

The University of Tulsa College of Law

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS FOR EXTERNS

Many have attempted to articulate the critical skills needed to practice law. While no list is exhaustive, students should have an opportunity to observe and hone a range of skills during their externships. To facilitate this development we focus on a comprehensive set of ten key competencies.

The first five competencies relate to the legal skills essential to the substantive practice of law. These break down as follows:

1. **Knowledge of the Law** (researching and finding the law, knowing general substantive and procedural law, developing subject-matter expertise)
2. **Marshalling Information** (fact finding, questioning and interviewing, collecting and reviewing documents, e-discovery, organizing and categorizing information)
3. **Analysis** (critical review, reasoning, problem solving, understanding what facts mean, understanding what the law means, and applying the law to the facts)
4. **Legal Expression** (persuasive or objective oral and written communication of analysis, positions, opinions, arguments, and recommendations)
5. **Practice Skills** (executing practice-specific tasks such as, in litigation, taking depositions, arguing motions, and trial tactics; or, in transactional work, negotiating, drafting agreements, conducting due diligence, and counseling clients)

The other five competencies relate to the intrinsic professional skills that underlie a successful practice. These are:

1. **Professionalism** (maintaining integrity and honesty, diligence, civility, ethics, diversity, mistake management)
2. **Client Service** (building client relationships; understanding the client's business, interests, and needs; providing advice and counsel; and building trust)
3. **Leadership** (communicating, influencing others, creative problem solving, collaborating, building consensus, envisioning, planning, and mentoring)
4. **Management** (communicating, giving feedback, planning and implementing tasks, organizing and managing one's own work, working effectively as part of a team, organizing and managing others, and running the "business" side of the practice of law)
5. **Business Development** (developing strategic relationships, networking, and marketing your office)

The key professional development tools for acquiring these competencies are work experience, feedback and evaluation, mentoring and coaching, and training.