law?

**no**

If so, what is it?

Legal Methods  
Regulatory Law  
International Law  
Evidence  
Criminal Procedure  
Theories of Law  
Other, please describe

4. Do you offer a separate curriculum in the first year that students can choose, or to which they are assigned? If so, please describe.

**For the typical first-year student, the answer is no, but we do offer joint-degree programs that provide a slightly different mix of courses in the first year. Students still take all 6 core courses, but they add courses from the other discipline.**

5. Have you made significant changes or innovations in your first year curriculum recently other than those described in response to the foregoing questions? If so please describe.

**We are still studying the possibility of some curricular changes/innovations in the first-year program, but have not committed to any particular changes at this point.**

## II. Second and Third Years

1. Do you offer a specialized track or concentration program in any of the following areas?

Business Law  
Public Law  
**International Law**  
**Transnational Law**  
Social Justice  
Criminal Law and Procedure  
Other, please describe

### **International Law**

Requires courses that other students can take as well (please specify) **The LLM of our JD/LLM requires International Law, Comparative Law, and enrollment in one of the Law School's international summer programs in international and transnational law**

Offers special courses (please describe) **a global law seminar**

Requires special courses (please describe) **Research Methods in International, Foreign, and Comparative Law**

Provides placements, internships or clinical program (please describe) **A wide range of international externships and summer placements**

Grants a certificate (please tell us for what)

Other features (please describe) **The LLM is in international and comparative law.**

### **Transnational Law**

Requires courses that other students can take as well (please specify) **The numerous joint-degree programs described elsewhere in the survey.**

Offers special courses (please describe)

Requires special courses (please describe)

Provides placements, internships or clinical program (please describe)

Grants a certificate (please tell us for what)

Other features (please describe)

2. Apart from the standard live client clinics, and the clinical programs described in your answer to the previous question, do you offer any other kinds of clinical programs? If so, please describe.

**In addition to our live-client clinics (Community Enterprise Clinic; AIDS Legal Assistance Project; Children's Education Law Clinic; Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic; Wrongful Convictions; Death Penalty Clinic), we have recently established the Guantanamo Defense Clinic, under special arrangement with the Office of Military Commissions in the Department of Defense.**

3. What joint degree or accelerated degree programs do you offer?

**We do not have an accelerated program, but we have a very high number of joint-degree programs available, including the following: JD/MD; JD/PhD in several disciplines; JD/MBA; JD/MPP; JD/MEM; JD/MTS; and JD/MA-MS in a wide number of disciplines, including cultural anthropology, East Asian studies, economics, electrical and computer engineering, English, environmental sciences and policy, history, humanities, mechanical engineering, philosophy, political science, psychology, public policy studies, religion, romance studies. We continue to explore additional joint-degree programs that will benefit law students, this week establishing the JD/MEMP (masters in engineering management).**

4. Other than the programs described above, do you have any other interdisciplinary programs of note?

**No additional curricular programs, but our numerous interdisciplinary centers do offer opportunities for interdisciplinary research and conferences, lectures, and symposia in which our students participate. A list of our centers and programs are available at <http://www.law.duke.edu/centersprograms.html>**

5. Have you made significant changes or innovations in your second and third year curriculum recently other than those described in response to the foregoing questions? If so please describe.

**We are currently engaged in a serious study, looking at various changes and innovations to move students from the study of law to its practice. The changes/innovations would enhance students' participation in their studies, allowing them some discretion over and ownership of a major portion of (especially) the third-year curriculum.**

### III. Curricular Reform Process

1. Did you gather data in connection with any of the curriculum reforms described earlier? If yes, and if you can share them, please attach a copy or describe their general findings.

**Yes, we surveyed other schools' curricula, but primarily by reviewing their websites. Two significant findings, both of which ran somewhat counter to our presuppositions, is that (1) most schools' first-year curricula have not departed much from the traditional structure (Contracts, Civil Procedure, Criminal Law, Property, Torts, Constitutional Law, and Legal Writing) and (2) only a handful of schools seem to be developing serious instructional tracks or certificate programs.**

2. How did the most significant curricular change in your school in the last 10 years come about - - who initiated the change and by what process?

**Our most significant curricular changes occur as a result of the regular review and study of the curriculum by the standing faculty/student Curriculum Committee - - or, in some cases, a specific study by an ad hoc committee.**

#### IV. Next Steps

1. What information would you like to receive about curricular reform?

**Data about specific reforms and innovations would be helpful, but it would also be very helpful to receive information about trends in legal education, one aspect of which could be what employers think about law students' preparedness for the practice of law.**

2. Would you be interested in presenting any curricular reform(s) that you are undertaking in a special session at an AALS annual meeting? Which one(s)?

**We are not yet prepared to present, but this is certainly something we would be willing to do in the future.**

If so, would you be interested in doing so at the next (2007) meeting? It will be held in San Francisco, and spec

**no**