

What Curriculum-Level AI Integration Actually Looks Like

Penn LPS 1L AI Integration — Summary

A summary of Penn Legal Practice Skills' approach to integrating AI into the first-year curriculum, beginning Fall 2025. Based on an internal program memo; this is a description of the approach, not the memo itself.

The Design Premise

Most law schools are still debating whether to permit AI. Penn Legal Practice Skills took a different stance: assume students will use it, and design the 1L year to teach them how.

The key move is sequencing. The semester starts AI-free — students complete a closed memorandum without any AI assistance, establishing the baseline skill and giving the program a clean before-measurement. Then a structured progression introduces AI intentionally, with specific exercises, specific tools, and specific ethical grounding. A curriculum that treats AI as a skill to be taught.

The Progression

Five phases, in order:

1. **AI-free opening assignment.** A closed memorandum with no tools permitted. This establishes the analytical and writing baseline, gives the program a before-measurement, and makes explicit that the core legal-analysis skills precede AI use.
2. **Asynchronous introduction module.** AI basics, ethics, responsible use, and prompt engineering. Students work through the module on their own time before the next live session.
3. **Large-class session.** Reinforces the ethical and effective use norms from the async module in a shared setting. Creates a common vocabulary for the rest of the semester.
4. **Experiential modules.** Three anchor exercises that operationalize what responsible AI use looks like:
 - **Summarize the closed memorandum in an email to a supervisor.** Tests whether students can translate their own analytical work into a different register with AI assistance.
 - **Revise a portion of a draft memorandum for grammar, concision, and coherence.** Tests whether students can use AI as an editing partner without losing their voice.
 - **Use ChatGPT's voice capabilities for oral argument practice.** Students brainstorm questions, draft sample exchanges, and practice live with the AI before the graded oral

argument.

5. **Canvas discussion boards on real-world AI misuse.** Each section maintains a running thread on news stories and anecdotes about AI misuse in practice. This keeps the ethical frame live and grounded in current events rather than abstract principle.

Why a Shared Institutional Tool

The program treats shared institutional access as central to the design. Two reasons. **Transparency:** students use AI whether the school permits it or not; a shared platform brings that use into the open for instruction. **Equity:** private paid subscriptions create an uneven playing field — one student's Pro tier outperforms another student's free tier, and instructors can't fairly assign AI-based work when the tools vary. Penn's ChatGPT EDU deployment addresses both. Whether this choice generalizes to other programs is a separate question the LPS design doesn't settle.

A third factor is privacy. Penn's ChatGPT EDU deployment is FERPA-compliant, which lets the program assign AI-driven tasks involving student work without triggering the privacy problems a non-compliant tool would create.

The Pattern Worth Stealing

The LPS approach is interesting not because of the specific tool choice but because of the structure: **baseline** → **instruction** → **structured practice** → **reflection**. That pattern generalizes across doctrinal and skills courses. The decisions are about sequence and transparency, not about whether AI is good or bad. A doctrinal course that wanted to integrate AI could use the same architecture: an AI-free baseline assignment, a short instructional module, structured exercises that operationalize responsible use, and an ongoing reflection mechanism.

The LPS program is worth attention for another reason: it demonstrates that AI integration at the curriculum level is not a theoretical exercise. A group of faculty with a concrete plan, institutional tool access, and a semester of runway can do it. The harder question is whether schools can scale that kind of integration beyond a single program — which is precisely the pedagogical challenge the broader AI initiative is designed to address.