

Formative Assessment with Team-Based Learning

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Helpful TBL Scholarship:

Sophie M. Sparrow, Using Individual and Group Multiple-Choice Quizzes to Deepen Students' Learning, 3 *Elon L. Rev.* 1, 2 (2011).

Sophie M. Sparrow, Margaret Sova McCabe, Team-Based Learning in Law, 18 *Legal Writing: J. Legal Writing Inst.* 153 (2012).

Sophie M. Sparrow, Can They Work Well on A Team? Assessing Students' Collaborative Skills, 38 *Wm. Mitchell L. Rev.* 1162, 1162–63 (2012).

Janet Weinstein et. al., Teaching Teamwork to Law Students, 63 *J. Legal Educ.* 36 (2013).

Melissa H. Weresh, Uncommon Results: The Power of Team-Based Learning in the Legal Writing Classroom, 19 *Legal Writing: J. Legal Writing Inst.* 49, 51 (2014).

Anne E. Mullins, Team-Based Learning: Innovative Pedagogy in Legal Writing, 49 *U.S.F.L. Rev. F.* 53 (2015).

Sample Team-Based Learning Syllabus Language¹

TEAM-BASED LEARNING

This course will be taught using a team-based learning approach, which is different from the traditional methods many law professors use. Team-based learning will help you develop the teamwork skills you will need in practice while also increasing your knowledge of real property law and practice.

¹ This language was, in large part, created by my fabulous colleague at the UA Little Rock William H. Bowen School of Law, Lynn Foster, who was the first to adopt team-based learning in Bowen's property courses. Professor Foster was in turn helped by Alice Noble-Alligire of Southern Illinois University School of Law, who has been using team-based learning in her property courses for years. And, as you can see from the bibliography, we are all grateful to the wonderful Sophie Sparrow.

Research has shown that the ability to work with others is critical to professional disciplines; in fact, studies have shown that strong teamwork skills are more important to success than intellectual expertise. The research also indicates that team-based learning improves student learning of the subject matter of a course. Finally, this approach best simulates the learning process employed by lawyers in practice and, therefore, helps you develop the skills you need to successfully navigate new projects or concepts you encounter as a lawyer.

In this course you will be working in teams of 5-7 students; these teams will last the entire semester. Each team is expected to work together effectively and efficiently; each team member is responsible for achieving these team goals. I will ask you to design thoughtful ground rules to guide your team interaction. You should refer back to the ground rules periodically. Be aware that most teams take about 5-7 weeks to become truly effective. Be patient, keep the lines of communication open, and talk to me if you have questions or concerns.

If you have problems within your team, I will ask you to work it out. The most common reason teams don't function effectively is because team members avoid conflict. I will encourage you to address the issue with your team as you would in a professional office. Consider how you would want to hear the message if your behavior was a challenge for your teammates. What approach would be effective? If the problem is not resolved using your team rules and the effective team behavior outlined on the rubric, talk to me, and I can suggest ways for you and your teammates to work through the problem. In the rare case of alleged student misconduct, I will intervene.

HOW CLASS WORKS

Readiness Assurance Tests: The course is divided into five units. At the beginning of each unit, you will take a readiness assurance test (RAT) covering the unit's initial reading assignment before we review that material in class. It is your responsibility, therefore, to make sure you understand and outline the initial reading to prepare for the RAT; you may not, however, use notes or your text while taking the RAT. Preparing for and taking the RATs prepares you to deepen your understanding of the material through our subsequent discussions, and it is also good practice for the final exam. Once you take the RAT, you will hand in your answer sheets to me. Your individual scores on the RAT are recorded and will count towards your final grade in the course. I will not count your lowest RAT score of the semester.

After everyone has turned in the RATs, your team will take the RAT as a team (the GRAT), and the team score will count toward your team grade. In well-functioning teams, the team usually outperforms the highest scoring individual team member

because you will be bringing to bear all the intellectual resources of the team and the deeper learning that comes from debate and discussion as you work together on your answers. As your team takes the GRAT you will scratch off the answers on a “scratch-off” sheet and receive immediate feedback. All GRAT scores will count.

NOTE: RAT/GRAT questions do not reappear on the midterm or final exams, but high quality multiple choice questions are very hard to draft. Therefore, on RAT/GRAT days, you will be required to place your cell phone at the front of the room. On these days, you will not be allowed to use your computers at all unless we are covering unrelated material at the end of the class. **Violations of these rules or, obviously, copying questions, are also violations of the Code of Academic Student Conduct.** You are free to write down the rules of law that we will discuss as we go through the questions, just not the questions and answers themselves.

Appeals: After the GRAT review, individuals or teams will have an opportunity to file a written appeal on any questions for which you believe I have made a mistake in my choice of the answer, in the clarity of the question, or in providing sufficient or clear reading materials that make it fair for you to be asked the question.

If the appeal is based on ambiguity in the question, you should 1) identify the source of ambiguity in the question and 2) offer an alternative wording that would have helped you to avoid the problem. If the appeal is based on inadequacies in the reading material or disagreement with what I indicated as the correct answer, you should 1) state the reason(s) for disagreeing with the answer and 2) provide specific references from the reading material to support your point.

When I grant an appeal on a question that a team has missed, the points missed will be added to that team’s score and to the score of any individual in the team who answered the same way the team did. Only those teams that appeal may add the additional points. A team member who had the original correct answer also will receive credit on the question.

Application Exercises: At the end of each unit, you will be assigned an application exercise (AE) to prepare for class individually. **Your AE must be submitted on TWEN before the class begins.** During the class, your team will work together on the AE and submit it to my assistant on TWEN. Most of these team AEs will be scored and count toward the final team score; others will be discussed in class but will not count toward

the team score. Your individual AEs will not be scored but will be checked over. If they are handed in late or are completed in bad faith, you will lose professionalism points. If you do not hand in an application exercise, your team score will be reduced.

Peer Assessment: Both in the middle and at the end of the semester, you will assess anonymously the performance of your team members, and you yourself will be similarly assessed using the Team Rubric. These assessments will factor into final grades.

In your peer assessments, you may not divide the points up evenly among your fellow team members unless you justify to me how each member contributed equally (which is, of course, possible and ideal). You may *not* agree as a team to divide the points equally. I expect each student to engage in thoughtful, fair assessment of others' team behavior.

Administrative Tasks: Your team will have an accordion file in which you will keep a copy of your team's ground rules, your attendance sheet, and a gradesheet to keep track of your scores on quizzes and application problems. At the beginning of each class, a member of your team should pick up the folder. Each of you is responsible for initialing the attendance sheet in the folder.

COLLABORATION

In this class:

1. You **MAY** study together for RATs.
2. You **MAY NOT** work together on individual application exercises prior to their submission. They should be the outcome of your efforts alone. After they are submitted, of course, you will work on a team product with your team members **in class**.

GRADES

Your final grade will be based on:

- A final examination (50%).
- Your individual RAT scores (25%)
- Your team RAT scores and graded exercises, and peer evaluations (20%)
- Professionalism points (5 %)

There may be additional assignments that are not graded but must be satisfactorily completed within a timely manner to receive credit for the course. You may be required to redo an assignment until you meet a minimum competency standard for the assignment.

ONE FINAL THOUGHT

There are a lot of moving parts to this course. It may take you awhile to get used to the different components of the course and how they work together, but this is the way the two Real Property courses are structured all year long. It will grow familiar soon and we'll use this method until next May. This is the third year that Professor Foster and I have used the team based learning method, and we can say with certainty that most students like it. Many if not most students say they learn more in Real Property than in any other course first-year course.