Course Learning Outcomes

ABA accreditation standards require law schools to adopt and publish “learning outcomes” for their overall JD program, all JD concentrations and certificates, and every course. The Law School’s JD program learning outcomes are available here: https://www.law.uconn.edu/academics/learning-outcomes-jd-program. Learning outcomes for the various JD certificates are here: https://www.law.uconn.edu/academics/jd-certificate-programs/jd-certificate-programs.

A course learning outcome is a statement of what students will be able to do, or do better, after completion of a course that they could not do previously. The purpose of requiring them is to provide notice, aid student learning, promote intentional teaching, and facilitate assessment. ABA accreditation standards and Law School policy require all instructors to include course learning outcomes in their syllabus.

Types of course learning outcomes: At least three different kinds of learning outcomes are possible. Learning outcomes can relate to:

1. Substantive knowledge
2. Skill/competency
3. Value/attitude

How can instructors begin to identify learning outcomes? To develop course learning outcomes, instructors can ask themselves the following questions:

1. Why do students take the course?
2. What expectations might the bench and bar have for students who have taken the course?
3. What fundamental information-gathering, analytical and/or communicative skills do students exercise in the course?
4. What subject matter knowledge and skills are required to do well on the exam (if applicable)?
5. How is the subject matter of the course similar to and different from other courses in the curriculum?
6. What major misunderstanding, mistaken assumption, prejudice, or bad habit do students bring to the course that should be “unlearned”?
7. What dilemmas faced by lawyers practicing in the subject area do students have an opportunity to confront in the course?

Tips for developing course learning outcomes:

1. Focus on the students and on what they will be able to do. Use phrases like “students will be able to,” rather than “we will study.”
2. Avoid vague or passive verbs, instead use active verbs.¹
3. Don’t avoid outcomes that may be difficult to measure.

Sample Course Learning outcomes have been developed.²

Assistance with development of, or review of, course learning outcomes can be provided by Paul Chill, Associate Dean for Clinical and Experiential Education.

¹ See Appendix A.
² See Appendix B.
These lists have been developed by in accordance with the categorization of cognitive and higher order thinking skills known as "Bloom’s Taxonomy".

**“Bad” Verbs**
- Appreciate
- Become familiar with
- Comprehend
- Learn
- Understand

**“Good” Verbs**
- Analyze
- Apply
- Assess
- Compare
- Compile
- Compute
- Create
- Critique
- Demonstrate
- Design
- Discuss
- Evaluate
- Explain
- Identify
- Outline
- Plan
- Predict
- Prepare
- Rate
- Revise
- Select
- Use
- Utilize
Sample Course Learning Outcomes #1

Civil Procedure

At the conclusion of the course, students should be able to:

- Identify the stages of the lifecycle of a lawsuit and the tasks in which a lawyer must engage at each of those stages.
- Read and apply a statutory provision or rule and articulate the relationship between this and other forms of legal authority.
- Demonstrate familiarity with how to draft a document for submission to a court.
- Recall and apply the law relevant to choosing a court and initiating and responding to a suit.
- Identify a lawyer’s professional obligations at each stage in the lifecycle of a lawsuit.
- Recognize the importance of accuracy, timeliness, and attention to detail in the legal profession.

Sample Course Learning Outcomes #2

Legal Profession

By the end of this course you will be able to:

- Identify the legal issues presented by a fact pattern implicating the law governing lawyers, apply the law to those facts, and critically evaluate the lawyer’s available options.
- Articulate the importance of key professional norms, including but not limited to candor, diligence, fiduciary duty, protection of client confidentiality, avoidance of conflicts of interest, and participation in pro bono publico service.
- Answer multiple-choice questions of the type asked on the Multistate Professional Responsibility Exam (MPRE).
- Avoid committing professional misconduct resulting in public shaming, financial loss, and/or incarceration.

Sample Course Learning Outcomes #3

Clinic: Mediation

By the end of the semester you will be able to:

- Demonstrate the basic cognitive and communicative knowledge and skills needed to be an effective mediator.
- Deploy generic listening, communication and persuasion skills that are fundamental to client representation and the practice of law generally.
- Practice law (or perform other professional tasks) with more dispassionate judgment and more of a problem-solving orientation, based on your experience in the role of a neutral rather than a partisan.
- Practice learning from experience by engaging in systematic self-evaluation and critique.
- Articulate the benefits and limitations of mediation and other dispute resolution techniques when counseling clients or serving in other roles, such as that of a manager or policy maker making informed choices about dispute resolution systems.