



Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar

Core Principles and Values of Law School Accreditation

August 2025

Core Goals of Accreditation. The Council identified the following statements as the primary goals of accreditation:

1. Accreditation requires that law schools maintain a rigorous program of legal education that prepares their students, upon graduation, for admission to the bar and for effective, ethical, and responsible participation as members of the legal profession.
2. Accreditation protects against the economic exploitation of law students and ensures applicants and the public receive accurate information about the program.
3. Accreditation protects clients, the public, and the legal system by ensuring that lawyers are competent to fulfill their professional responsibilities.
4. Accreditation standards must reflect changing forms and methods of law practice, as well as support and promote the rule of law.

Accreditation should not be designed to protect the profession by regulating the number of new entrants or protecting the income level of lawyers. Accreditation should not protect the terms and conditions of employment of law school employees, unless necessary and narrowly tailored to achieve one of the four objectives above. Accreditation should not be designed to place limits on the number of law schools or require homogeneity among law school programs, unless necessary and narrowly tailored to achieve one of the four objectives above but should enable innovation and differentiation by mission.

The Standards are guided by the following substantive values:

1. The Standards are minimum standards for ensuring a quality legal education, but law schools should seek to exceed the Standards consistent with their mission and goals.

2. Consistent with the rule of law, the Standards should encourage participation in the profession by students, graduates and teachers from all backgrounds and ideologies.
3. The Standards should support the value of access to legal education by not imposing requirements that unnecessarily increase the cost of legal education. The Council will periodically review existing Standards to determine if they unnecessarily inflate the cost of legal education.
4. The Standards support the values of shared governance of the law school and academic freedom to support the highest quality decision-making, legal education, and outcomes.
5. The Standards require transparency for prospective and current law students regarding the program of legal education, so students can make the best decisions with respect to pursuing a law degree.
6. The Standards should enable innovation.
7. The Standards should respect the varied missions of law schools and the universities with which the law schools are associated.
8. The Standards should support law professors and the next generation of lawyers and law students in improving the administration of justice.
9. The Standards should encourage all forms of education designed to ensure that students graduate with the knowledge, skills, habits, and values necessary for effective and ethical participation in the profession, including doctrinal learning and experiential learning.
10. The Standards should be periodically reviewed by the Council to ensure that the Standards evolve as the profession and the need for legal services change.
11. The Standards should support the ethical development and professional identity formation of students to help ensure graduates will practice with integrity.
12. The Standards should help advance an ethic within the profession to ensure access to justice, including a commitment to pro-bono work.

The Council is guided by these procedural values as it does its work:

1. When considering the adoption of new or revised Standards, the Council should seek input from a wide range of stakeholders including legal practitioners, judges, courts,

regulators, affiliated organizations, law school and university administrators, legal educators, and current and prospective law students.

2. The Standards should be designed to require law schools to use evidence in decision-making and the Standards themselves should be formulated and evaluated using evidence-based reasoning and professional judgment.
3. Transparency for stakeholders (legal practitioners, judges, courts, regulators, affiliated organizations, law school and university administrators, legal educators, and current and prospective law students) builds confidence in the Council's work and enables the Council to dialog with its stakeholders in developing the most appropriate Standards.
4. Peer review of law schools by site visit teams helps the Council best apply its Standards, giving a high degree of deference to site visit teams' fact-finding.
5. Council decisions relating to a law school's accreditation will involve appropriate processes, including notice, opportunities to respond with additional information, and, if required, a hearing.
6. Consistency in the application of the Standards is essential to the Council's process of reviewing law schools.
7. The Council is committed to periodic review of the Standards to evaluate their efficacy.
8. The Council seeks to ensure that the data collected is not unduly burdensome on law schools, is impartial, and connected to assessment of compliance with the Standards, consumer information, or revision of the Standards (which may include research into internal Council data).