

## **University of Buffalo School of Law**

### **Technical Standards for Professional Degrees**

Technical Standards for the J.D., LL.M, and J.S.D. Degrees University of Buffalo School of Law Adopted by Faculty Vote on Jan. 26, 2024.

The University of Buffalo School of Law strives to provide an outstanding legal education that reflects our commitment to equity and justice. To that end, we believe in an inclusive and accessible learning environment. Such an environment is critical to our students' success in law school and in their future careers.

As an accredited law school, we are obligated to provide “a rigorous program of legal education that prepares [ ] students, upon graduation, for admission to the bar and for effective, ethical, and responsible participation as members of the legal profession.” ABA Standard 301. Our graduates must have a predictable level of competence across the range of knowledge and skills expected of practicing lawyers. This competence allows clients, licensing and credentialing authorities, and other interested parties to be able to rely on our graduates. The American Bar Association (ABA) and state bar associations mandate some of these competencies; others come from widespread industry practice and expectations in the legal profession, as reported by the National Association for Law Placement and the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System. And others come from our commitment to promoting professionalism and civility in the legal profession.

To achieve these competencies, students at the University at Buffalo School of Law must meet certain standards, either with or without reasonable accommodation consistent with applicable law, throughout law school. These Technical Standards are listed and described below.

All students are expected to meet the same Technical Standards, including students with disabilities and students for whom English is not their native language. These Technical Standards are not, however, intended to deter or exclude students with disabilities. To the contrary, the University at Buffalo School of Law is committed to training lawyers with disabilities and provides reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals who apply for admission and are enrolled as law students. Otherwise qualified individuals will not be excluded from admission to, or participation in, the School of Law's education programs and activities based on their status as persons with a disability. To that end:

1. Technical Standards are not waivable. All students must be able to meet these requirements, either with or without reasonable accommodation consistent with applicable law. If a student cannot meet these requirements with or without reasonable accommodation, then a student will not be able to enroll or complete the J.D. program and graduate.

2. Because of the specialized skills involved in the practice of law, accommodations that were available and adequate in high school, undergraduate study, and/or in standardized testing may not be appropriate, adequate, or reasonable when applied to law study at the University at Buffalo.
3. The J.D. program is a full-time program. This typically requires a credit load of approximately 15 credit hours, which translates to forty or more hours of work per week.

## **Technical Standards**

### **I. Attendance and Assessment**

#### Students must:

- Adhere to the Law School and individual faculty members' attendance policies and course-specific requirements.
- Attend classes punctually and prepared to participate.
- Satisfy all exam, paper, or other requirements in enrolled courses and academic offerings.
- Give and receive feedback respectfully, to facilitate learning and to develop the students' professional identity in the legal profession.

### **II. Behavioral Skills**

#### Students must:

- Exercise sound judgment, honesty, integrity, and civility at all times.
- Adhere to the University at Buffalo's General Academic Requirements, Policies, and Code of Student Conduct.
- Tolerate competing demands, time pressures, and workloads, such as those routinely found in the legal profession. These demands can be mentally and emotionally taxing.
- Monitor their own behavior and identify when they need to access available additional resources.

- Effectively and appropriately work alone and with others, including students, faculty, and staff.
- Adapt to changing circumstances while adhering to the norms of professional conduct.

### III. Communication Skills

#### Students must:

- Communicate with others in a candid, respectful manner.
- Communicate with members of the law school faculty and administration directly, both orally and in writing.
- Read, understand, and respond to all communications received in a timely fashion.

### IV. Critical Thinking and Learning Skills

#### Students must:

- Follow directions, make reasonable inferences, and organize and synthesize information.
- Research, solve problems, apply concepts, and navigate complex systems of information.
- Process and understand large amounts of material, from a variety of sources (e.g., written material, lectures, and audio and video presentations, etc.).
- Extract and organize ideas, and communicate those ideas to others, in writing and orally.
- Set goals, formulate, and execute plans, and adjust those plans, as needed.

### V. Participation

#### Students must:

- Respond to questions from the instructor, guest speakers, or other students in a classroom, office hours, or other instructional setting, with or without advanced notice.

- Satisfy participation policies in all enrolled courses and academic offerings, which may include presenting in front of others.

## VI. Time Management Skills

### Students must:

- Meet deadlines, keep scheduled appointments, and complete classroom assignments, exams, and administrative tasks within the approved timeframe.
- Practice strategic time management, including prioritization, short- and long-term task planning, accountability, and sound judgment.

### **Notes on Accommodations**

1. The University of Buffalo School of Law works with the Office of Accessibility Resources (OAR) to assess needs and to determine accommodations. Reasonable accommodations are reviewed on a case-by-case basis through an interactive process between the student, OAR, and the Law School, in accordance with these technical standards and consistent with applicable law. Accommodations are deemed unreasonable if they fundamentally alter an essential academic requirement that is necessary to the curriculum of the student's particular program. This includes competence, knowledge, and general lawyering skills inside the classroom and in the practical environment. In those cases, the request for accommodations may be denied. Further, accommodations that create an undue administrative or financial burden for the Law School will also be denied.
2. It is the responsibility of a student with a disability, or a student who develops a disability, to self-disclose to the OAR and Law School and to request accommodations. Students must complete all steps of the formal accommodation process in full and in a timely manner to receive an accommodation. Prospective and current students with questions regarding these Technical Standards are also encouraged to contact the Law School's Office of Student Affairs for assistance.
3. The Law School's technical standards intentionally overlap with its [Learning Outcomes](#). The performance criteria for each Learning Outcome offer further guidance on whether a requested accommodation fundamentally alters an essential academic requirement.

### Acknowledgements

Resources consulted in the development of these standards include the National Association of Law Placement Report on 2020 Survey of Law Firm Competency Expectations for Associate Development; Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System's 2014 Foundations Project; Suffolk Law's Essential Performance Standards; University of Oregon's Technical Standards, and Boston University School of Law's Technical Standards.