

The 2024 International Legal Education Abroad and LLM Administrators Conference

Friday, April 26, 2024

Case Study: A New Approach to Legal English Assessment via Support for Afghan LLM Candidates

2:00 PM– 3:00 PM ET

3:00 PM – 4:00 PM ET (Open Agenda/Happy Hour)

In line with the creativity theme of the conference, we will be describing a legal English assessment process created from scratch for an ABA pilot program (itself created from scratch) to support refugee Afghan judges and lawyers trying to establish themselves professionally in the US. And we plan to put it into context with English the legal English assessment processes used by law schools in connection with LLM and JD applicants.

Since August 2023, we (Lindsey Kurtz, Stephen Horowitz, and Daniel Edelson) have been collaborating with Dana Katz, Diane Edelman and several others to provide legal English assessments on a pro bono basis for the [ABA Afghan Legal Professionals Scholarship & Mentoring Pilot Program](#). In a nutshell, we've been helping the program determine which non-native English speaking candidates for LLM programs will have the greatest chance of academic success to best direct the limited funds they have to allocate, all towards the greater purpose of being able to help refugee Afghan legal professionals take a US bar exam and restart their legal careers, attract more funding by proving the concept, and grow the pilot program.

To accomplish this, we devised an approach to assessment of LLM candidates that aimed to incorporate best practices for language assessment in a legal education context beyond what we've been able to design or use at law schools where we've worked.

Our presentation will describe our approach, what criteria and best practices we felt were missing from other options, and the solutions we devised in collaboration with Dana, Diane and their colleagues to address the gaps. It will also describe some of the unique linguistic tools and methods we've been able to apply to create more objective criteria (in order to avoid the need by admissions staff to create an apples-to-apples by referencing a previous student.)

Additionally, Dana will share her experience using and interpreting the assessment reports. Plus we'll share some of the lessons learned from our experience and thoughts on ways to improve the process.

We'll end by discussing ways our experience might be beneficial for law schools or other legal education programs that rely on language assessments as part of their candidate screens for one-year, 3-semester, 2-year, JD, and other extended programs. And we plan to spend the final 15-20 minutes in Q&A and open discussion with attendees.

Presenters:

Stephen Horowitz, Legal English Lecturer, Georgetown Law School

Dr. Lindsey Kurtz, Legal English Specialist, Penn State Law



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Daniel Edelson, Director of Academic Success, Seton Hall Law; Founder of USLawEssential
Dana Katz, Vice Chair, Afghan Legal Professionals Resettlement Task Force, American Bar Association (ABA) International Law Section (ILS)