

## **Learning Outcomes for Graduating Law Students**

### **University of Tennessee College of Law**

This document describes the learning outcomes for a graduating law student. For each law school course, the professor will establish learning outcomes and describe them to the students. The outcomes for each course may emphasize not only substantive knowledge that the student should master in the course but also competencies necessary for the successful practice of law. In choosing among courses, a student should consider not only the outcomes emphasized in courses already taken but also outcomes useful for his or her desired career path.

We expect every graduating student to have attained or achieved the knowledge, competencies, and understanding described below. In achieving these goals, each student must follow the law school's Code of Academic Conduct, the law school's Memorandum of Writing Standards in Law School, and the university's honor code.\*

**1. Substantive and procedural law.** By graduation, each student should attain knowledge sufficient to begin the competent practice of law, which should include the following areas of study:

- (a) The first-year curriculum (Contracts, Civil Procedure, Criminal Law, Legal Process, Legal Research, Property, and Torts);
- (b) Upper-level required courses (Constitutional Law and Legal Profession); and
- (c) Upper-level elective courses, which together may comprise a general area of study, such as business law, civil practice, or litigation, and perhaps a more specific area of study, including appropriate dispute resolution, bankruptcy law, civil rights law, commercial law, corporate and securities law, criminal law and procedure, entertainment law, environment law, estate planning, family law, health care law, immigration law, income tax law, intellectual property law, labor and employment law, private or public international law, public interest practice, and real estate law.

**2. Sources and the development of the law.** Each graduating student should understand the following:

- (a) The structure of the American legal system, the hierarchy of courts, and the various types of legal actors, institutions, and authorities (e.g., constitutions, statutes, case law, regulations, and other administrative guidance), including thinking critically about how to apply those authorities;
- (b) The processes by which law is made and evolves;
- (c) The different roles that federal, state, and other authorities play in developing the law;

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\* The order of the categories that follow or the topics within any category in no way reflects a hierarchy of importance.

- (d) How economic and social policy and political dynamics affect the development of the law; and
- (e) How to integrate legal theory and practice and how that integration affects the development of the law.

**3. Writing.** We stress writing across the curriculum and each graduating student should be proficient in the following areas:

- (a) Writing analytically and persuasively, including refining a written product through editing and proofreading;
- (b) Writing for a variety of audiences;
- (c) Anticipating future problems or changes in circumstances, planning for their resolution in documents that govern future behavior, and drafting those documents in precise and understandable language; and
- (d) Writing a substantial research paper that proposes and defends a solution to an important legal problem or presents a sensible way of thinking about an important legal question.

**4. Legal analysis and reasoning.** Each graduating student should be proficient in the following areas:

- (a) Stating a clear and concise legal argument, including stating the relevant issue; identifying, stating and explaining the relevant rule or doctrine; applying the rule or doctrine to relevant facts; and reaching a conclusion, understanding when and how to incorporate alternative arguments and counterarguments;
- (b) Analyzing and synthesizing cases;
- (c) Reading and analyzing statutes, regulations, administrative guidance, and other sources of the law;
- (d) Researching a wide variety of legal issues;
- (e) Constructing a coherent and effective narrative based on a set of facts; and
- (f) Presenting analysis and arguing orally.

**5. Other basic competencies for legal practice.** Each graduating student should be proficient in the following areas:

- (a) Thinking critically about legal issues;

- (b) Systematically solving legal problems in light of a client's objectives, being able to anticipate and assess risks;
- (c) Learning through reflection and self-critique;
- (d) Paying attention to detail;
- (e) Using practical judgment;
- (f) Listening attentively;
- (g) Planning strategically;
- (h) Organizing and managing a heavy workload within time and resource constraints;
- (i) Working collaboratively and with civility; and
- (j) Recognizing common ethical problems and resolving them with high professional standards.

**6. Additional competencies for legal practice.** Each graduating student should be proficient in at least some of the following:

- (a) Negotiating;
- (b) Interviewing clients;
- (c) Counseling clients;
- (d) Using appropriate dispute resolution;
- (e) Discovering facts;
- (f) Performing basic trial tasks;
- (g) Analyzing transactions, agreements, or settlements;
- (h) Structuring transactions, agreements, or settlements; and
- (i) Using technology in legal practice.

**7. Professional and ethical responsibilities.** Each graduating student should understand the following:

- (a) How to act in professional settings in a manner expected of a competent legal

practitioner;

- (b) How to act in compliance with the standards of professional conduct; and
- (c) A lawyer's ethical responsibilities as a representative of clients, an officer of the court, and a public citizen responsible for the quality and availability of justice.