

Statement by Bill Adams, managing director of ABA Accreditation and Legal Education, on misleading media reports of proposed changes to law school standards:

For the past several months, inaccurate reports have circulated in several media outlets and blogs regarding proposed changes to the [standards](#) for American Bar Association-approved law schools. The proposed changes relate to the standards that provide law schools broad guidance on educating their students on issues of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Unfortunately, most of these reports have inaccurately described two separate proposals involving Standards 303 and 206. (Please see explanations of each below.) In addition, they have conflated the roles of the Council of the ABA Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar and the larger ABA. The Council solely is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as the national accreditor of law schools and serves as an independent arm of the ABA in executing that function. In short, the Council alone acts on law school accreditation matters and has the final decision on setting standards for nearly 200 ABA-approved law schools.

In August 2021, the Council approved changes to Standard 303 that were developed pursuant to a request from 150 law school deans in a July 2020 [letter](#) to provide more emphasis on diversity training. The proposed changes do not mandate law schools to create or offer any new courses or specific study methods. Rather, the [changes to Standard 303](#) and [its addendum](#) will add a requirement that students receive education in bias, cross-cultural competency and racism both at the beginning of their legal studies and at least once later during their law school careers. Schools are left to decide how this should be done. Standard 303 will not take effect until it is considered by the ABA House of Delegates. HOD consideration is expected at the ABA Midyear Meeting in February 2022. Under ABA rules and procedures, the House has two opportunities to review these changes, and can concur, reject or make recommendations for revisions. But final approval to change ABA Standards and Rules of Procedure for Approval of Law Schools rests with the Council.

At the August meeting, [proposed revisions to Standard 206](#) were tabled for further review to address concerns identified during the Council's earlier Notice and Comment process. In addition to other mischaracterizations of the proposal, reports that the proposal required quotas were inaccurate, and quotas will not be imposed in any new proposals. Similarly, claims that the proposal required schools to violate the law were inaccurate and referenced a provision in the current standard that has never been interpreted to require schools to violate laws or constitutional provisions. In fact, the provision explicitly permits law schools "to demonstrate the commitment required by Standard 206 by means other than those prohibited by the applicable constitutional or statutory provisions."

The status of both proposals was approved by the Council at its hybrid public meeting on Aug. 20. These actions are posted in a meeting summary on the Section's [General News](#) webpage.

As noted, changes to Standard 206 remain under review by the Council, and there is no timetable for final House consideration.

Media seeking further information, please contact Bill Choyke in the ABA Division of Media Relations and Strategic Communications at bill.choyke@americanbar.org or by cell at (757) 575-1442.