



Australian
National
University

Undergraduate / Postgraduate Law Dissertation Guidelines

ANU Law School

1. Program Requirements and Enrolment

- 1.1. To be eligible to enrol into the Undergraduate or Postgraduate Law Dissertation students must meet the minimum program requirements.
 - Undergraduate Law Dissertation
 - ◆ LLB (Hons): a distinction (70%) average across all completed law courses and be in the ultimate or penultimate semester of your degree.
 - Postgraduate Law Dissertation
 - ◆ Juris Doctor: a distinction (70%) average across 24 units of study in the JD, including the completion of at least two 8000 level courses.
 - ◆ Master of Laws: a distinction (70%) average across 24 units.
 - ◆ Master of International Law and Diplomacy: a distinction (70%) average across 24 units.
 - ◆ Master of Financial Management and Law (MFIML): a distinction (70%) average across 24 units.
- 1.2. A student who does not meet the minimum program requirements may seek an exemption from the Course Convenor of the program. The student must present compelling and exceptional reasons for why they should be permitted to enrol in the course. The decision to permit enrolment into either the Undergraduate or Postgraduate Law Dissertation to a student who does not meet the minimum program requirements is at the discretion of the Course Convenor.
- 1.3. Students interested in enrolling in the appropriate Law Dissertation must prepare a research topic or topics and consult with at least one potential supervisor in the semester prior to their planned enrolment. Students must consult the 'List of Potential Supervisors' available on either the Undergraduate or Postgraduate Law Dissertation webpage before approaching potential supervisors. Students should have completed background reading and identified areas of research interest and research topics prior to discussions with potential supervisors. Where staff are absent from the University such discussion may need to take place by email.
- 1.4. In the semester prior to the one in which the student elects to undertake the dissertation, the student must prepare a research paper outline which includes:
 - the proposed research topic or topics and its boundaries.
 - the key issues to be addressed.
 - the methodology to be adopted.
 - a draft timeline for drafting the paper; and
 - a preliminary literature review and a bibliography.
- 1.5. Students are required to nominate one academic staff member as a potential supervisor for the course. Subject to academic workload, students may be reallocated to a different supervisor and will need to be prepared to rework the chosen topic if required.
- 1.6. The outline must demonstrate that the topic or topics are sufficiently developed and refined to ensure the paper can be successfully completed within the semester. The outline should be a between 1500 - 2000 words in length.

- 1.7. If empirical research is to be conducted, students, in consultation with potential supervisors, must determine if ethics approval is required. Students are responsible for gaining ethics approval. In practice, ethics clearance should be obtained at least six to eight weeks before the Undergraduate or Postgraduate Law Dissertation is scheduled to commence for the student. Students and potential supervisors should carefully consider the feasibility of completing the research within the timeframe of the scheduled Undergraduate or Postgraduate Law Dissertation.
- 1.8. Students having difficulty finding supervisors should contact the Course Convenor of the Undergraduate or Postgraduate Law Dissertation for advice and assistance. Students will not be permitted to undertake the Undergraduate or Postgraduate Law Dissertation if no member of staff is prepared to supervise their paper. Supervisors must be current staff or emeriti of the ANU College of Law. External supervision will not be approved.
- 1.9. Students must obtain a confirmation email from a potential supervisor/s indicating that: a) the supervisor has read and approved the research paper outline, and b) the supervisor is prepared to supervise the student in that semester. The student must submit an online application before the advertised closing date on the SRP and GRU websites.
- 1.10. The Course Convenor, in consultation with the Head of School will determine the supervisor based on supervisor availability and workload.
- 1.11. If a student's application is approved the student will be notified via their student email address and sent a permission code to enrol in the course for the approved semester. If a student's application is not approved the student will be notified via their student email address.

2. Supervision

- 2.1. When supervising a student, the supervisor should arrange regular meetings (fortnightly is recommended) to discuss the student's progress. Within reasonable limits, the supervisor should be available to students for discussing problems encountered in the preparation of the research paper. Supervisors should be prepared to provide feedback on:
 - important primary and secondary sources relevant to the topic.
 - matters that should be emphasised in the research paper.
 - the effectiveness of the structure, arguments, clarity, and expression; and
 - any other matters relevant to fostering sound academic legal research and writing practices.
- 2.2. The supervisor is not required to undertake independent research upon the topic simply for the purpose of assisting the student. The supervisor must not co- author the research paper. Other members of staff should not read or comment upon drafts.
- 2.3. The supervisor should provide oral and written feedback on any working drafts or parts thereof in the context of the regular meetings. Students must provide written work in a timely manner before meetings to receive appropriate feedback. Subject to paragraph

2.4 below, the supervisor must read and comment upon the final draft of the student's research paper and return comments to the student by Friday in week 12 of the semester.

- 2.4. The supervisor will provide feedback within a reasonable time (which might be several days for an advanced draft). The supervisor should tell students when they can expect feedback on drafts, again, this will primarily be during their regular meetings.
- 2.5. Beyond scheduling the regular meetings and meeting the supervision requirements outlined above, it is not the function of a supervisor to actively seek out students for the purpose of assisting them in the preparation of their research paper for the Undergraduate or Postgraduate Law Dissertation. The supervision relationship is one of mutual responsibility, with the onus on the student to consult with and provide drafts to the supervisor.
- 2.6. The quality of the research paper is the student's responsibility, and the supervisor must not in any way undertake the writing of any part of the research paper.
- 2.7. It is essential that the student and supervisor do not actively discuss the potential or desired grade for the research paper.
- 2.8. A student who is dissatisfied with the supervision arrangements should consult with the Course Convenor of the Undergraduate or Postgraduate Law Dissertation at an early stage.

3. Examination

- 3.1. One examiner (separate to the supervisor) for each dissertation will be appointed by the Convenor on the advice of the Head of School prior to the approval of the application. The identity of the examiner will remain confidential and will only be disclosed to the student upon release of the examiner's report(s).
- 3.2. The supervisor is the member of staff who has overseen the preparation of the research paper. The examiner will be a current member of staff or emeritus of the ANU College of Law with expertise in the topic of the dissertation. In exceptional circumstances, where no member of the staff other than the supervisor is competent to examine the dissertation, an outside examiner may be appointed at the directive of the Head of School.
- 3.3. The examiner must read the dissertation independently and form a preliminary view about an appropriate mark or mark range. The examiner should consult with the supervisor. The supervisor is encouraged to provide a summary of any issues or mitigating factors to the examiner.
- 3.4. The examiner will prepare the final report and submit it to the Course Convenor and the supervisor with a recommended mark.

- 3.5. The report should provide a clear view of the quality of the work and be sufficiently detailed to enable the Course Convenor to use it as a basis for comparing the recommended mark with marks recommended for other research papers.
- 3.6. When preparing the report, the examiner should bear in mind that reports are made available to students. The report should be carefully edited by the examiner before emailing to the Course Convenor. The feedback should be constructive and supportive. It is not appropriate to refer by name or identifying information to another student's paper.
- 3.7. If the examiner's report does not satisfactorily address the assessment criteria or requires revision, the Course Convenor will return the report to the examiner for editing. The Course Convenor may correct minor typographical errors.
- 3.8. Co-ordination and moderation of the marking of the Undergraduate or Postgraduate Law Dissertation will be the responsibility of the Course Convenor together with such members of academic staff as are appointed by the Head of School to assist the Course Convenor with moderation and finalisation of marks. The sole purpose of moderation should be to achieve uniform standards of examining within the course.
- 3.9. Where a difference arises between the examiners of an individual paper and the Course Convenor (as assisted under 3.8) concerning the final mark for the paper, the Course Convenor will consult with the individual paper examiners to determine whether an agreed mark may be arrived at and make the final decision.
- 3.10. The result for each paper will be determined by the Undergraduate or Postgraduate Law Dissertation Course Convenor.
- 3.11. After the results of the Undergraduate or Postgraduate Law Dissertation have been published, students will be emailed a copy of their final report.
- 3.12. For Undergraduate or Postgraduate Law Dissertation papers that receive a high distinction of 90+, a copy is printed and bound at the College's expense. The copy is then given to the Law Library.
- 3.13. For the purposes of the ANU Assessment Rule, the Course Convenor together with members of academic staff appointed under 3.8 will be the examiners for Undergraduate or Postgraduate Law Dissertation, and the Course Convenor will be the Chair of Examiners for the course.