

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

Course record information

Name and level of final award:	Graduate Diploma in Law
Name and level of intermediate awards:	n/a
Awarding body/institution:	University of Westminster
Teaching Institution:	University of Westminster
Status of awarding body/institution:	Recognised Body
Location of delivery:	Westminster Law School (Central London)
Language of delivery and assessment:	English
Mode, length of study and normal starting month:	One year (full time). September start. Two years (part time evening). September start.
QAA subject benchmarking group(s) :	Law (2015)
Professional statutory or regulatory body:	Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) Bar Standards Board (BSB)
Date of course validation/review:	November 2018
Date of programme specification approval:	December 2018
Valid for cohorts:	2019/20
Course Leader:	Derek Lavery
Course URL: Westminster Course Code: JACS code: UKPASS code:	westminster.ac.uk/courses/undergraduate GDLAW01F (FT), GDLAW01P (PT) M100 (Law by Topic) P004389

Admissions requirements

There are standard minimum [entry requirements](#) for all undergraduate courses. Students are advised to check the standard requirements for the most up-to-date information.

For most courses a decision will be made on the basis of your application form alone. However, for some courses the selection process may include an interview to demonstrate your strengths in addition to any formal entry requirements. More information can be found here: westminster.ac.uk/courses/undergraduate/how-to-apply

The Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL) award constitutes completion of the academic stage of legal education, and so students then are eligible to commence the Legal Practice Course (LPC) or Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC).

In addition to the standard minimum entry requirements, applicants must also meet the following course specific requirements:

1. Hold a non-Qualifying Law Degree from a UK/ Republic of Ireland university; or
2. Hold a degree in a subject other than law from a UK/Republic of Ireland university at or above the minimum standard; or
3. Be an overseas graduate who has studied for a minimum of three years full time; or
4. Hold an academic or vocational qualification(s) that the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA)/ Bar Standards Board (BSB) considers equivalent to a degree.

Furthermore, the Solicitors Regulatory Authority (SRA) and the Bar Standards Board (BSB) specify eligibility requirements for those wishing to undertake the Graduate Diploma in Law for the purpose of qualification as a solicitor or as a barrister. *Students are responsible for ensuring that they meet the eligibility requirements and are advised to consult the current Academic Stage Handbook* which can be accessed from the following websites:

- www.barstandardsboard.org.uk
- www.sra.org.uk

Recognition of Prior Learning

Applicants with prior certificated or experiential learning at the same level of the qualification for which they wish to apply are advised to visit the following page for further information:

- [Academic Regulations Handbook \(Section 4\)](#)

Students may be considered for exemption from a maximum of two of the core modules (maximum 40 credits). Students must support their application with full evidence (with a certified translation into English if relevant) of the syllabus, modes of teaching, assessment and results in any module for which they seek an exemption. [Applications can be found online](#) and must be submitted to the Course Leader no later than the end of Orientation. If a student seeks an exemption from more than 2 modules, they will be registered for individual modules, and will not receive the GDL on completion, but a transcript of their results in the modules taken.

Admissions queries: Margaret Harrington; M.Harrington@westminster.ac.uk

Aims of the course

The Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL) has been part of the University's provision of professional courses since 1977. The Westminster Law School forms part of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities. The School is located in the University's Little Titchfield Street building, which is in the heart of London's West End, only 5 minutes' walk from Oxford Circus.

The GDL is designed to enable students to satisfy the professional requirements of the academic stage of legal education, and to proceed to the vocational stage of legal training, equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to become effective legal practitioners.

The programme of study will provide students with a knowledge and understanding of basic legal principles, the application of those principles to formulation and resolution of legal problems, and an enquiring, logical and critical approach to legal analysis. The course builds upon the academic and professional expertise previously acquired by graduate students and develops the relevant skills needed to demonstrate competence in legal practice.

In compliance with the requirements of the Joint Statement issued in 1999 by the professional bodies, the programme of study covers the seven '*Foundations of Legal Knowledge*': Public Law (including Constitutional Law; Administrative Law and Human Rights); Law of the European Union; Criminal Law; Obligations (including Contract, Restitution and Tort); Property Law; and Equity and the Law of Trusts. In addition, students study aspects of the English Legal System and one other area of legal study, and must demonstrate competence in legal research skills.

What will you be expected to achieve?

Learning outcomes are statements on what successful students have achieved as the result of learning. These are threshold statements of achievement the learning outcomes broadly fall into four categories:

- The overall **knowledge and understanding** you will gain from your course (KU).
- **Graduate attributes** are characteristics that you will have developed during the duration of your course (GA).
- **Professional and personal practice learning outcomes** are specific skills that you will be expected to have gained on successful completion of the course (PPP).
- **Key transferable skills** that you will be expected to have gained on successful completion of the course (KTS).

Course learning outcomes

Upon completion of level 6 you will be able to demonstrate:

- LO1. Explain the sources of law, legal institutions and legal process (KU).
- LO2. Evaluate critically the fundamental doctrines, values, concepts and principles of the Foundation subjects (KU).
- LO3. Explain the inter-relationship between different areas of law by reference to both national and European contexts (KU).
- LO4. Identify the role and relevance of law in broader social, economic and political contexts (GA).
- LO5. Manage information drawn from a range of sources, recognise and rank issues in terms of importance, collate relevant evidence and critically evaluate a range of solutions (PPP).

- LO6. Present legal argument in a manner which is relevant to the task (PPP).
- LO7. Assume responsibility for their own learning, including an ability to work independently and to reflect on the learning achieved through the giving and receiving of feedback (GA).
- LO8. Apply legal knowledge to both real and hypothetical situations; culminating in the provision of reasoned conclusions supported by relevant legal authority (PPP).
- LO9. Identify, plan and execute research in an area of law using both primary and secondary sources of law, accessed through paper sources and electronic databases (PPP).
- LO10. Use and recognise the potential of IT as a research tool and for the production of word-processed documents (KTS).

How will you learn?

The Graduate Diploma in Law programme is made up of seven compulsory core modules and one option module which total 160 credits. All modules are worth 20 credits, and are delivered at level 6.

The seven core modules represent the '*foundations of legal knowledge*', as specified in Schedule 2 of the Joint Statement. For their eighth module, the "Another Area of Law", students can choose between either "Research Project" or "Reflecting on Work Experience". These optional modules enable students to develop key skills, as described below in the course skills strategy.

In addition, academic staff offer extra-curricular activities that provide an important contribution to academic, employability and personal development. The Law School's Law Clinic provides opportunities for extra-curricular activity and a wide range of pro bono work. GDL students have the opportunity to participate in mooting competitions organised within the Law School; coaching by academic staff enables students to enter external competitions in mooting, interviewing, negotiating and mediation skills.

The teaching team will provide a framework for understanding knowledge whilst requiring students to develop their skills of research, critical evaluation and analysis. Students are expected to find, analyse, interpret and apply law, so as to gain an understanding of law that is far more than merely 'learning law'. Reflection on performance is actively promoted, particularly as part of formative assessment. Also, students are allocated a personal academic tutor who will assist with reflection on performance and provide academic guidance throughout the course.

How will you be taught?

English Legal System (ELS) is taught to full time and first year part-time students in 'burst mode' as part of the two-week Orientation Programme. Teaching is by way of a series of lectures interspersed with individual exercises and group work. Part-time students receive an abridged programme of lectures, delivered over two evenings, within their Orientation Programme, but this is supplemented by material in the form of a comprehensive handbook. Although not a separate module, students must take a formative assessment at the end of the ELS teaching programme, as an understanding of the sources of law, legal institutions and legal principles forms part of the knowledge assessed in the foundation subject modules.

For the seven foundation subjects contributing to the Graduate Diploma in Law award, teaching is by a combination of lectures and tutorials. Each subject is taught over eleven teaching weeks within a single semester; full time students receive four and a half hours of lectures per subject over a two-week period, and part-time students receive two hours of lectures per subject per teaching week. The aim of the lectures is to stimulate the interest of the students in each of the subject areas and to provide a sound foundation of knowledge. Lectures help students to focus on the more complex and demanding issues within each topic which they may have difficulty in understanding from their own reading. At the same time, lectures can begin to develop a critical assessment of the relevant jurisprudence and an awareness of the political, economic and social context in which the law is evolving.

The course places an emphasis on small group work, and this is reflected in the delivery of the foundation subject modules. All students, (full and part time) attend a weekly tutorial in each foundation subject, and will attend ten tutorials, including a final revision tutorial per subject during the semester in which the module is delivered. Students are assigned to a tutorial group for the duration of the academic year, each group consisting of around fifteen students. The aim of tutorials is to consolidate the material covered in the lectures, to give students practice in analysing legal problems and in applying the relevant law to offer solutions to those problems, and confidence to articulate their findings and views. In addition, the tutorials afford students the opportunity to develop the skills of research, analysis and problem-solving in relation to a range of factual and legal situations. Tutors encourage all students to participate fully in class so as to develop their oral communication skills, and to take advantage of the tutorial setting to improve their ability to work as a member of a team. In addition to lectures and tutorials, students learn and progress through discussions with and feedback from academic tutors, and guided and independent study.

The Course Skills Strategy

Students will commence the GDL with a variety of transferable skills, such as interpersonal and communication skills, acquired during their previous degree courses. The aim of the GDL course will be to reinforce these skills and refocus them within a legal context as part of the learning outcomes of the course as a whole.

More specifically, the GDL will provide students with the opportunity to develop specific skills, in particular legal research, analysis of case law, and interpretation of legislation.

A lecture and workshop on practical legal research is included as part of the Orientation programme, and several foundation modules have research skills built into their learning. Public Law is delivered in semester 2 and has, as a specific element of assessment, a coursework which requires students to undertake independent legal research and then demonstrate competence in legal writing.

Students may opt to take the 'Research Project' as their additional area of legal study. This Research Project module builds upon the knowledge and skills gained in the Public Law coursework assessment in relation to legal research and legal writing, as well as providing the student with the opportunity to gain knowledge and understanding of another area of law outside the seven foundation subjects. For students who opt to take the Reflecting on Work Experience module, this is assessed an essay which requires the student to accurately describe and critically reflect on their learning of theory and their practice of legal skills gained in the workplace.

The skills of case analysis and interpretation of legislation are introduced to students as part of the ELS course in the orientation period. These skills are further developed and assessed in the foundation subject modules. In semester 1, the Contract Law syllabus introduces students to the detailed analysis of case law, with a formative exercise in case analysis in tutorial, leading to a summative in-class test as a significant element of the module assessment. The Criminal Law syllabus does the same for the skill of statutory interpretation

and its application and assessment in semester 2 for full time students and in semester 1 of Year 2 for part-time students.

How will you be assessed?

GDL assessments take a variety of forms: examinations, coursework essays and in-class tests. The specific forms of assessment within each module have been determined solely by the learning outcomes of that module, details of which are provided in the individual module proformas and module handbooks.

All assessments are marked against a set of criteria set out in the module proforma, module handbook and/or the module folder on the GDL Blackboard site. These explain what the assessment was designed to test and how. Criteria, which have been developed specifically for level 6, are used to determine the grade that the student will receive for that piece of work.

Throughout the course the assessment strategy places a significant emphasis on formative assessment feedback (that is 'assessment for learning'), allowing the student opportunities to reflect on the development of their skills and receive feedback from tutors prior to the submission of summative assessments (that is 'assessment of learning'). Some formative assessments are synoptic in nature in that they are designed to reinforce the student's understanding of elements of law which could form part of several module assessments. This is the case with the formative assessment for ELS, which takes the form of a 1 hour exam at the end of the Orientation programme, and consists of multiple-choice questions and short-answer questions. Knowledge and application of the elements of the ELS syllabus can be assessed in any of the summative module assessments; in addition this assessment provides students with an opportunity to consider and answer multiple-choice questions, this being the main method of assessment of the Tort module.

There is an opportunity for students to sit a mock examination in each foundation subject. Feedback is given to students, and module leaders hold revision sessions to guide the students on examination techniques.

Coursework is designed so that students have the opportunity to demonstrate that they have developed understanding and basic competence in certain legal skills. Students undertake supervised written coursework (an in-class test or 'ICT') as part of the overall assessment in two foundation subject modules, namely Contract Law and Criminal Law. Each ICT lasts 1 hour and assesses both subject knowledge and its application, as well as the skill of case analysis and the interpretation of legislation.

Other compulsory coursework takes the form of a piece of legal writing as an element of the Public Law assessment. This 2000-word essay affords the opportunity for students to demonstrate their ability to conduct legal research using a variety of sources, use the information from these sources, and communicate this information and their conclusions effectively in a piece of legal writing.

Assessment in 'Another Area of Law' depends upon which of the two option modules a student has chosen. The Research Project module is assessed by the submission of a 4,000-word essay on a topic chosen from a set list. This coursework is used to meet the professional requirement that the students study "another area of law" in addition to the seven foundation subjects. Students draw on their experience and feedback from the Public Law coursework in researching, writing and presenting this much longer essay. Titles are published in Semester 1 and full time students must submit their work in Semester 2, on a date before the Easter vacation; part-time students have until the end of the summer vacation between year one and two to submit their work.

Students who choose the Reflecting on Work Experience module are assessed by a 3,000-word essay reflecting on their workplace experience. Students are supported by sample materials and other resources on Blackboard, and a workshop session before the

period of work experience begins.

Further information on rationale, weighting and assessment criteria can be found within the Assessment Regulations in the Course Handbook, and in the module proformas for each of the seven foundation subjects.

Employment and further study opportunities

All University of Westminster courses capitalise on the benefits that London, as a global city and as a major creative, intellectual and technology hub, has to offer for the learning environment and experience of our students.

On completing the Graduate Diploma in Law at the University of Westminster, our students will be able to demonstrate the following five Graduate Attributes, being:

- Critical and creative thinkers
- Literate and effective communicators
- Entrepreneurial
- Global in outlook and engaged in communities
- Social, ethically and environmentally aware

As GDL students are already graduates and may have acquired some or all of these attributes, the curriculum and course outcomes seek to reinforce and refocus these graduate attributes within a legal context.

The University of Westminster is committed to developing employable graduates by ensuring that:

- Career development skills are embedded in all courses;
- Opportunities for part-time work, placements and work-related learning activities are promoted to students;
- Staff continue to widen and strengthen the University's links with employers in all sectors, involving them in curriculum design and encouraging their participation in other aspects of the University's career education and guidance provision; and
- Staff are provided with up-to-date data on labour market trends and employers' requirements which will inform the service delivered to students.

Staff continue to widen and strengthen the University's links with employers in all sectors, involving them in curriculum design and encouraging their participation in other aspects of the University's career education and guidance provision. The Law School has regular events with alumni, for example panel discussions with alumni in the judicial profession and Law employability events.

The Graduate Diploma in Law is viewed as a valuable asset by a large group of employers across a broad range of sectors both legal and non-legal. The GDL provides the necessary qualification for admission to the Legal Practice Course (solicitors) or the Bar Professional Training Course (barristers). It can also be a stepping stone into more advanced legal study, being accepted as a suitable basis for admission to an LLM or other postgraduate qualifications, such as an MA, MSc or M.Phil /PhD. Indeed, the Law School has numerous distinguished alumni within both branches of the legal profession.

Also, the GDL provides a qualification for those who wish to acquire a competence in law but who do not intend to pursue a career as a solicitor or barrister. GDL students also pursue careers in business, accountancy, the Civil Service, education and local government, amongst others.

Course structure

The Graduate Diploma in Law programme is made up of seven compulsory core modules and one option module which total 160 credits. All modules are worth 20 credits, and are delivered at level 6. Course structures can be subject to change each academic year following feedback from a variety of sources.

Credit Level 6				
Module code	Module title	Status	UK credit	ECTS
6GLAW001W	Contract Law	Core	20	10
6GLAW002W	Tort Law	Core	20	10
6GLAW003W	Public Law	Core	20	10
6GLAW004W	Criminal Law	Core	20	10
6GLAW006W	Land Law	Core	20	10
6GLAW005W	Law of the European Union	Core	20	10
6GLAW007W	Equity and Trusts	Core	20	10
6GLAW009W	Research Project	Option	20	10
6GLAW008W	Reflecting on Work Experience	Option	20	10
Award of Graduate Diploma in Law available				

Please note: Not all option modules will necessarily be offered in any one year.

Full-time

At the commencement of the course, students undertake a two-week Orientation Programme which includes a series of lectures and workshops providing an in depth examination of the English Legal System and an introduction to the skill of legal research.

In semester 1, students study three foundation subjects. In the semester 2 students study the remaining four foundation subjects. During semester 1, students must choose their other area of legal study, either a research project or reflective work experience.

Part-time year 1 students

At the commencement of the course, students undertake a two-week Orientation Programme which includes a series of lectures and workshops providing an in depth examination of the English Legal System and an introduction to the skill of legal research.

In semester 1, students study two foundation subjects. In the semester 2 students study one foundation subject, and must choose their other area of legal study, either a research project or reflective work experience. The essay is submitted at the beginning of semester 1 in Year 2.

Module title
English Legal System and Skill of Legal Research
Contract Law
Tort Law
Public Law

Part-time year 2 students continue with the remaining modules

Module title
Criminal Law
Land Law
Law of the European Union
Equity and Trusts
Research Project
Reflecting on Work Experience

Professional Body Accreditation or other external references

Professional statutory or regulatory bodies include the [Solicitors Regulation Authority \(SRA\)](#) and [Bar Standards Board \(BSB\)](#).

External reference points: the Learning Outcomes of the course, as detailed earlier, have been formulated in accordance with the specific QAA subject benchmarks for [Law \(2015\)](#) (www.qaa.ac.uk)

Academic regulations

The current Handbook of Academic Regulations is available at westminster.ac.uk/academic-regulations, **however please note course specific regulations apply to this course.**

How will you be supported in your studies?

Academic Support: Upon arrival, an orientation programme will introduce you to the staff responsible for the course, the campus on which you will be studying, the Library and IT facilities, additional support available and to your College Registry Office. You will be provided with the Course Handbook, which contains detailed information about the course. Each course has a course leader or Director of Studies. All students enrolled on a full-time course and part-time students registered for more than 60 credits a year have a Personal Academic Tutor, who provides advice and guidance on academic matters. The University uses a Virtual Learning Environment called Blackboard where students access their course materials, and can communicate and collaborate with staff and other students.

Learning Support: The Academic Learning Development Centre supports students in developing the skills required for higher education. As well as online resources in Blackboard, students have the opportunity to attend Study Skills workshops and one to one appointments. Learning support includes four libraries, each holding a collection of resources related to the subjects taught at that site. Students can search the entire library collection online through the Library Search service to find and reserve printed books, and access electronic resources (databases, e-journals, e-books). Students can choose to study in the libraries, which have areas for silent and group study, desktop computers, laptops for loan, photocopying and printing services. They can also choose from several computer rooms at each campus where desktop computers are available with the general and specialist software that supports the courses taught at their Faculty. Students can also securely connect their own laptops and mobile devices to the University wireless network.

Support Services:

The University of Westminster Student and Academic Services department provide advice and guidance on accommodation, financial and legal matters, personal counselling, health and disability issues, careers, specialist advice for international students and the chaplaincy providing multi-faith guidance. Further information on the advice available to students can be found at westminster.ac.uk/student-advice. The University of Westminster Students' Union also provides a range of facilities to support students during their time at the University. Further information on UWSU can be found at westminster.ac.uk/students-union.

How do we ensure the quality of our courses and continuous improvement?

The course was initially approved by a University Validation Panel in 2007. The panel included internal peers from the University, academic(s) from another university and a representative from industry. This helps to ensure the comparability of the course to those offered in other universities and the relevance to employers.

The course is also monitored each year by the College to ensure it is running effectively and that issues which might affect the student experience have been appropriately addressed. Staff will consider evidence about the course, including the evidence of student surveys, student

progression and achievement and reports from external examiners, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the course.

A Course revalidation takes place periodically to ensure that the curriculum is up-to-date and that the skills gained on the course continue to be relevant to employers. Students meet with revalidation panels to provide feedback on their experiences. Student feedback from previous years is also part of the evidence used to assess how the course has been running.

How do we act on student feedback?

Student feedback is important to the University and student views are taken seriously. Student feedback is gathered in a variety of ways.

- Through student engagement activities at Course/Module level, students have the opportunity to express their voice in the running of their course. Student representatives are elected to expressly represent the views of their peers. The University and the Students' Union work together to provide a full induction to the role of the student representatives.
- There are also School Staff Student Exchange meetings that enable wider discussions across the School. Student representatives are also represented on key College and University committees.
- All students are invited to complete a questionnaire before the end of each module. The feedback from this will inform the module leader on the effectiveness of the module and highlight areas that could be enhanced.
- Final year Undergraduate students will be asked to complete the National Student Survey which helps to inform the national university league tables.

Updated December 2018

Please note: This programme specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the course and the learning outcomes that a student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. This specification should be read in conjunction with the Course Handbook provided to students and Module Handbooks, which provide more detailed information on the specific learning outcomes, content, teaching, learning and assessment methods for each module.

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