

Report: Knowledge, Skills, and Values
Doctrinal Area: Human Rights

1. Knowledge:

What core elements are essential for students to enable them to have a substantive understanding of the field?

The members of the Human Rights Study Group identified the following core elements:

- domestic constitutional provisions, laws, and institutions that protect human rights and their relationship to international and regional standards;
- the core areas of international and regional human rights laws, standards and institutions;
- mechanisms for implementing human rights at local, regional, and international levels;
- as appropriate in a given jurisdiction, comparative human rights laws and institutions, and comparative approaches to the implementation of human rights; and
- the contextual underpinnings of human rights, including an understanding of critiques of human rights.

2. Skills

In addition to the general skills outlined in the Outcomes of a Legal Education, are there any skill sets particular to this field, which students should have attained at the end of the course?

Identified skill sets include skills in:

- researching, problem-solving, planning and strategizing on how to secure the implementation of human rights;
- critical analysis and reasoning, including the ability to make nuanced, contextual, and culturally sensitive arguments;
- effectively communicating (through listening as well as written and oral communication), in both legal and non-legal and national and cross-national contexts;
- collaboration and initiative; and
- critical reflection on human rights discourses and on students' own roles within human rights practice.

3. Values

What values specific to this field should students incorporate in an overall ethical legal education? What values specific to this field can be used to illustrate and reinforce an ethical legal education?

These values include:

- the principles of human dignity, equality, nondiscrimination, and inclusion, as well as justice and the rule of law;
- professional ethics and integrity; and
- respect for cross-cultural perspectives.

The group also discussed the need for human rights and human rights values to be mainstreamed into the curriculum broadly rather than addressed only in a few designated human rights courses.

4. How has globalization impacted your course?

The group noted that the very field of human rights has been, from its origins, intertwined with globalization. As such, it continues to be influenced by developments relating to globalization, both at the international level and within other countries. Our courses are affected by these developments in the field, as well as by the globalization of approaches to human rights teaching.

5-7. Are there areas where international standards are adopted? How did that come to pass? What areas in your field will be the next ones influenced by globalization?

The group considered these questions together. It noted that international standards are at the heart of all areas of the human rights field. In addition, a participant noted that in recent years UN institutions have moved towards establishing international standards for human rights education specifically (e.g., the World Program for Human Rights Education adopted at the 2005 World Summit and its subsequent Plans of Actions; the 2011 UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training), including in the area of higher education. Group members also concluded that all areas of the human rights field are influenced by globalization.

8. How should we prepare our students to confidently meet these challenges within a regime of the rule of law?

The group agreed with many of the strategies that had been discussed during the plenary with regard to legal education more broadly. In particular, the group felt that it would be valuable to adopt more participatory learning methodologies, offer more practical or experiential opportunities, and focus on conveying the knowledge, skills, and values earlier discussed. These strategies are not specific to the human rights field, but this field in particular offers many comparative examples that can be drawn upon.

10. How can collaborative approaches across regions inform the scholarship in this field?

Group members agreed that scholarship in the field of human rights can be greatly enhanced by collaboration across regions. Cross-regional collaboration brings diverse approaches and experiences to bear on global problems, usefully challenges the assumptions of the collaborators, and helps to generate new insights through the collaboration. Participants noted that cross-regional collaboration can benefit teaching as well as scholarship, for example, though classes that are linked by video-conference or student collaboration on human rights projects.

9 & 11. What are the major areas for investigation in this field? What trends are developing in the field of which researchers and scholars both in and outside of the field should be aware?

The group discussed questions 9 and 11 together, as developing trends in the field typically present fruitful areas for investigation. Some of the major areas for investigation in the human rights field include:

- the accountability of non-state actors;
- the location of human rights standards and norms in international institutions;
- climate change and human rights;
- local interpretation and engagement in human rights;
- the evolution of critiques of human rights discourse; and
- the human rights of marginalized and vulnerable individuals and groups (such as, for example, the Roma in Europe, homeless people, the San people in Botswana).

The group stressed that these examples are in no way an exhaustive list – the areas for investigation in this field are numerous. Group members also suggested that the last of these examples is the most important, as the universality of human rights cannot be realized if the rights of the most marginalized and vulnerable people are excluded.