

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 21st 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? **yes**

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)

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 offer a great array of skills courses, taught through our Blakely Advocacy Institute, which coordinates legal writing, all advocacy courses and extracurricular activities, and post-JD training in advocacy.

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.

We offer an upper-level elective course in advanced legal writing AND one in advanced legal research. The writing course is taught by clinical faculty members and the research course is taught by a tenure-track faculty member.

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?

yes

If so, what is it?

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

Seminar--requiring a research paper

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.

All students take contracts, torts, civ pro, and legal writing in the fall and crim law, property, con law, writing, and an elective in the spring. Our evening students take all of these courses but over three semesters.

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 changed our curriculum 3 years ago to shorten all first-year courses (except writing) to one-semester, rather than two, and added the limited electives in the spring.

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

health law, intellectual property, energy/environmental, advocacy

International Law

Requires courses that other students can take as well (please specify) **no required courses--lots of electives**
Offers special courses (please describe) **we also have an LLM in private international law**
Requires special courses (please describe)
Provides placements, internships or clinical program (please describe) **internships are available**
Grants a certificate (please tell us for what) **not yet**
Other features (please describe)

Criminal Law

Requires courses that other students can take as well (please specify) **no required courses--lots of electives**
Offers special courses (please describe)
Requires special courses (please describe)
Provides placements, internships or clinical program (please describe) **internships are available**
Grants a certificate (please tell us for what)
Other features (please describe) **we offer a JD/PhD in criminal justice**

jointly w/Sam Houston State

health law, intellectual property, energy/environmental, advocacy

Requires courses that other students can take as well (please specify) **we have LLMS in health law, intellectual property, energy/environment, tax, and one for foreign lawyers**
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.

**Mediation Health Law Consumer Law Consumer Complaints Transactional
Clinic Juvenile Justice Criminal defense Criminal prosecution General civil clinic
Immigration Law**

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

**JD/MPA JD/MHA JD/MBA JD/Master's in History JD/PhD in Medical
Humanities JD/PhD in Criminal Justice**

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

We do a lot of interdisciplinary cooperation w/the social sciences and with Rice U.

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.

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.

Lots of schools are going to one-semester 1L courses.

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?

The Dean asked a special committee to study the idea of revising our curriculum, and after the committee made suggestions, the faculty voted on the suggestions.

IV. Next Steps

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

Updates on what schools are doing--with special concentration on new technology (pros and cons).

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)?

Happy to help out wherever possible, as always.

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