

**South Texas College of Law Houston**  
**Revised Assessment Plan**  
**Spring 2022**

***1. Assessment of Institutional Learning Outcomes and Individual Student Academic Achievement***

The Law School has adopted six institutional learning outcomes for the J.D. degree program. The first Program Effectiveness Committee Assessment Plan called for assessing two of those institutional learning outcomes each year. In the first year (academic year 2016-2017), the Law School assessed Outcomes 3 (Legal Research) and 4 (Other Professional Skills, including Effective Communication). The annual cycle continued with the assessment of Outcomes 1 (Substantive Law and Legal Process Knowledge) and 2 (Legal Analysis, Reasoning, and Problem Solving) during academic year 2017-2018 and Outcomes 5 (Professional and Ethical Responsibility) and 6 (Self-Management and Collaboration) during academic year 2018-2019.

Year	Semester	Learning Outcome	Assessment
2016-2017	Fall 2016		
	Spring 2017	Learning <b>Outcome 3</b> (Legal Research) Learning <b>Outcome 4</b> (Other Professional Skills, Including Effective Communication)	1L and 3L LRW survey on research and writing competencies
2017-2018	Fall 2017		
	Spring 2018	Learning <b>Outcome 1</b> (Substantive Law and Legal Process Knowledge)	Texas bar examination and focus group of bar takers
2018-2019	Fall 2018		
	Spring 2019	Learning <b>Outcome 2</b> (Legal Analysis, Reasoning, and Problem Solving)	Rubric based assessment of student work
2019-2020	Fall 2019		
	Spring 2020	Learning <b>Outcome 5</b> (Professional and Ethical Responsibility) Learning <b>Outcome 6</b> (Self-Management and Collaboration)	LSSSE Student survey

Normally the Law School would have repeated the assessment cycle for institutional learning outcomes noted above. Changes in academic administration and the COVID-19 crisis pushed the continuation of the assessment plan off schedule. During that time, the Law School began working on two projects that will change assessment going forward. The first project, which began in Fall 2020, is the Curriculum Re-imagination effort. Phase One of that project developed an expanded list of skills and competencies that, upon faculty vote, every STCL Houston graduate should have. The Law School plans in Fall 2022 to use that list to consider expanding the institutional learning outcomes. The second project, which started in Fall 2021, is an effort to add to the assessment plan a component focused on the academic achievement of every student. Going forward, the Program Effectiveness Committee will be working every year on assessing both institutional learning outcomes as well as student academic achievements.

## 2. *Assessment Measures.*

The Law School's original approach to creating an assessment plan called for focusing on two measures of student achievement – one direct measure and one indirect measure. Going forward, the Law School will continue the same approach.

### a. Direct Measures.

- (i) Texas UBE. The Texas Board of Law Examiners (BLE) provides to in-state law schools a fair amount of detailed information concerning each school's individual performance by graduates on the Texas UBE. The Law School's Office of Assessment and Research has performed a detailed analysis of the data provided by the BLE and will continue to do so. Some of that data is directly relevant to the Law School's learning outcomes, so analysis of the data relating to the graduates' performance on the Texas UBE will be incorporated as appropriate into the Law School's annual assessment.
- (ii) Sample Student Work. In addition, the Law School's assessment plan calls for employing one additional direct measure of student achievement. Most often, this measure will require the examination and analysis of some sample of student work, completed at the appropriate juncture in the students' course of study, to identify the strengths and weaknesses of students as a group (e.g., 1L students). The assessment plan as used up until Spring 2022 contemplates that members of the faculty will perform this review of student work. The Committee endorses for future evaluations the use of outside assessors.

### b. Indirect Measures.

- (i) Student self-assessment of knowledge and skills. In Fall 2021, the Law School introduced in a new assessment method to evaluate students' changes in knowledge and skills. This method requires each student to assess their learning progress by retrospectively rating their level of knowledge and/or skills before and after taking a course. The rating uses the learning objectives adopted by professors for each course and is incorporated in every online course evaluation.
- (ii) Student Surveys and/or Focus Groups. The Law School's assessment plan contemplates that annual assessments may also include conducting student surveys and/or student focus groups of graduating students directed toward determining how well students believe they have achieved the Law School's institutional learning outcomes, the particular aspects of their legal education they found most beneficial, and why and how the Law School could help them learn more effectively.
- (iii) Alumni Surveys. When the initial Assessment Plan started, the Program Effectiveness Committee believed that it would be useful to track graduates' views about their legal education beyond graduation and to compare the views of each graduating class at successive intervals – at graduation, after a year of law practice, and after several years of law practice. The current Program Effectiveness Committee endorses that position and expects to begin using alumni surveys beginning in 2022-2023. The Program

Effectiveness Committee will coordinate with Institutional Advancement and with Career Services concerning such alumni surveys.

### ***3. Annual Assessment Meeting and Notification to Faculty Committees***

The Law School's Assessment Plan calls for faculty meetings during which the faculty reviews the data produced by the assessment efforts, discusses one or more action items to improve student, and responsibility for following up on the action item or items. In November 2019, the Program Effectiveness Committee reported on the assessment cycle and took guidance. The Program Effectiveness Committee recognizes that an annual meeting is preferable for oversight of the assessment plan going forward.

The Program Effectiveness Committee will determine which faculty committees should receive its annual report prior to the Annual Assessment Meeting. The Committee will follow up with the selected committees on their suggestions regarding the assessment plan

### ***4. First Cycle of the Assessment Plan.***

In Spring 2017, the assessment of research skills (Learning Outcome 3) and communication skills (Learning Outcome 4) was conducted using a survey of 1L, second semester students and 3L students in their last semester. Each group was asked the same set of questions about their self-perceived research and writing competencies. The results were sent to a work group of Legal Research and Writing faculty to analyze and suggest potential changes to the program; a report was created and then sent to the Curriculum Committee.

In Spring 2018, bar results data and a focus group assessment of students who passed the bar after having previously failed were used to evaluate Learning Outcome 1 (Substantive Law and Legal Process Knowledge). The Program Effectiveness Committee asked the Teacher Development Committee to examine several issues that were raised and distributed to all faculty via email a report of the focus group assessment.

In Spring 2019, a direct assessment of final exam essays of both 1L and upper level students was conducted to assess Outcome 2 (Legal Analysis). Results of the assessment were distributed to all faculty and discussed the results at the October 2019 faculty meeting.

In Spring 2020, the Program Effectiveness Committee decided to use the LSSSE survey to assess Learning Outcome 5 (Professional and Ethical Responsibility) and Learning Outcome 6 (Self-Management and Collaboration). A list of LSSSE questions matching Learning Outcomes 5 and 6 were identified and used to compare results with other schools and over time at STCL Houston.

### ***5. Second Cycle of the Assessment Plan***

In 2021-2022 the Program Effectiveness Committee begin the second cycle of the assessment plan. This second cycle contains the additional assessment measures discussed earlier.

- a. Institutional Learning Outcomes. The Program Effectiveness Committee fixed on assessment of Learning Outcome 3 (Legal Research) and Learning Outcome 4 (for this year Effective

Communication) for the 2021-2022 academic year. Learning Outcome 3 was assessed through a direct measure of all 1L first semester students' work on legal research. The assessment was conducted by LRW all faculty. The assessment included evaluating three performance criteria using multiple choice exam questions and a final memo. Learning Outcome 4 will be assessed in Spring 2022 using an indirect measure of 1L second semester students. Students will conduct a self-assessment of their improvement in communication skills with focus on Interviewing & Counseling, and Negotiation, and general skills (in writing and oral communication, gained through LRW I and II).

- b. Individual student academic achievement. The Committee adopted and implemented a retrospective self- assessment of students' changes knowledge and skills based on the learning objectives of each course. The same assessment will be repeated in Spring 2022. The Committee also adopted an assessment of student work using 1L students' self-reflections on their final examinations and how to improve their exam-taking skills going forward.