Designing and Implementing Research Competency


Article Categories: Advanced & Subject-Specific Legal Research Instruction; Course Creation & Design; Legal Research Instruction for 1Ls; Surveys & Empirical Research

Keywords: AALL Principles and Standards for Legal Research Competency; ABA Standards; Assessments; Competencies; Course Design; Curriculum; Law Firms; Law Schools; Learning Outcomes; Legal Research Instruction; Rubrics

Reviewer’s Summary:

Downing, Pal, and Tarves first state the five broad Principles and Standards for Legal Research Competencies (PSLRC) and how they interact with ABA Standard 302. They then describe how some firms broadly assess legal research skills at the end of an orientation in ways that align with the PSLRC. Law schools can, in turn, use different assessments to judge whether students are meeting the PSLRCs in class. While the first and second PSLRCs lend themselves to quizzes and research logs respectively, PSLRCs III and IV require more in-depth analysis. The authors posit that using rubrics for assessment will keep an instructor organized, fair, and on-topic for the learning objectives (namely, the PSLRCs). They provide several options for where to find rubrics, including the RIPS-SIS website, and remind the reader that rubrics should be viewed as a starting point rather than a “perfect assessment tool.”