

The Procertas Legal Tech Assessment is a competency-based learning and benchmarking platform that integrates core legal technology training (Word, Excel, PDF) into the law school curriculum. We explain more below. But you can try it for yourself right now at www.procertas.com/demo.

Starting with Why

Law schools must establish learning outcomes that shall, at a minimum, include competency in the professional skills needed for ethical participation as a member of the legal profession.¹ Ethical participation includes competence with technology.²

Framed from another perspective, law school graduates are expected to be ‘practice ready’ but almost universally fall short.³ Ask recent law grads what “practice ready” means in concrete terms, they respond that “using office technologies (e.g., email and word processing)” is the 6th most important skill and ability for young lawyers. Out of 30. Ahead of “legal reasoning”, “issue spotting”, and “interpersonal skills”.⁴

Tech competence begins with the basics. 99% of legal fee earners identify Word as a “critical tool”.⁵ Excel is the “most important software application of all time”.⁶ And courts have mandated PDF-centric eFiling for three decades.⁷ Enter the Legal Tech Assessment.

What is the Legal Tech Assessment?

The Legal Technology Assessment (LTA) is a competency-based learning and benchmarking platform focused on the core technology tools of legal service delivery: Word, Excel, and PDF.

“Competency-based” means that users complete graded tasks rather than simply press the play button on videos. The LTA places users in real-world legal scenarios and has them work through the preparation of common legal documents utilizing their own software. When and where users struggle, the LTA provides on-the-spot, task-specific training.

The LTA is a cloud-based SaaS solution that utilizes native browser functionality. There are no installs or plugins. The LTA is browser, operating system, and software agnostic. It works with any modern browser (Chrome, Firefox, Safari, Edge, Explorer). It works on PC and Mac. It works with any version of Word or Excel from 2007 onward. It works with the most common PDF software (Adobe, Nuance, and Foxit).

¹ Standard 302(d) of the ABA’s [Standards and Rules of Procedure for Approval of Law Schools](#)

² [Technology Competence: What the Ethical Duty Means for You and Your Firm](#) (citing Model Rules of Professional Conduct 1.1, 1.5, 1.6, 4.4., 5.1, and 5.3, as well as the 2017 revision to the Model Rule for Minimum Continuing Legal Education)

³ “95% of hiring partners and associates in a recent survey believe recently graduated law students lack key practical skills at the time of hiring.” [Hiring partners reveal new attorney readiness for real world practice](#).

⁴ [The Most Important Knowledge and Skills for Recent Law Grads](#) citing a survey by the National Conference of Bar Examiners of 1,700 recent graduates.

⁵ [Debunking Lawyers’ Myths About MS Word](#)

⁶ [Excel the Killer](#) (ACC Docket)

⁷ [The Force of E-Filing](#) (ABA Journal)

The basic rhythm of the LTA is *download-edit-upload*. Users are placed in a legal scenario (e.g., prepare a contract or an eFiling) and given tasks to complete (e.g., delete comments, redact PII, remove metadata). Tasks are completed on the downloaded documents with the users' own software.⁸ Users upload the modified documents to be graded in real-time.

The LTA offers both assessment and trainer modules for each of the three tools (Word, Excel, and PDF).

Assessments can be used as a diagnostic (to establish a baseline), for validation (to measure the effectiveness for training), and for benchmarking (relative to average and target performance). In an assessment, users receive a grade once all tasks are complete. Users are marked correct or incorrect on each task. Each task is also timed. The user's actual time is compared against a target time. Depending on their overall score (a combination of time and accuracy), users are rated as Beginner, Intermediate, Qualified, or Advanced.

Users who achieve Qualified or Advanced on an assessment receive a digital badge administered through a third party, [Acclaim](#). Badges are earned for individual modules. That is, a user can earn a badge for Word without starting, let alone passing, the Excel module. The badges can be posted to LinkedIn or inserted on a digital resume to replace 'proficient in MS Office', which ranks up there with "I have read these terms and conditions" for ubiquity and incidence of accuracy.

Trainers cover the same material as assessments but provide users with feedback at the completion of each individual task. If users perform a task correctly, they move onto the next task. If users perform a task incorrectly, they are prompted to watch a task-specific training video and retry the task. Training videos are available for both PC and Mac. Users have an unlimited number of attempts and may watch the training videos as many times as necessary, as well as take advantage of any other training they might find useful. In addition to unlimited attempts, trainer tasks have no time component.

Trainers offer *adaptive, synchronous, active* learning. The training is adaptive because it identifies what users know and what they don't—permitting them to test out of training they do not need and highlighting the training they do need. Training is synchronous because it is provided concurrent to the identification of the need. The learning is active because users are afforded the immediate opportunity to apply what they've learned (in their own live environment) and receive instant feedback on whether they've done so correctly.

Once users have performed a trainer task correctly, it is marked complete. When users have completed all tasks in a trainer module, the module is finished. Finished modules remain available and fully navigable (i.e., users can select which tasks to practice). Users may return to a trainer module at any time. In addition, all training videos are available in the Content Library if users need some quick, just-in-time learning.

⁸ Users are expected to perform LTA tasks on the professional-grade software they will use in the professional environment they are preparing to enter. Google Docs is fantastic but has a de minimus install base among practicing attorneys (WordPerfect still has more market share). On their own or through their schools, most students have access to the most current version of Microsoft Office. Professional PDF software is a different story (a free reader won't cut it). But the most used PDF packages in the legal market—Acrobat and Power PDF—both offer free trials that enable the students to get through the PDF module.

How can the LTA be integrated into the law school curriculum right now?

The easiest integration is simply to provide LTA access to every student. Offering competency-based technology training to a population that needs it is an immediate improvement on the status quo.

Maximum integration would be to require the LTA in multiple core courses. Word might be required in Legal Research & Writing or Contracts. PDF might be required in Civil Procedure (i.e., eFiling). Excel would be required in Corporations, Bus Orgs, or some other commercially oriented course.

In between these poles are hybrid approaches. One module can be mandatory and the others optional. Or the LTA modules can be provided to all students but also available to individual faculty to make mandatory in specific courses, workshops, clinics, or boot camps. The LTA can also be offered through the library or career services.

There are also different approaches to making LTA modules mandatory. The most rigorous approach is test-train-test. That is, an assessment to establish a baseline, access to a trainer to address knowledge gaps, and a second assessment to validate that training was effective. This can include a minimum required score (e.g., a Qualified rating) on the validating assessment—i.e., students retake until they demonstrate competence. Alternatively, students can be given access to the assessment and the trainer simultaneously with only the requirement being that they achieve a qualifying score on an assessment by a date certain. Finally, a lower-stakes mandate is to require students to only finish the trainer module while being encouraged, but not required, to take the attendant assessment.

The LTA has built-in administrative access and reporting to make it easy to determine which students have completed which assessments and finished which trainers.

How long do LTA modules take?

It depends on the student and the requirements. Students sit along a curve of initial competence.

While the digital native is mostly a myth, a small subset of students will already be extremely proficient. Candidly, they won't get much from the LTA. But they will also test out of any module in under 10 minutes. There is no reason to waste their time. They, however, are outliers (less than 5% of the law student population).

Some students will spend much more time. They are also outliers. They come in with low proficiency. They may take two to three hours per module. But that's good. They need it.

The median student will know about half of what is on an LTA module. If they are only required to complete the trainer, they will spend ~45 minutes doing so. If they are also required to get a minimum qualifying score on the attendant assessment, their total time per module will be closer to 90 minutes.

Thus, the range is eight minutes to three hours per module with most students falling between 45 minutes and 90 minutes depending on the requirements they are being asked to satisfy.

What is currently on the LTA?

The LTA tasks were calibrated based on user performance data so that the average user achieves 50% accuracy and needs about 30 minutes of additional training to get that proficiency closer to 90%. We have over 11,000 users in the system and have issued over 1,600 digital badges. The common gut

reaction that the below 'seems easy' should be mitigated by the empirical evidence that students struggle with the basics and the LTA can immediately improve their proficiency.

Word

- Accept/Turn-off changes and comments
- Cut & Paste
- Replace text
- Format text
- Footers
- Insert hyperlink
- Apply/Modify style
- Insert/Update cross-references
- Insert page break
- Insert non-breaking space
- Clean document properties
- Create comparison document

Excel

- Copy/Rename worksheet
- Insert column
- Format column width
- Format text
- Sort
- Filter
- Remove duplicates
- Divide
- Count
- Sum
- Average
- Prepare to print
- Pivot table
- Pivot chart

PDF

- Convert Word & Excel documents to PDF
- Create single PDF from multiple files
- Recognize text (OCR)
- Extract page
- Highlight text
- Redact information
- Insert footer
- Create bookmark
- Create internal link
- Remove hidden Info
- Password protect

What are the future plans for the LTA?

The LTA is already in market and will bring immediate benefits to your law students. The LTA is also a modern software offering, which means it will never be ‘done’. There will always be new features and content in the pipeline. We want you to help us shape what the LTA will become.

Our immediate plans focus on content. We would like to work with our law-school partners to create content that is even more tailored to the law-school curriculum. Our current vision—which we are happy to iterate on in response to additional feedback—is to have modules that explicitly track the traditional law school curriculum. Students would learn to put together a memo in Legal Research and Writing, a contract in Contracts, and an eFiling in Civil Procedure. They would also have an introduction to Excel in some business-oriented course (e.g., Corporations, Bus Orgs) and, ultimately, take some form of capstone assessment to earn a certificate/digital badge to replace the meaningless “proficient in.”

Beyond the traditional curriculum, we want to add value to other courses like data analytics (more advanced Excel) or trial skills (PowerPoint). We’re looking to the community to tell us where we can be of the most use. We have created a flexible platform and have no doubt that the crowd will come up with brilliant ideas for flipping the classroom that haven’t occurred to us.

Finally, no matter what the institution requires, all LTA content will be available to all students. This includes content we are co-creating with various state bars (our first CLE is an eFiling module with The Florida Bar). If we create it, and it is useful to them, students will have the opportunity to take advantage of anything we might offer.

How much does the LTA cost?

\$5,000 for the entire law school or \$30 per student if they purchase for themselves [here](#) (e.g., as a lab assigned for an individual course). The \$5,000 per year covers every student and all faculty/staff.

Candidly, we wanted this answer to be “free” when we launched the LTA on a third-party platform a few years ago. We quickly learned that free is obscenely expensive, especially given our almost immediate recognition that we would need our own purpose-built platform to truly serve the law-school market. The new platform came online in 2017.

We’ve tinkered with several pricing models and settled on what has proven successful for our friends at CALI: an inexpensive, flat fee. Our intention was to make core technology training for every law student less expensive than the annual cost of clearing shelf space in the library. In addition to a low-cost, flat fee, we also commit to capping any price increase at 5% per year.

Because the low-cost approach only works at scale, we need a critical mass of law schools. We therefore are offering to set the baseline price for our first 30 commitments at \$4,250/year with the same 5% cap on annual price increases. We’re at 18 commitments so far.

In addition, any participating institution can get a \$500 credit per referral. If a referred law school signs up, we credit \$500 to the referring law school. We apply two referral credits per year. But the number of referral credits is unlimited (i.e., surplus credits carry forward into additional years).

Which law schools are using the LTA already?

38 law schools have used, or have signed up to use, the LTA in some form or fashion:

American University Washington College of Law

Boston University School of Law*

Brooklyn Law School

Case Western Reserve University School of Law

Chicago-Kent University School of Law

Cumberland School of Law (Samford University)

Curtin Law School

Duquesne University School of Law*

Florida International University College of Law*

Florida State University College of Law*

Fordham University School of Law*

Harvard Law School

Institute for the Future of Law Practice (Northwestern University)

J. Reuben Clark Law School (Brigham Young University)*

James E. Rogers College of Law (University of Arizona)

Loyola University Chicago School of Law*

Michigan State University College of Law

North Carolina Central University School of Law*

Osgoode Hall Law School (York University)

Paul M. Hebert Law Center, Louisiana State University—Baton Rouge*

Salmon P. Chase College of Law (Northern Kentucky University)

Suffolk University Law School*

The Faculty of Law at the University of Calgary

University of Akron*

University of Cincinnati College of Law

University of Colorado Law School

University of Connecticut School of Law*

University of Dayton School of Law*

University of Hartford

University of Houston Law Center*

University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law*

University of New Mexico School of Law

University of North Carolina School of Law

University of North Texas at Dallas College of Law*

University of Pittsburgh School of Law

University of South Carolina School of Law*

University of Tennessee College of Law*

Vanderbilt University Law School*

*Indicates institutions that have committed to the school-wide model above

How do I respond to common faculty objections?

This is not what law school is for.

Some debates cannot be won. A few faculty are at the hard-core end of the spectrum on seeing law school as existing only to support 'scholarship' with students learning to 'think' like a lawyer. They regard any form of practical training as somehow beneath the legal academy. The LTA will not persuade them otherwise if they are unconvinced by:

- Standard 3.02 of the Standards and Rules of Procedure for Approval of Law Schools ([here](#))
- Model Rules of Professional Conduct 1.1., 1.5, 1.6, 4.4, 5.1, and 5.3 ([here](#))
- What law school graduates themselves identify as important ([here](#))

But the ability to offer the LTA as optional or integrate it into the existing curriculum places it among the lightest-touch changes imaginable. While it certainly complements a technology-oriented course offering, the LTA does not itself need a stand-alone course that competes for credit hours. Moreover, the LTA can be administered completely on the backend so faculty can add practical-skill labs to their existing courses without themselves having to teach those practical skills.

This is secretaries' work.

What secretaries? The world has changed. Even graduates who land a job at a top law firm will, at best, share secretary with four more senior lawyers. The job numbers and document-management system data all indicate junior lawyers are doing this work themselves (*see more* [here](#) on the stats that undermine the 'delegation dodge'). There is a reason [Vault](#) started rating firms on whether they give associates substantive work.

In another sense, this is about learning to properly delegate. Most of the tasks on the LTA take less than 30 seconds when completed properly. But that can stretch out to hours if the user is ignorant of how to use some standard features. What the modern lawyer needs to learn is when and how to delegate to the machine.

In addition, the duty of tech competence is largely [non-delegable](#). And our empirical evidence suggests there is no reason to assume admins or paralegals are any more proficient with the technology. It's not just that failure to use technology well takes more time, it also introduces opportunities for human error. Even in a supervisory role, an attorney needs to know enough about the technology to properly calibrate their oversight and expectations.

Legal work is fundamentally different in the digital age. Young lawyers are tethered to a desk ten to twenty hours per day staring at a machine they've never been trained how to use. This shift is a big part of why being a legal associate is both the [unhappiest](#) and [most boring](#) job, turning lawyers into the [loneliest](#) workers. Tech competence is not just about quality of work, it is about quality of life.

There is substantial drudgery inherent in legal work. And the lawyers are doing it themselves. Much of that drudgery can already be delegated to the machine. But our technologies, like our cars, are not yet self-driving. Our software can get us from Point A to Point B, but it still requires precise user inputs.

The kids already understand technology.

The digital native is a [myth](#). The OECD conducted a multi-year study across 33 developed countries asking 215,942 people to solve problems of various complexity using technology. The unequivocal [conclusion](#) is that the distribution of users' computer skills is "worse than you think." This includes young people—who are tech dependent, not tech savvy—and is confirmed by our own LTA data from more than 11,000 users.

Again, the average law student can only correctly complete about half of the tasks listed in the "What's on the LTA?" section above. Most of young people's comfort with technology is more attributable to exposure than to acumen. Most of what they do with technology is consumption, not creation. When creation does occur, it tends to be rudimentary—texts, pictures—and supported by single-purpose apps.

Indeed, the simplicity of single-purpose apps warps expectations about how technology works. We become frustrated with anything that requires learning. Yet there is an inherent tradeoff between depth and complexity. Even Google offers [two six-week courses](#) on how to use Google because, like all software that rewards power users, Google has deep functionality that is not intuitive. For example, [findings](#) by Google's own search anthropologists suggest that less than 10% of the population knows how to use the Find function. Taking advantage of deep functionality—like that required to properly construct a legal document—is a matter of learned skills, not innate talent. It is incumbent on us to teach those skills because they are both essential and lacking in the modern legal environment.

What about AI, blockchain, IoT, coding, robots.....?

Yes, teach those, too.

The LTA does not need a stand-alone course. It can be optional. It can be integrated into the traditional curriculum. Or it can complement a course focused on the more advanced technological aspects of the modern legal landscape. There is no competition here. We welcome the opportunity to partner with our law school community to create modules that supplement advanced courses.

The LTA is not supposed to be sexy. Again, tech competence begins with the basics. 99% of fee earners identify Word as a "[critical tool](#)". Excel is the "[most important software application of all time](#)". And the legal profession has had mandatory, PDF-centric eFiling for over [three decades](#).

The LTA focuses on the boring, practical, and necessary. That students should learn the basics is not to discount any other topic. It is simply to say that whatever curriculum you design, the basics should be included.

Contact: info@procertas.com