ISSN: 2637-6067 DOI: 10.6918/IJOSSER.202611_9(11).0024

Toward Job-Ready Competence: A "One Case, Three Returns" Closed-Loop Approach to Teaching Reform in the Course Safety and Emergency Laws and Regulations

Xiaohan Guo[1], Lixin Sun[1, *], Jian Li[1, 2, 3], Hua Wang[1, 2], Yuliang Zhou[1, 2], Leizhi Zhang[1], Jie Wang[1]

[1]School of Urban Safety, Emergency Management University, Sanhe 065201, China

[2]Key Laboratory of Safety Production Supervision Technology And Management System, Ministry of Emergency Management, Beijing 100713, China

[3]Multi-scene Water Chain Accident Wisdom Emergency Technology Innovation Center of Hebei, Sanhe 065201, China

[*]Corresponding author: Lixin Sun, E-mail: sunlixinchd@163.com.

Abstract

Courses on safety-related laws and regulations commonly suffer from cases detached from front-line law-enforcement settings and from learning outcomes that never reach practice. Taking the course Safety and Emergency Laws and Regulations as its subject, this paper proposes a closed-loop teaching reform scheme entitled "One Case, Three Returns." The scheme takes a single real legal event drawn from the front line of on-post internships as its operating unit and completes one teaching cycle through three crossings of the boundary between the classroom and practice. The first return — Case Return-flow — converts first-hand events encountered by students during their on-post internships into classroom cases through collection, screening, de-identification, and pedagogical redesign. The second return — Legal Retrospection — draws on the four-phase sequence of "prevention and emergency preparedness, monitoring and early warning, emergency response and rescue, and post-incident recovery and reconstruction" to trace, section by section within the classroom, the applicable statutory provisions, responsible parties, procedural requirements, and legal consequences. The third return — Action Response — sends the rectification proposals, public legal-education plans, or practice projects produced by students back to the front line to be tested in real settings. A cross-cohort relay mechanism is introduced so that cases brought back by one student cohort become teaching material for the next, enabling case resources to accumulate across cohorts. A four-dimensional teaching-evaluation rubric covering "regulation identification — provision citation — responsibility determination — rectification proposal" is also developed, converting competence in applying the law from impressionistic description into observable indicators.

Keywords

Safety and emergency laws and regulations, One Case- Three Returns, Closed-loop teaching, Case feedback, Competence in applying the law.

1. Introduction

The 2025 Central Conference on Urban Work observed that cities concentrate dense populations, resources, and economic and social activities, that safety risks are correspondingly concentrated there, and that safe and resilient cities must therefore be built [1-2]. Cities have

ISSN: 2637-6067 DOI: 10.6918/IJOSSER.202611_9(11).0024

become the principal theatre of emergency management in China. As the China Safety and Emergency Management Talent Development Report (2024) makes clear, the shortfall in safety and emergency management personnel nationwide amounts to some 5.5 million [3], and professionals combining operational expertise with legal competence are in particularly short supply [4]. Against this background, the competence objectives of the course *Safety and Emergency Laws and Regulations* offered within the Urban Management programme (grassroots urban safety and emergency governance direction) must urgently shift from "knowing which laws exist" to "applying the law accurately in specific situations."

Considerable progress has been made in law-related courses in conventional engineering disciplines and in cyber security, notably in the refinement of teaching methods [5-6], the integration of ideological and political education with information technologies [7-8], conceptually driven restructuring [9-10], alignment with professional qualifications [11], and enablement by intelligent technologies [12-14]. Further reform is nevertheless required in order to develop students' practical capacity to apply laws and regulations. Although case-based teaching is widely adopted in safety-related law courses, cases are mostly drawn from closed accident files in industry, mining, and commerce; cases concerning urban public-safety incidents are scarce, and routine grassroots rule-of-law scenarios such as law-enforcement inspections are rarely represented. At the same time, case selection and case-bank construction remain predominantly instructor-led and technology-assisted, lacking sustained supply from the front line. Course outcomes and assessment likewise continue to rely on coursework and written examinations, leaving students' competence in genuine law-enforcement processes unevaluated.

In response, this paper proposes the "One Case, Three Returns" closed-loop teaching reform scheme. Building on the on-post internship mechanism of Emergency Management University, it takes a real front-line legal event arising from an on-post internship as its operating unit and establishes a mechanism that crosses the classroom–practice boundary through Case Return-flow, Legal Retrospection, and Action Response. Working with authentic front-line cases, students strengthen their law-enforcement competence by exercising four capacities in sequence: regulation identification, provision citation, responsibility determination, and rectification proposal. The findings of this study may inform curriculum development for the Urban Management programme (grassroots urban safety and emergency governance direction) and the reform of safety-related law courses in cognate disciplines.

2. Overall Design of the "One Case, Three Returns" Closed-Loop Teaching Scheme

2.1. Rationale for the Design

The teaching scheme rests principally on situated learning theory, experiential learning theory, and the concept of Outcome-Based Education (OBE). Situated learning theory provides the rationale for bringing authentic front-line cases into the classroom. The cycle advanced by experiential learning theory — concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation — corresponds structurally to the "One Case, Three Returns" model. The OBE concept supports the reverse design of teaching activities and assessment from the competences required for competent performance in the post.

2.2. Selecting "One Case"

The "case" used in this scheme refers to a real legal event encountered at the front line during an on-post internship, rather than a closed accident case drawn from a textbook or a public source. The notion of a "case" is deliberately broad: it covers routine legal events such as law-enforcement inspections, information reporting, and complaint handling, and may even cover

ISSN: 2637-6067 DOI: 10.6918/IJOSSER.202611_9(11).0024

only one segment of an event, provided that the segment contains identifiable legal relations and procedural questions. Although such routine legal events lack the dramatic impact of catastrophic accidents, they are precisely the situations most frequently encountered in front-line posts, and they constitute the content most conspicuously absent from textbook cases. Because these events are collected by the students themselves during their internships, they carry a quality of first-hand experience, which is a precondition for genuine student engagement during the subsequent classroom debriefing.

2.3. Operating Mechanism of the "Three Returns"

By "Three Returns" — Case Return-flow, Legal Retrospection, and Action Response — we mean three crossings of the boundary between the classroom and practice, rather than three steps within a single class session. Operating together, they ensure that a case is no longer merely a "story" recounted in class, and that learning does not stop at the pages of a book.

(1) The first "return": Case Return-flow. Students compile first-hand events that they witnessed or participated in during their on-post internships into raw material. After screening, de-identification, and pedagogical redesign by the instructor, this material is converted into analysable classroom cases and entered into the case bank.

(2) The second "return": Legal Retrospection (in class). Taking the four-phase sequence — prevention and emergency preparedness, monitoring and early warning, emergency response and rescue, and post-incident recovery and reconstruction — as the debriefing instrument, the case is decomposed into its constituent phases, and the applicable statutory provisions, responsible parties, procedural requirements, and possible legal consequences are then traced phase by phase.

(3) The third "return": Action Response. The analyses, rectification proposals, or public legal-education plans produced by the students are returned to the practice setting for testing in real conditions.

2.4. Resolving the Asynchrony Between the Course and the On-Post Internship

The course *Safety and Emergency Laws and Regulations* is delivered in the first semester of the second year, whereas on-post internships generally take place during the summer following the second or third year. It is therefore difficult to guarantee that any single cohort of students will experience the complete "One Case, Three Returns" cycle while enrolled in the course. The design accordingly adopts a cross-cohort relay to resolve this difficulty: Cohort N enters practice after completing the course, and the front-line cases it collects are entered into the case bank; Cohort N+1 analyses those cases in class, formulates rectification proposals, returns them to the front line, and verifies them during its own internship. Case resources thereby accumulate across cohorts, and completion of the teaching loop does not depend on any single cohort of students completing all three returns.

3. Building a Sustainable Case Bank Fed by the Front Line

3.1. Collecting and Processing Front-Line Cases

Materials brought back by students from on-post internships tend to be fragmentary and to lack such elements as time, post, and procedure, making them difficult to use directly for teaching. A standardised case-collection form has therefore been designed and issued to students as an explicit assignment before the internship begins. Students are required to record four items of basic information: the time and stage of the event; their own post and mode of participation; the procedures and documents involved in handling the event; and any points they found questionable or contested.

ISSN: 2637-6067 DOI: 10.6918/IJOSSER.202611_9(11).0024

3.2. Criteria for Admitting Cases

Whether a front-line case may enter the classroom is determined by the four criteria set out in Table 1. Of these, "legal relevance" and "teachability" are the most difficult to satisfy: the former serves to exclude purely technical events, the latter to judge whether the material can sustain a complete classroom debriefing.

Table 1. Criteria for admitting cases

Criterion	Basis for determination	Treatment
Authenticity	The student witnessed or participated in the event, which can be traced to a specific stage	Basic information on time, post, and mode of participation must be provided
Legal relevance	The event contains identifiable legal relations and procedural questions	Material that is purely technical, with no legal point of contention, is excluded
Teachability	The event can be decomposed into at least one segment of the four-phase sequence	A single segment suffices; comprehensive coverage is not required
Disclosability	The event contains no confidential information and infringes no lawful rights of the parties concerned	Organisation names and party identities are removed; events unsuitable for public disclosure are rewritten as simulated scenarios

3.3. De-identification and Entry into the Case Bank

To protect the privacy of the parties concerned, all front-line cases must be de-identified: the names of organisations and individuals are removed, times and locations are blurred, and events unsuitable for public disclosure are rewritten as simulated scenarios. Cases entered into the bank are indexed by "source post — event type — phase affiliation — disclosability," enabling retrieval across cohorts.

4. Implementing Legal Retrospection in the Classroom

4.1. Operational Steps

The analytical scaffold for classroom legal retrospection is the four-phase sequence of prevention and emergency preparedness, monitoring and early warning, emergency response and rescue, and post-incident recovery and reconstruction. For any given case, the relevant phase is located first; tracing the case forward along the sequence phase by phase makes procedural defects easier to expose. Institutional requirements are then identified and responsibility attributed; finally, alternative scenarios are simulated. The specific steps are as follows.

(1) Locate. Determine which phase the event falls in. Where an event spans several phases, locate it in each and identify the junctures between them.

(2) Retrieve. Identify the institutional requirements and specific provisions applicable to that phase, and state their normative level and conditions of application.

(3) Attribute responsibility. Establish the source of each actor's obligations, whether those obligations were discharged, and the nature of the liability, distinguishing the liability of the acting party from regulatory liability and procedural liability from substantive liability.

(4) Simulate. Consider how the legal consequences would change if the event were handled differently.

ISSN: 2637-6067 DOI: 10.6918/IJOSSER.202611_9(11).0024

4.2. Arrangement of Classroom Teaching

The classroom teaching process centred on case debriefing is set out in Table 2. The "adversarial position-switching exercise" differs markedly from the conventional moot-court segment: within the same scenario, students must first argue from the standpoint of the regulator and then from that of the administrative counterpart, and must be prepared to switch positions. The intention is to make students aware that the law binds both the regulator and the administrative counterpart. What this segment trains is not debating technique but the capacity to weigh the available courses of action within the scope of legal authority.

Table 2. Flow of a typical teaching unit

Segment	Duration	Instructor activity	Student activity	Assessment focus
Scenario introduction	5 min	Present the de-identified case; set out the post and the context	Read the material; note questions that arise	—
Phase location	5 min	Guide students to determine which phase the event falls in	Locate the event on the four-phase sequence and justify the choice	Regulation identification
Group debriefing	30 min	Provide scaffolding for statutory retrieval; circulate to advise	In groups, trace the provisions, responsible parties, and procedures	Provision citation; responsibility determination
Adversarial position-switching exercise	30 min	Assign opposing standpoints (regulator / counterpart); organise the switch	Argue from the assigned standpoint, then restate after switching	Responsibility determination
Formulation of rectification proposals	15 min	Require proposals to have a statutory basis and to be operable	Draft rectification proposals	Rectification proposals
Reflection and commentary	5 min	Comment on common problems; explain follow-up arrangements	Complete the reflection record sheet	—

4.3. Evaluating the Effectiveness of Classroom Teaching

To capture the actual improvement in students' capacity for law enforcement, and to convert "competence in applying the law" from impressionistic description into observable and scoreable behavioural indicators, a four-dimensional evaluation rubric has been designed, as shown in Table 3. The four dimensions correspond to the questions posed during debriefing: regulation identification corresponds to "which laws apply in this situation"; provision citation to "on what basis"; responsibility determination to "who is accountable, and under what procedure"; and rectification proposals to "what should lawfully be done next."

ISSN: 2637-6067 DOI: 10.6918/IJOSSER.202611_9(11).0024

Table 3. Evaluation rubric for competence in applying the law

Dimension	Needs improvement	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Regulation identification	Fails to identify the laws and regulations involved	Identifies some of them, with omissions or misidentification	Identifies the principal ones; secondary norms are overlooked	Completely identifies the laws and regulations involved, together with their normative levels
Provision citation	Speaks only in generalities without pointing to specific norms	Can indicate the general regime; the provision cited is inaccurate	Can cite the principal provisions, with isolated errors	Accurately cites provisions and explains the grounds for their application
Responsibility determination	Misidentifies the party bearing responsibility	Identifies the principal parties but is unclear as to procedural requirements	Parties and procedures are broadly clear	Complete account of party, procedure, and basis; distinguishes the liability types attaching to different parties
Rectification proposals	No proposal offered, or one without legal grounds	A proposal is offered but is weakly targeted and not operable	The proposal has a statutory basis and is broadly feasible	The proposal is lawful, specific, and operable, and takes account of proportionality and implementation conditions

5. Action Response: Carrying Learning Outcomes Back into Practice

Once a returned front-line case has been debriefed in class, students' learning outcomes can be carried into practice through action response along three routes.

(1) Drawing on their on-post internship, students submit the rectification proposals and compliance notes arising from the debriefing to their host organisation or to the relevant authority, and seek written feedback.

(2) Working through social-practice activities during the summer or winter vacation, students convert the conclusions of the debriefing into public legal-education materials for communities and schools.

(3) Students turn the problems identified during debriefing into topics for practice-project applications, such as provincial-level research projects on youth development or provincial youth-work research competitions.

6. Conclusion

The "One Case, Three Returns" closed-loop teaching scheme proposed in this paper takes a real legal event from the front line of an on-post internship as its operating unit and, through Case Return-flow, Legal Retrospection, and Action Response, crosses the boundary between the classroom and practice three times. It answers the three questions of "where cases come from," "how cases are used," and "where outcomes go," while the cross-cohort relay mechanism

ISSN: 2637-6067 DOI: 10.6918/IJOSSER.202611_9(11).0024

resolves the mismatch between a course taught in the lower years and internships undertaken in the upper years, thereby turning the on-post internship into a pivotal node in the cultivation of professionals with combined operational and legal competence. The accompanying four-dimensional teaching-effectiveness evaluation converts competence in applying the law from impressionistic description into observable indicators. The findings of this study can effectively strengthen the law-enforcement capacity of students in the Urban Management programme (grassroots urban safety and emergency governance direction).

Acknowledgements

The authors gratefully acknowledge the financial support from Key-item of 14th 5year Plan of Hebei Higher Education Society(GJXHZ202427); Construction of the Provincial Graduate Professional Degree Teaching Case Database of Hebei Province (YKCJSZ2027053);Innovation Entrepreneurship Course (2025CXKC182),Reform (2025CXCY244) of Hebei Higher Education; Undergraduate Teaching(HKJG202401), Smart Course(ZHKC202508),Textbook(JC202510) of North China Institute of Science and Technology; Plan of Chinese Society of Education (202416374619B).Corresponding author: Lixin Sun, E-mail:sunlixinchd@163.com.

References

[1] Xi, J. (2026). Speech at the Central Conference on Urban Work. Qiushi, (2), 1–5.

[2] People's Daily. (2025, July 16). The central conference on urban work held in Beijing.

[3] Huang, S., & Zhongguancun Association for the Promotion of Safety Management Technology and Talent Development. (2024). China safety and emergency management talent development report (2024). Social Sciences Academic Press.

[4] China Mining News. (2022, September 26). On the cultivation of emergency management talents and discipline development.

[5] Yang, L., Zhong, M., Wei, X., et al. (2018). Exploration and research on teaching methods for the course Safety Laws and Regulations. Science & Technology Vision, (29), 181–182.

[6] Ren, L., Jing, X., Zou, B., et al. (2019). Application of case-based teaching in the course Safety Laws, Regulations and Standards. Education Modernization, 6(56), 208–209.

[7] Guan, W., Zhou, Y., & Huai, X. (2020). Research on the ideological and political teaching reform of the course Production Safety Laws and Regulations against the backdrop of the internet. Information System Engineering, (11), 154–155, 157.

[8] Su, F. (2024). Research on the teaching reform of the course Production Safety Laws and Regulations against the backdrop of the internet. Information & Computer, (24), 236–238.

[9] Li, J., Cai, Z., Zhao, W., et al. (2023). Case-driven teaching reform in Production Safety and Fire Protection Laws and Regulations. Safety, 44(12), 55–60.

[10] Gao, L., Zuo, C., & Li, M. (2025). Research on the teaching reform of safety laws and regulations courses oriented toward engineering education accreditation. The Guide of Science & Education, (17), 55–57.

[11] Hai, Y. (2025). Research on the teaching of Production Safety Laws and Regulations oriented toward the cultivation of registered safety engineers. Journal of Ningbo University of Technology, 37(1), 78–84.

[12] Liu, Z., Peng, B., & Gan, Q. (2026). Research on an AI teaching model for cyber security laws and regulations courses in the cyberspace security major. Computer Education, (4), 232–239.

ISSN: 2637-6067 DOI: 10.6918/IJOSSER.202611_9(11).0024

[13] Liu, Z., & Zhao, W. (2025). Exploring a “case bank + AI tutor” driven model for emergency-course reform. Journal of Shijiazhuang Tiedao University (Social Science Edition), 19(4), 101–108.

[14] Liu, Z., Feng, H., Ren, J., et al. (2025). Exploration and practice of teaching reform in the emergency management major based on an emergency-event case bank. Journal of Higher Education, 11(25), 125–128.