

Checklist for Competency Development in Law Schools¹

1. **Lay the Groundwork** – You start the end in mind by articulating objectives and scope. What is your purpose in creating the framework? How you plan to use it, will impact who you involve in preparing it, and how you determine its scope.
2. **Ensure strong leadership and vision** – You will need the support of the Dean and key faculty leaders as well as key committees such as those dealing with curriculum and academic affairs. These leaders and committees, will be essential to creating an institutional culture that is open to change and engaged in the process. And you will need to be able to articulate your vision to others in order to build consensus and support as you move forward.
3. **Create a competency team** - Include people from all areas of the law school: Deans, faculty, program administrators and students.
4. **Identify competencies** - This will require you to draw on the past, live in the now, but also look to the future. You will need to determine the resources and tools available: You can select from existing competency list from law firms, Bar associations, best practices or lawyer effectiveness factors. You can use experts, observe top performers, interview successful practitioners, or analyse work. You can conduct your own research on the competencies required.
5. **Draft an Interim Competency Model** – Group behaviours and skill sets into competencies, create sub-groups or performance factors. Identify and name the competencies and describe the behavioural elements, those distinct observable behaviours that would be exhibited by a student, who had mastered the performance factor, create levels or stages in desired and align competencies to law school goals and legal practice.
6. **Finalize the Competency Model** – Test the model with key stakeholder: Faculty, students, alumni and legal employers.
7. **Map the Curriculum to the Competency Framework** – Curriculum mapping is a process of an identifying where individual courses and the curriculum as a whole are linked to the full range of competencies. It can empower a faculty to gain a more comprehensive understanding about the scope and sequence of what is being taught, how it can best be delivered and how competency development is linked from the beginning to end through subjects, courses and programs.
8. **Develop Learning Outcomes within the Competency Model and discuss Mastery** - A competency model helps shift a law school conversation from teaching to learning by making it easier to articulate what students can/ will be able to do through learning outcomes.
9. **Communicate the Model to Faculty, Students, Alumni and Legal Employers** – To be useful, the framework needs to understandable, visible, easily accessible and useable with common messages tailored to specific audiences.
10. **Integrate and implement** – Create an implementation plan based on your original goals, and phase integration into manageable pieces based on your available resources. Keep it simple, create policies and practices that support competencies, provide coaching and training.
11. **Evaluate and assess** – Develop assessment tools. Some form of assessment is important for the effectiveness of a competency framework in ensuring it prepares graduates for practice. Find ways to demonstrate that competence has been obtained beyond the confines of a Bar exam.

¹ From forthcoming (2014) article in University of St. Thomas Law Journal, Competency Model Approach to Legal Success Symposium Special Edition: Terri Mottershead and Sandee Magliozzi, *Can Competencies Drive Change in the Legal Profession?*