

Introduction to Law and Legal Skills

Module title			
Introduction to Law and Legal Skills			
Module NFQ level (only if an NFQ level can be demonstrated)	Module number / reference	ECTS Value	Duration
Level 8 NFQ	LLBH - ILLS	10 ECTS	24 weeks.
Parent programme(s). Principal programme title, and embedded(s) if relevant		Stage of parent programme	Semester No.
Bachelor of Laws (Honours)		1	1 and 2
Bachelor of Laws (Honours) in Criminal Justice		1	1 and 2
Bachelor of Laws (Honours) in Commercial Law		1	1 and 2
Teaching and Learning modes	Proportion (% of Total Directed Learning)		
Classroom / Face to Face	26%		
Workplace			
Online			
Other (Identify)	74% (Independent Research and Learning)		
Entry requirements (statement of knowledge, skill and competence)			
Please see section 4.2 for full details of entry requirements.			
Maximum number of learners per instance of the module	Sixty (60)		
Average (over the duration of the module) of the contact hours¹ per week	3		
Pre-requisite module title(s) (if any)	None		
Co-requisite module title(s) (if any)	No		
Is this a capstone module? (Yes or No)	No		
Module-specific physical resources and support required per centre (or instance of the module)			
Requirements are for the lecturer to utilise a PC with Microsoft Office, Zoom and access to the internet through which an individual can gain access to the Griffith College student intranet: Moodle. There are no further software requirements for this module. In relation to Microsoft Office the lecturer will require to use PowerPoint or Word to present the information to the learners. Zoom will be required in conjunction with Microsoft Office in order to record the lectures when the module is being delivered for block release or for the Blended Programme when organised in advance. Zoom will also be required for the seminars through which the module will be taught (block release).			
Specification of the qualifications (academic, pedagogical and professional/occupational) and experience required of staff working in this module.			
Role e.g. Tutor, Mentor etc	Qualifications & experience required:		# of Staff with this profile (WTEs²)

¹ Effort while in contact with staff

² WTE is the whole-time equivalent number. The number 1 indicates a fulltime person fully dedicated to the programme. 0.5 indicates a part-time person available to this programme half of the time.

Lecturer	Lecturers expected to hold at least a level 8 legal qualification, preferably with a professional legal qualification. It is an advantage to have completed the Certificate in Education, Learning and Development provided by Griffith College.	0.25 WTE
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Analysis of required learning effort		
*Effort while in contact with staff	Minimum ratio teacher / learner	Hours
Classroom and demonstrations	1:60	64
Mentoring and small-group teaching	-	-
Other (specify)	-	-
Independent Learning		
Directed e-learning (hours)		-
Independent Learning (hours)		186
Other hours (specify)		-
Work-based learning hours of learning effort		-
Total Effort (hours)		250

Allocation of Marks					
	Continuous Assessment	Supervised Project	Proctored Practical Exam.	Proctored Written Exam	Total
Percentage Contribution	50%			50%	100%

Module aims and objectives

Introduction to Law and Legal Skills aims to provide learners with a core understanding of the structure and function of the Irish legal system and to provide learners with a core understanding of the rules and principles that underpin the Irish legal system. This module is designed to outline how, in particular, the system of law developed and is developing and to inculcate knowledge of the hierarchy of legal sources and to analyse forms and types of legal rules. Learners will develop a practical awareness of dispute resolution mechanisms as well as an appreciation of the role of law in society. The objective of this module is to develop learners' skills in legal research and analysis and encourage learners to approach legal issues analytically and creatively while also developing learners' legal writing and oral communication skills. This module will also provide an introduction for the learners to the global legal systems. Finally, the module aims to equip learners' with practical legal skills, including client interviewing, advocacy and argumentation to develop the ability to argue effectively and persuasively.

Minimum intended module learning outcomes

On successful completion of this module, learners will be able to:

- (i) Explain how the Irish legal system including the principal functionaries within the legal professions and how the courts are accessed and function;
- (ii) Evaluate the fundamental legal principles such as statutory interpretation and judicial precedent;

- (iii) Demonstrate their understanding of law-making in Ireland and the methods and principles of statutory interpretation;
- (iv) Interpret primary legal materials and sources including case law and legislation;
- (v) Analyse the relationships between domestic and regional international law;
- (vi) Explain the Irish Constitution including fundamental rights, the role of the constitution in the legal system and how the constitution is interpreted by the Irish Courts.
- (vii) Understand and define the in-camera rule, its purpose and its application.
- (viii) Describe and understand the different institutions and instruments of the European Union.
- (ix) Conduct effective research of legal problems using both hard copy sources and online legal databases;
- (x) Communicate their opinions and ideas in an appropriately legal manner;
- (xi) Construct legal arguments and engage in legal analysis of problems;
- (xii) Analyse and investigate the relationship between the legal process and broader social issues;

Rationale for inclusion of the module in the programme and its contribution to the overall MIPLOs

Introduction to Law and Legal Skills is a core module where learners become familiar with the principles within the Irish legal system that provide a basis for students to develop the key skills needed to do a law degree and an understanding of topics that they will study in Constitutional Law, International Human Rights Law, Administrative Law and EU Law. The Module comprises learning in key areas of law from both professional practice and academia.

The Module serves to directly underpin programme-learning outcomes (i) apply specialised knowledge of core areas of Irish and E.U. law and the key skills required for writing in a legal and business environment, including problem solving, communication skills, research, professional writing and I.T. skills. This module re-enforces the module learning outcomes (vi) effectively employ advanced research skills, including use of legal databases, to investigate, interrogate and critique the law and (x) demonstrating independent critical judgment and analytical skills supporting personal and career development. This module also directly underpins the Programme Minimum Learning Outcomes (ii), (vii) and (ix).

Information provided to learners about the module

At the start of the Academic Year, learners will receive their Faculty Handbooks. The Faculty Handbook provides general information about the faculty, its staffing, resources, and operation. Detailed programme information is supplied through Moodle, including copies of the approved module descriptors from the accredited programme (detailing related teaching, learning and assessment) along with a programme timetable.

During the first class of the Module, learners are given a detailed outline of the Module showing the schedule of delivery and the dates when assignments are released and due for submission.

Moodle is used to provide learners with ongoing access to module related information, from the handbooks and module outlines provided in advance of the module commencement, the lecture material and links to related resources provided on a scheduled basis in line with the module delivery.

Module content, organisation and structure

Introduction to Law and Legal Skills is a 10 ECTS credit module taught and assessed over one academic semester. The module is delivered through in person lectures for the Full Time and Part Time learners and weekly pre-recorded lectures that will be supplemented with evening seminars and Live Days for the Blended learners.

The Learning Outcomes for this programme have been aligned with the knowledge, skills and competencies indicated as appropriate for Level 6 on the NFQ. They have been explicitly articulated using the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Generic Awards Standards.

Topic 1 – Introduction to Law and the Sources of Law

Topic 2 - The Historical Development of the Irish Legal System

Topic 3 - The Courts System in Ireland

Topic 4 - The Doctrine of Precedent

Topic 5 - Legislation and Legislative Interpretation

Topic 6- The Constitution and Constitutional Interpretation

Topic 7 - Legal Professionals

Topic 8 - Alternative Dispute Resolution

Topic 9 - Access to Justice

Topic 10 - The In-Camera Rule

Topic 11- Law Reform

Topic 12- Introduction to European Union Law

Topic 13 - Introduction to International Law

In addition to these substantive topics, there will also be ‘skills based’ lectures as follows:

Skill 1 - Academic Writing

Skill 2 - Reading the Law (legislation and case-law)

Skill 3 - Advocacy

Skill 4 - Legal Research and referencing

Skill 5 – Study and Examination skills (as study and notetaking skills are covered in the IT skills module, it could be removed from this module)

Module teaching and learning (including formative assessment) strategy

Teaching and learning methods for this module include delivery of theory through lectures, guest talks and online supports on Moodle, the College virtual learning environment. Learners also attend tutorials, which embody discussions group work sessions and exercises. Formative assessment is provided in the form of interactive exercises such as directed class discussions, moot courts, debate and group exercises with reference to the module curricular and current affairs pertaining to the Irish legal system at the time of instruction.

Classroom assessment and benchmarking techniques are used to encourage learners to develop more agency in terms of their own learning. These include in-class presentations, group work, peer-review exercises and reflective practice. The variety of teaching, learning and assessment techniques reflect an enhanced emphasis on skills acquisition to deepen practical knowledge. Learners are introduced to current industry practice and technology used in the specific area of law to add a further dimension to learning, tracking the actual practice of legal professionals.

Learners undertaking the course via blended learning benefit from varied and additional options for engagement to compensate their reduced attendance on campus. These include webinars,

screencasts (recorded lectures), discussion fora, and increased use of the College's VLE (Virtual Learning Environment), Moodle.

In addition to what has been stated, classroom assessment and benchmarking techniques are deployed to encourage learners to develop more agency in terms of their own learning including in-class presentations, group work, peer-review exercises and reflective practice. The variety of teaching, learning and assessment techniques reflect an enhanced emphasis on skills acquisition to deepen practical knowledge. Finally, the attention of learners is drawn to current industry practice and technology used in the specific area of law to add a further dimension to learning, tracking the actual practice of legal professionals.

Work-based learning and practice-placement

This module does not have a work-based component.

E-learning

Moodle, the College Virtual Learning Environment is used to disseminate notes, advice, and online resources to support the learners. E-learning activities include learner feedback, forums where learners contribute, formative quizzes and video links. The learners will also have access to a number of other online resources through the library such as access to databases and research tools (Westlaw.ie, Westlaw.uk, JustisOne (vLex) and Hein Online) as well as access to online copies of books published from Bloomsbury Online.

Module physical resource requirements

Requirements are for the lecturer to utilise a PC with Microsoft Office, Zoom and access to the internet through which an individual can gain access to the Griffith College student intranet: Moodle. There are no further software requirements for this module. In relation to Microsoft Office the lecturer will require to use PowerPoint or Word to present the information to the learners. Zoom will be required in order to deliver or record lectures when the module is being delivered via the Blended Learning modality (options 1 and 2).

Reading lists and other information resources

Primary reading

- *Byrne, R., McCutcheon, P., Cahillane L. & Roche-Cagney E. (2020) Byrne and McCutcheon on the Irish Legal System. Dublin: Bloomsbury*
- *Holland, J. & Webb, J. (2022) Learning Legal Rules: A Students Guide. Oxford: OUP*
- *Finch, E. & Fafinski, F. (2023) Legal Skills. Oxford: OUP*
- *Kenneally, A. & Tully, J. (2013) The Irish Legal System. Dublin: Clarus Press*
- *Donovan, D. (2010) The Irish Legal System. Dublin: Roundhall*
- *Holland, J. & Webb, J. (2013) Learning Legal Rules: A Students Guide. Oxford: OUP*
- *Schweppe, J., Kennedy, R. & Fahy, E. (2016) How to Think, Write and Cite: Key Skills for Irish Law Students. Dublin: Roundhall*
- *Thornton, L., Ni Mhuirthile, T. & O'Sullivan, C. (2016) Fundamentals of the Irish Legal System. Dublin: Roundhall (publication pending)*
- *Donnelly, L. [et al.] (2011) Oscola Ireland. Legal Citation*

Secondary reading

- Bryan (2013) *Legal Writing in Plain English: A Text with Exercises*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Dernbach, Singleton, Wharton, Ruhtenberg, & Wasson (2021) *A Practical Guide to Legal Writing & Legal Method*. New York: Aspen Publishers
- Doolin (2011) *Principles of Irish Law*. Dublin: Gill and MacMillan
- Finch, E. & Fafinski, F. (2013) *Legal Skills*. Oxford: OUP
- Garner (2001) *Legal Writing in Plain English: A Text with Exercises*. (2001) Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Higgins and Tatham (2015) *Successful Legal Writing*. London: Sweet & Maxwell
- Hunt (2016) *Murdoch & Hunt's Dictionary of Irish Law*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- O'Malley, T. (2001) *Sources of Law: An introduction to Legal Research and Writing*. Dublin: Round Hall Sweet & Maxwell
- Penner (2008) *The Law Student's Dictionary*. Oxford: OUP
- Pope, D. (2015) *Mooting and Advocacy Skills*. London: Sweet & Maxwell
- Smith, A.T.H. (2013) *Glanville Williams: Learning the Law*. London: Sweet & Maxwell

E-Resources

- Bloomsbury Professional Online
- JustisOne – Vlex
- Westlaw.ie
- Westlaw UK
- Heinonline
- Griffith College Library Website

Specifications for module staffing requirements

Lecturers qualified to at least a Level 8 legal qualification (LLB (Honours), preferably with a professional legal qualification and a third level teaching qualification (e.g. Certificate in Education, Learning and Development offered by Griffith College).

Module summative assessment strategy

Teaching and learning methods for this module include delivery of theory through lectures, guest talks and online supports on Moodle, the College virtual learning environment. Learners also attend tutorials, which embody discussions group work sessions and exercises.

Formative assessment is provided in the form of interactive exercises such as directed class discussions, moot courts, debate and group exercises with reference to the module curricular and current affairs pertaining to the Irish legal system at the time of instruction.

Classroom assessment and benchmarking techniques are used to encourage learners to develop more agency in terms of their own learning. These include in-class presentations, group work, peer-review exercises and reflective practice. The variety of teaching, learning and assessment techniques reflect an enhanced emphasis on skills acquisition to deepen practical knowledge. Learners are introduced to current industry practice and technology used in the specific area of law to add a further dimension to learning, tracking the actual practice of legal professionals.

The first assessment in this module consists of case study that the lecturer will set at the start of the semester. This is to assess the learner's knowledge that they have derived from the lectures on this module to this point and their ability to discern what are the most pertinent elements of the case. Learners will be asked to explain why the court came to that decision in their judgment, calling on precedence from that area of law. This assignment is to reflect the scenario that the learners will find themselves in in the future when they are working in a law firm and a task of a similar nature is prescribed to them.

The second assignment which the learners will have is an interactive oral on one of the assignments the learners would have completed on one of the three other modules that the students will have while they study in Stage 1 of their Programme: Criminal Law, Law of Contract and Law of Torts. This will take place after the submission of all assignments to the Law Faculty through Turnitin on Moodle. The learners will address three questions in ten minutes (from a range of potential validated questions, selected for each learner on a random basis who will not have advance notice of the questions. The theme of the questions will relate to research methodologies, usefulness of research sources and personal reflections on the research process.

The examination will consist of both essay and problem style questions. Essay style questions will place emphasis on the demonstration of understanding pertaining to the framework of the Irish Legal System. Problem Style questions will enable learners to apply the principles of law to a factual scenario. The learner will be required to answer three questions from six that are on the exam paper.

The following table indicates the module's learning outcomes' alignment with the assessment used for the module:

No.	Description	MIMLOs	Weighting
1	Case Study (2,000 words)	(i), (ii), (vi), (x)	20%
2	Interactive Oral Assessment	(i), (ii), (vi), (vii), (ix), (x)	30%
3	Exam	(i) – (xii)	50%

Reassessment/Repeat assessment strategy: Griffith College regulations state that learners must pass all component elements of the module to be deemed to have passed the module.

- In the event of a learner failing components of / this module, they will be required to submit a new individual repeat assignment which will be made available on Moodle to learners, and which must be submitted as per faculty instructions.
- In the event of a learner failing the group assessment element of this module, a new individual repeat assignment will be made available on Moodle to learners which must be submitted as per faculty instructions.
- In the event of the learner failing the exam, learners will take the re-sit exam at the next available sitting, details of which will be made available to learners via Moodle.

Sample assessment materials

Please see sample assessment supplementary document.