Australian National University

Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) - Mentoring Program

Welcome to ANU Law, and welcome to PAL's Guide to Law School!

What is PAL?

PAL is an award-winning student-led program aimed to develop key legal writing, research, and study skills essential to succeeding at law school. We welcome both undergraduate and post graduate students across all years and courses of study. In our experience, the program is particularly beneficial for students in the early years of their degree.

PAL sessions are not about revising or applying the specific content that you're learning in class. Instead, it is an opportunity for you to develop self-directed learning strategies and to practice the core skills that you will need to succeed not only this semester, but for the rest of your law degree and future career. We cover weekly topics on everything you need to know to succeed including how to stay organised, key tips for legal writing, referencing, HIRAC and exam strategies. PAL is a safe and non-judgmental space where you can come and ask questions that you may not feel comfortable asking in class, and a key opportunity to learn from older students who have faced many of the same challenges you may be experiencing.

PAL runs multiple sessions each week – to find these session times and locations, please visit our Canvas site or social media pages. If you have any questions, you are always welcome to email us at pal.law@anu.edu.au.

What is PAL's Guide to Law School?

In addition to our in person and online sessions, we develop a range of online resources to assist law students in succeeding with their studies. This includes our new Guide to Law School which is a fantastic easy-to-reference guide to all the key skills PAL assists you in developing. Whilst it doesn't cover all the tips and content we teach during PAL sessions, it will give you the basics on studying law at ANU, where to access help, and the most important skills for your law studies (from managing lectures and readings, approaching research tasks, and preparing for exams).

We have flagged at the start of each section where the information will be most useful – for example, we encourage you to read and use the information on semester organisation in O-Week or in Week 1 of each semester.

It's important to know that this Guide does not include everything PAL teaches: our sessions build on this information, providing excellent examples and personal experiences from

our knowledgeable mentors. Further, they provide a casual and welcoming space for you to meet other law students and ask questions from those who can share their experiences.

With that, we hope this Guide is helpful and look forward to seeing you in PAL sessions in the future!

Best wishes,
The PAL team

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Part 1: An Overview of ANU Law

Chapter 1: Spaces in the law school you should be aware of

The ANU Law buildings can be difficult to navigate at times. These are some spaces you should be aware of and utilise!

CLGP College Student and Education Support Team

The friendly College Student and Education Support team staffs a counter which students can approach to have their administrative questions answered, or to speak with a staff member about their educational needs.

The Enquiries desk is located on the ground floor of the Law Buildings and is accessible Monday – Friday between 10am-4pm. Alternatively, you can email or phone the team to have your questions answered.

For more information about the Enquiries team and how they can support you, please visit College Student and Education Support | ANU Law School.

ANU Law Library

The Law Library provides a range of physical and online legal resources for ANU staff and students, in addition to many study spaces and computer labs across the library's two floors. There are several private group study rooms which you can book online, and multiple printers which ANU students and staff can access. The law librarians generally run tours of the law library during O-Week.

The Law Library staff can help you with using specific legal databases. Classes on finding legal materials and using databases are delivered to all first and second year students as part of their courses. This information is also covered during PAL sessions.
For more information, including specific Law Library accessibility information, please visit Law Library | Library.

The LSS Common Room

The LSS Common Room is located in the ground floor of the ANU Law School, and is open to all law students during business hours. It has kitchen facilities (including a fridge, microwave, bins and sinks), couches, tables, chairs and a foosball table. You can use this space to study or socialise.

Chapter 2: Where to go for help with your studies or university life

Law is a challenging field of study, and everybody needs help sometimes. If you are struggling, please reach out for assistance, whether that be academic, administrative, mental health, mentoring/career advice, or financial support.

Academic support

PAL is a student-run program aimed at developing key legal writing, research, and study skills essential to success at law school. We run several sessions each week where you can attend to learn, practice key skills, and ask questions of our experienced student mentors. Please note that PAL sessions are not about revising the content you've learnt in class, and our mentors are unable to answer questions about course content.

ANU Accessibility (previously Access and Inclusion) supports students within the ANU community whose participation in academic studies is impacted by physical and learning disabilities, mental health conditions, chronic medical conditions, and short-term illnesses/conditions. They also support carers and elite athletes. If you require additional support from the Accessibility team, you can contact them to develop an Education Access Plan (EAP) which outlines the adjustments ANU will make to support students to thrive in their academic life. For more information and to register for an EAP, please visit Accessibility | Australian National University.

Academic Skills can support you by offering a range of one-on-one meetings to provide individualised feedback on your work. You can book an appointment or visit one of their drop-in sessions. Please note that this service is not specialised to law students, although law students have benefited from visiting Academic Skills learning advisers. For more information, please visit Academic Skills | Australian National University.

If you are having difficulties meeting your assessment deadlines, you can apply for reasonable adjustments through **ANU's Assessment Extension and Deferment Options**. If approved, you may be allowed additional time to complete your assessment, be granted a time adjustment for exams, or have extenuating circumstances considered during your marking. Relevant difficulties which extensions may be approved for include medical, hardship, compassionate, elite, duties, disaster, employment related reasons, or cultural or religious commitments. For more information, please visit Assessment Extension and Deferment Options | ANU Law School.

Administrative support
The **CLGP College Student and Education Support Team** is available to assist all ANU Law students with any administrative questions they may have. This includes questions about enrolment, degree requirements or management, extensions or exam deferment options, and other support services. For more information, please visit College Student and Education Support | ANU Law School or visit the Law Enquiries desk.
Mental health support

ANU Counselling is a free, short-term, confidential and non-diagnostic mental health support service available to all currently enrolled ANU students located in Australia. Students *don't* need a referral or Mental Health Treatment Plan from a General Practitioner to register and attend appointments. For more information or to book an appointment, please visit ANU Counselling | Australian National University.

The **ANU Wellbeing and Support Line** is a phone service for all current students who are experiencing situational stress, emotional difficulties and mental health concerns. The service can also be used to provide debriefing support and assistance for student leaders. The ANU Wellbeing and Support Line works with ANU Counselling but is operational 24 hours a day. You do not have to have an appointment to access this service. For more information, or to access this service please call 1300 050 327 or visit Student Safety and Wellbeing | Australian National University.

The **ANU Student Safety and Wellbeing Team** offers free and confidential support for students who have been impacted by an incident which influenced their student experience while at ANU. Case Managers have backgrounds in health, social work, counselling and human services and provide information to students and coordinate support and help. Incidents can include sexual assault or harassment, mental health, financial concerns, relationship issues, conflict management, transitioning into university, isolation and loneliness, and navigating ANU. For more information, please visit Student Safety and Wellbeing | Australian National University.

Support for international/EASL students

The **International Student Legal Orientation** (ISLO) consists of a series of visits to various key sites and landmarks in Canberra, and compulsory on-campus sessions to introduce international and inbound exchange students to Australian institutions that are relevant to the study of law. All eligible students will be enrolled into LAWS1001/LAWS6001: International Student Legal Orientation. Please see International Student Legal Orientation (ISLO): Semester One 2026 | ANU Law School for more information.

The Academic Skills team runs regular **English Conversation Groups** for international students or students who speak English as a second language to meet new people and practice speaking English. These sessions are fun and relaxed groups of ANU students, and are guided by an experienced peer facilitator. Students who have English as their first language also volunteer their time with the groups, so that everyone gets a chance to have conversations with native English speakers. For more information, please visit English conversation groups | Australian National University.

Mentoring or career support

The **Law MomentuM Mentoring Program** is available to all students at the ANU Law School. It is designed to assist law students gaining insight beyond their law studies. ANU students are paired with mentors, which are mostly ANU Alumni, to learn about different career pathways and options. This program is a great opportunity to enhance leadership and communication skills, accelerate professional development, connect with industry peers and expand professional networks. Applications are required – to find out more information, please visit ANU Law MomentuM Mentoring Program | ANU Law School.

The **LSS International Student Mentoring Program** is available to all first-year international students studying at the ANU Law School, and is designed to assist international students in their transition into law school. Mentors are students who have successfully adjusted to law school and can give mentees advice on studying law at the ANU, moving to a new country, and adjusting to Australia's cultural, social and academic differences. To find out more information, please visit Mentoring Program | ANU Law Students' Society.

The **Set4ANU Mentoring Program** is available to all first year ANU students. Mentors are friendly later-year ANU students who can give you tips and tricks for making the most of your time at ANU. Set4ANU also runs events and activities where you can meet other new students and find out more about how to be a successful ANU student. Applications are required – to find out more information, please visit Set4ANU Mentoring | Australian National University.

The **ANU Careers & Employability** team is also available to help you maximise your potential and make a successful transition from education to work. They offer appointments, guidance, and run events to support students and new graduates in building their employability skills including career planning, job applications and decision making. For more information, please visit ANU Careers & Employability | Australian National University.

Financial supports
ANU provides a range of financial supports to students. This includes grants for accommodation, extra-curricular activities, graduation ceremonies, meals and grocery vouchers, medical bills and travel related to medical treatments, textbooks and/or study essentials among others. Applications are required – to find out more information, please visit Financial Supports | ANU Law School.

Chapter 3: Law School 101

Your time at ANU Law is full of a range of different opportunities including elective courses, specialisations, internships and clinics, exchange, extracurriculars and more! There are a wide range of opportunities available to you – this is the time to make the most of them.
This information is useful to know at the beginning of your studies, but will likely be most helpful in your second, third and final years. There are pre-requisites and applications required to engage with many of these opportunities, so make sure you are aware of various requirements.

Every fortnight, you will receive an **Academic Update** email from the College Student and Education Support team. This email is the primary channel for important information, including upcoming opportunities, application processes, key deadlines, important dates, course information, internships, events, and other matters relevant to your studies. Students are strongly encouraged to read each Academic Update carefully, as critical information is often time-sensitive. Missing an Academic Update may result in missed opportunities or deadlines. All Academic Updates are archived and can be accessed at any time via the ANU Law School website at Academic Update | ANU Law School.

Degree management
All law programs have a clear structure – check your programs and courses page to see exactly what you need to study including how many courses you need to take, identify compulsory and potential elective courses on offer, and plan when you should take these courses. Remember to check that your programs and courses page has your commencement year set correctly, as sometimes course requirements can vary from year to year.

You can find a recommended degree plan at the end of the programs and courses page. This tells you when you should take different compulsory courses, and indicates where you have space to take electives. However, this is only a *suggested* degree plan – there can be a variety of reasons why you might deviate from this:

- If you are going on exchange, you will have to re-schedule any compulsory courses you would have taken during the semester you are on exchange for. Most students will apply to have the courses they complete on exchange recognised as elective courses.

- Electives you are interested in may only run at certain times, or every second year. You may therefore want to take an elective course earlier than you would if you followed the suggested degree plan.
- You may wish to underload (i.e. take less than four courses within a semester). This is very normal – most people do it at some point!

However you choose to approach your degree, you need to have a clear and consistent way of keeping track of what courses you have completed, and which you still need to take. Some of our mentors use Excel or a to-do list to keep track of this information.

If you do vary the recommended study plans for your degree or would like confirmation that your future enrolments meet graduation requirements, download the 'Proposed Study Plan 2026-2030' at [Program Management - Bachelor of Laws (Honours) | ANU Law School](). Once downloaded, follow the instructions in the document and email the completed form to [enquiries.clgp@anu.edu.au]() for verification. The College Student and Education Support team will review your proposed plan and respond.

Specialisations
The ANU Law School provides students with the opportunity within their program to focus on a particular area of law by completing a specialisation. This requires 24 units of courses from different specialisation lists. This is not compulsory, and you can change your specialisations once you have designated them.

There are a range of different specialisations you can undertake. For Bachelor of Laws (Honours) students, you can specialise in corporate and commercial law; international and comparative law; law reform, environmental and social justice; and public law. Masters of Laws and Juris Doctor students can specialise in a wider range of areas – to see the full list, visit the below website.

It's important to note that you *must* add your specialisation to your ANUHub account for it to appear on your transcript. There are specific timeframes where you can do this. For more information (including those timeframes), please visit [Specialisations | ANU Law School]().
Internships, Clinics and Practicums

As an ANU Law student you can apply for internships, clinics and practicums which can be recognised to count as a course. You will need to apply for these opportunities, and the eligibility criteria is different for each one. PAL recommends that you start applying as soon as you become eligible.

ANU Law offers a limited range of college-arranged internships with a variety of Commonwealth and ACT Government departments, statutory bodies, community legal centres and other non-government organisations. You can apply to these opportunities, or arrange your own internship with a suitable organisation and professional supervisor and apply for your self-arranged internship to be recognised. For more information about internships, please visit [Law internships | ANU Law School]().

In addition to an internship, you are able to undertake a clinical course. These courses are facilitated by the ANU, and allow you to engage with real clients, tangible issues and hard

deadlines in a real-world environment. Placements may be undertaken in a community agency, community legal centre or non-government organisation where you are provided with the opportunity to explore law reform and social justice issues relevant to that field of practice. It is an opportunity to gain insight into how the industry works, develop professional skills and gain valuable work experience. For more information, including how to apply for clinical courses, please visit Clinical Courses | ANU Law School.

ANU Law also runs a small range of practicum courses which again provide you an opportunity to gain professional skills whilst dealing with real world problems. These courses are delivered on-campus, guided by an industry professional. Students will be presented with scenarios and must apply real-life integrated learning skills to find a solution in a highly engaging simulation. For more information including application deadlines and requirements, please visit Practicum Courses | ANU Law School.

It's important to know that these courses can be very time consuming. Some of our mentors recommend underloading when you are undertaking an internship, clinic or practicum to avoid becoming burnt out.

Competitions
There are a range of competitions which you can participate in whilst you are at ANU. This includes internal competitions organised by the LSS, and external competitions which the LSS and ANU supports students to attend. You can get course credit for some competitions, but know that they can be very time intensive too!

If you are keen in knowing more, PAL encourages you to follow the LSS and consider going to events by the Women* Mentoring and Advocacy Group for guidance.
To find out about more about Competitions, please visit Mooting and Student Competitions | ANU Law School and Competitions | ANU Law Students' Society.

Exchange
You also have the opportunity to study in another country as part of your law degree. Going on exchange is an incredible experience – our PAL mentors highly recommend you consider it!
If you are considering applying for exchange, make sure you plan early. The earliest you can go is in the first semester of your third year, but you should consider how going on exchange will impact your degree progress. For example, many law students go on exchange in the first semester of their fourth years. This means that they 'miss' doing Property at the recommended time – to make sure that they have completed the pre-requisites for Equity when they return, many students going on exchange at this time will take Property 'early' in semester one of their third year.

If you are considering going on exchange, you can contact ANU Global Programs for more information (see ANU Global Exchange Program | ANU Law School). We also recommend talking with the College Student and Education Support team to identify how you will restructure your degree to ensure you meet all of the requirements!
PAL really encourages you to make the most of the opportunities you have available whilst you are at ANU Law. We highly encourage you to attend PAL sessions to learn more about these opportunities, and ask our mentors questions about their experiences with these different programs!

Chapter 4: Finding Work as a Law Student

Whilst you are at law school, it's important that you are preparing yourself for your future career. This means that you should be working towards gaining job experience in your later years. Our tips regarding how to find work as a law student will be helpful throughout your degree.

Finding jobs as a law student

Most students find that identifying jobs they are suitable for can be the most difficult part of finding work. However, there is a misconception that only legal experience is beneficial – in reality, all jobs are valuable and will help you to build skills that will make you more employable. Having a diverse range of experience can also give you a better idea about what you like and dislike in a workplace too!

All of our PAL mentors, and the majority of law students, enter the workforce in non-legal jobs. Some options for non-legal jobs include retail, hospitality, research assistants and student leaders, ambassadors and mentors within the ANU. These non-legal jobs still build transferable skills which will be important when you come to finding a legal job: communication, responsibility, initiative, teamworking, organisation, administration and ability to work under pressure are essential capabilities to develop.

In our experience, most law students don't get a 'legal' job until their fourth or fifth year. At that point in your studies, you have a stronger grasp of the law and key legal skills which you are still developing during first and second year. Legal jobs for students generally include paralegal, research assistant, legal assistant, intern and policy officer positions. If you are wanting to get a start with legal work experience but are finding it difficult to gain relevant experience, consider gaining volunteer legal experience through the ANU LRSJ projects, clinics, internships or practicums. You can also complete virtual work experience programs online through GradConnection, Forage and Leo Cussen simulations which you can add to your resume.

When it comes to finding work, the majority of positions will be advertised on job application databases like Indeed, Seek, Jora, APS Jobs and LinkedIn. It can be helpful to keep an eye on ANU Career Central for other listings, and attend careers fairs to gain an understanding of the job market and legal sectors. You can also 'cold email' firms by sending your resume and a cover letter to their Human Resources representatives and asking for it to be kept on file and considered for upcoming opportunities.

Setting expectations

One of the difficult aspects of working as a law student is balancing work hours and commitments with your studies. The question of how much you should be working is very dependent upon your financial situation – some students have different amounts that they *need* to work. In our experience, most students schedule several shifts or routinely work 2-3 days per week. It is very common to take time off during busy periods and exams, but make sure you notify your manager well in advance. Make sure you are also checking in with yourself to see if your work and study commitments feel manageable – if you are starting to feel overwhelmed or burnt out on a regular basis, this may be an indication that you need to cut back on something.

Writing job applications

Writing job applications are notoriously difficult. They tend to take the form of a resume and a cover letter, and will be structured the same for most positions you apply to. However, remember that the content should be tailored for each position – if you are applying to a research position at a barristers' chambers, you will want to emphasise different things than if you were applying to a paralegal position in a community law centre.

Your resume should generally be no more than two pages. You should include a framing introduction of who you are, your key qualities and strengths, and your current educational pursuits. Your work experience should outline your role titles, position dates and a list of responsibilities, and emphasise any achievements you made. In the educational section, you can include your GPA, any high marks that are relevant to the job, and any prizes or awards you have received. Further, you should list a several referees (people who know you in a professional or academic capacity who can speak to your strengths and skills). Make sure that you have confirmed they are ok with being listed as your referee first!

When drafting your cover letter, you should tailor it to the place you are applying for. Doing some brief research on the company can help you articulate why you want to work there – their values may align with yours, or the work they do might be particularly interesting. Whilst we know that many students have begun using AI to draft their cover letters, PAL suggests you approach using AI here cautiously – it is often quite evident which application has been written with AI, and it will likely leave a bad impression on the employer.

Interviews

Making a good impression at the interview stage is essential. If you have been offered an interview, this is generally confirmation that you have the strengths and experience which the employer is looking for. The interview is normally an opportunity for you to ask questions, for the interviewers to learn more about you and for them to determine whether you fit the 'office vibe'.

First impressions are important: make sure you are dressed well, have arrived early, and have prepared. Know that different workplaces can have very different interview styles (i.e. some can be more conversational or more structured) -- doing some research ahead of time can help you identify whether the workplace is known for adopting particular strategies in their interviews or not.

There are some common questions which you can prepare for:

- The broad 'tell us about yourself' or 'why do you want this job' questions: having some key points prepared can be helpful to respond to these – try to avoid scripting your answers too much, as you do want to appear authentic.
- Behavioural questions which generally start with 'tell us about a time you…': make sure you use the STAR method (situation, task, action, result) and have a set of examples prepared for you to draw on.
- Questions about anything on your resume or cover letter: make sure you know your application inside out, and are prepared to elaborate on anything!
- 'Do you have any questions for us?' is very common to hear: remember to have 1-2 of your own questions prepared to ask the interviewers!

After the interview, try avoiding overthinking it: it is very easy to end up thinking about what you could have done differently, but this most likely won't help your stress levels. Sometimes it may be worthwhile to send a thank you note to your interviewers – PAL encourages you to consider the context and whether a follow-up would be appreciated or not.

Overall, know that job applications are tricky and take a while to get used to. We highly encourage you to attend PAL sessions to learn more about finding and applying for jobs. We provide excellent examples and tips in a welcoming space where you can meet other law students and ask our experienced mentors questions.

Part 2: Key Skills for Succeeding
Chapter 1: Semester Organisation

Before you begin your semester, it is important to get organised. This section will help guide you through different steps you can take before or during Week 1 to help you prepare for the semester.

Planning out your time

Having a clear plan will help you balance competing priorities and demands, whilst ensuring that you have time to take breaks. Each person's plan will look different, but PAL recommends having a broad semester plan and a more detailed weekly plan or schedule to ensure you are staying on top of all your responsibilities.

Your weekly plan may look like a timetable, where you schedule time to attend tutorials, lectures and designate time to complete readings or prepare for class. This can be helpful to ensure that you are keeping up with course content, and have clear limits set to ensure you don't overwork yourself and burn out. Additionally, you should include information like work shifts, appointments or administrative tasks. Your timetable should also reflect a healthy work/life balance: you should include breaks, time to cook meals, spend time with friends and to sleep. Your timetable should reflect what works for you, so plan your tasks around when you will have the most energy and be most efficient (e.g. if you're a morning person, plan more study for the mornings so you can have a relaxing evening).

You can use a range of programs or designs to make your weekly planner. You can start by building on the timetable generated in MyTimetable, or use apps like Google Calendar, Outlook, or Notion. Some students also enjoy using a physical weekly planner or diary.

Planning out assessments

As you create your broader semester plan, you should focus on including assessment due dates and 'mini due dates' to ensure you stay on top of your assignments. Your assessment information can be accessed in the Class Summary, and will give you specific dates and times when your assessments are due. Make sure you record this clearly and carefully in your broader semester plan.

Some of our mentors also like to set reminders or mini deadlines to remind them of upcoming assessments and ensure they stay on track. This could be a set date to start research for a paper, to have completed a draft, or to have finished your exam summary.

Make sure that your semester plan is somewhere you will look at regularly, or set a periodic time to review it to ensure you don't miss any due dates.

As you complete your broader semester plan, you can also start to identify what your busier or quieter periods will be based on when your assessments are due. This will allow you to take proactive steps to reduce your stress in busier periods (e.g. by starting tasks earlier), and give you guidance on when you should say yes or no to commitments.

Your Week 1 to-do list

There are a range of things you can do in Week 1 to prepare well for the semester. These include:

- Deciding how you will take and file/store your notes
- (If relevant) apply for an Education Access Plan from ANU Accessibility
- Check out MyTimetable and ensure you have allocated yourself into tutorials
- Draft a regular weekly plan and a broader semester plan
- Organise or buy your textbooks
- Think about your expectations for yourself (remember law is hard, so be flexible with your expectations!)

We highly encourage you to attend PAL sessions to learn more about Semester Organisation. We provide excellent examples and tips in a welcoming space where you can meet other law students and ask our experienced mentors questions.

Chapter 2: Lectures, Tutorials, Readings (and Note-Taking)

Taking notes is a key skill which law school will develop further. This information will be most useful in the first few weeks of your law school career, or many be helpful to refer back to if you would like to try a new approach to note-taking.

Throughout your studies, you will be taking notes from three main sources: lectures, tutorials, and readings.

You should always take notes with a purpose. This will likely be to understand the material, ensure you are paying attention, practice key skills, remember information, or to help with your assessments.

Everyone's notes look different. You can try handwriting or typing your notes: typing can be quicker but could lead to distractions, whilst handwriting will be more concise and is proven to be more effective for learning. You should also consider which program works best for you – our mentors use Google Docs, Word, One Note, Notion and a variety of other programs. Remember that you can change your approach if it is not working, and you may have a slightly different approach for every course.

Lectures

Lectures are long presentations where your professor teaches you the relevant week's content. You may have a one, two or three hour long lecture depending on the course. Generally, lectures are not very interactive: you have an opportunity to ask questions, and your lecturer may ask you questions, but the majority of time will be your lecturer speaking.

Lectures are the foundation of your understanding of the course content. You can choose to either go to lectures in person or watch the recordings online afterwards. Wherever possible, we recommend attending lectures in person: whilst they are recorded, there is a risk that the recording software may fail. If the recording does fail, your convenor is not required to provide you with another copy of the lecture. Consider the below points in deciding which method will work best for you (remembering you can try both!):

In person	Recordings
• Being in the room with others can be more engaging; • Easier to work into your routine and stay on top of the course content; • You may be more focused because other people are in the room; • You can get an understanding of how everyone else is finding the content (this can be reassuring if you're feeling confused); • You don't have to rely on a recording; • It's easier to ask questions.	• Easier to work around work commitments or timetable clashes; • You can utilise Echo360's features including a generated transcript, or speeding up or slowing down the recording; • You can pause the lecture to think about points, write notes, or attempt practice problems; • Some of our mentors have found it easier to fall behind on watching lecture content if you rely on recordings. If you are choosing this method, ensure you have a strategy to avoid this e.g. watching the recording on the same day as the lecture was held.

Your lecture notes will likely be your longest and most detailed notes. You should include any information about cases, applying the law, and tips from the lecturer. However, make sure that you are not transcribing everything the lecturer says: your notes should work for you and be in your own words where possible.

It is important to have a system for structuring the information. Try using these ideas:

- Headings: If the lecturer gives you an outline or contents slide at the start of the lecture, use the topics they give as your headings;
- Use subheadings: e.g. write the case name as a subheading and then list the information about it beneath;
- Consider a colour-coding system: you could have a set colour for cases, put things you lecturer has emphasised in bold or all caps, or highlight your notes where you may have missed something.
- Avoid repetition: if you have already recorded the information in your reading notes or in lecture notes for a previous week, refer back to those weeks rather than duplicating your notes.
- Have a system for recording your questions: this could be on a separate document, using bold or leaving comments on your document.

Tutorials
Tutorials are smaller group discussions which are generally based on a problem question. They are an excellent opportunity for you to practice your legal reasoning, check your understanding

of the course content, receive verbal feedback, and learn from your peers. Bear in mind that some courses will have a tutorial participation mark!

You should try to prepare for tutorials to ensure you get the most out of them. The level of preparation you do will depend on how much time you have. Here are some ideas on how you can prepare:

- If you have 15 minutes or less, read the tutorial question and highlight key parts.
- If you have 15-30 minutes, read the tutorial question and dot-point out issues, relevant law and how it may apply.
- If you have 30+ minutes, read the question and try to fully scaffold out a response.

Remember that tutorials are the most vital opportunity to practice for exams: PAL highly encourages you to prepare what you can. It is important to go to tutorials even where you haven't prepared – they are not recorded, and having some notes (even if you don't understand them now) is always more useful than having none!

During tutorials, your notes will likely be structured in a HIRAC format based on your tutor's suggested answer to the problem question. Where you have prepared, you may wish to write your tutorial notes in a different colour or add to your existing notes during the tutorial. Specifically, you should focus on the below things in your notes:

- Key rules and cases: pay attention to the facts the tutor thinks are important and the cases they refer to frequently;
- How to apply cases: what arguments are raised, including counterarguments to your ideas.

Participation is also an important part of tutorials. You should aim to participate where you can – this could be through suggesting approaches to problem questions based on your preparation or asking questions. Don't stress about getting things wrong, tutorials are the best place to make mistakes as you won't lose marks for them, and will likely remember the correct answer! Remember that there is nothing wrong with saying 'I don't know' if you are called on, or just having a go and getting it wrong – we all will at some stage.

After a tutorial, you may find it useful to read back through the notes you took, identify any areas you might want to review or any remaining questions you might have.

Ideally, you should read the tutorial question, highlight key parts, identify the relevant rules and legal principles, and dot point out some ideas about how these rules would apply to the problem question.

Readings
You should expect to be assigned a significant number of readings each week. Know that many students (including our mentors) find it difficult to 'keep up' with these readings and find understanding them challenging (especially at the start of their degrees). Try to use some of PAL's tips to make readings a bit easier!

In law school, you may be assigned a variety of readings. This will primarily be cases, textbook paragraphs or chapters, and journal articles. Your note taking approach may be different for each.

Cases

Generally, students find case readings most difficult. To make it a bit easier, try to go into the judgment with a vague idea of what the case is about: this will make it easier to identify the important information. Check whether your textbook has a short summary of the case, or find one online (Westlaw, LexisNexis, Aus Pub Law, or law firm websites may be helpful for this). Remember that you should still read the case judgments where you can – case summaries may be incorrect. Being able to read and understand case law is an important skill, but it will take time to develop and will be difficult at the start!

Your lecturer may tell you where to find your assigned cases (e.g. on a set textbook page or on Canvas). If they haven't, you can find cases on various legal databases including Westlaw, LexisNexis, Jade, and Austlii. Consult the law subject guide ([Welcome - Law - LibGuides at The Australian National University](#)) to assist you with this. Westlaw, LexisNexis and Jade all provide indications of the most cited paragraphs within individual cases which may be helpful in gaining an overview of important parts of the judgment.

For cases, you may wish to use a case table like the one below. This will allow you to identify the relevant facts, legal issue, rule, application and conclusion, and is structured in a clear and concise way. This will be particularly helpful for HIRACs. Avoid large quotes which you don't understand – paraphrasing is often best and more helpful in exams.

Case Name
Facts
Procedural History (if relevant)
Arguments and Application
Conclusion/Holding

Textbooks

The ANU Law School Course Search website provides you with the required textbooks well in advance of the course start date. Make sure you always read this early, as some textbooks can be difficult to source!

Your lecturer may assign textbook readings that give you a broad overview of the development of the law, or includes specific summaries or extracts from key cases. You may find this a helpful introduction to the course content, or useful for revision.
For textbook readings, most students have short notes that aim to fill gaps in their lecture notes. You should avoid repeating information that may already be in your lecture notes or case notes.

Journal articles

Some courses may assign journal articles to illustrate academic debates or new research on certain topics. However, they are not particularly common in law courses. Where you are

assigned a journal article to read, focus on the abstract, introduction, and conclusion. Keep your notes short unless the article is directly tied to an assessment. A one paragraph summary will likely be sufficient!

PAL's Tips
Generally, you should aim to complete your readings before the lecture. This means that you can check your understanding during the lecture, will help you improve your analytical skills, and allows you to ask questions to clarify anything you haven't understood. However, many students find understanding their readings easier after the lecture as they have a functional understanding of the content. Overall, you should aim to finish your readings when you can – it is never too late to do them!

Readings can be time consuming, especially where you are finding them difficult to understand. To avoid spending too long on your readings, you can:

- Have time-based goals to avoid getting stuck (e.g. I will spend 3 hours on my torts readings this week).
- Check how long your readings are before you start and develop a strategy.
- Consider forming a study group to discuss the readings with your peers.
- Be critical about what you are getting out of the readings – if they are not aiding your learning, utilise your time wisely and focus on revision which does benefit your understanding.
- Consider what helps you to focus the most (e.g. try the pomodoro technique, turning off your music, studying with others).

We highly encourage you to attend PAL sessions to learn more about lectures, tutorials, readings and note-taking. We provide excellent examples and tips in a welcoming space where you can meet other law students and ask our experienced mentors questions.

Chapter 3: HIRAC

HIRAC is a writing style which you will be required to use for the majority of your law courses. It is hard (and a little illogical!) to understand and use at first, but like the other skills you are developing it will become easier over time.
This information gives you a brief outline of what HIRAC is, how to plan and write a HIRAC, and the key differences between take-home and exam HIRACs.

What is HIRAC?
HIRAC is an acronym for the structure we use to respond to problem questions in law. It stands for Heading, Issue, Rule, Analysis, and Conclusion.
However, it is also more than that: it is a way of thinking and structing your writing, and follows the same process that lawyers use when they write advice for a client or make submissions to a Judge.

When you are given a problem question in law school, it will typically involve a set of facts (the fact scenario) which reads like a story. There will also be at least one question at the end, which will provide the legal issue you're advising the relevant clients on.
We will go through each of the sections in more detail below.

Headings/issues

Each of the paragraphs in your HIRAC response should relate to a particular issue. First, you will need to identify each of the issues in the fact scenario (see our advice on issue spotting below!).

Issues are the different legal questions that would need to be determined if this case came before a court. Sometimes the question will identify the main issue, and leave it for you to decide what sub-issues you will need to advise on (e.g. you may be asked to advise whether Bob acted negligently, in which case you would have several sub-issues including determining whether there was a duty of care, a breach, and relevant causation). In some instances, you may have to determine both the main and sub-issues within a problem question.

Within a HIRAC response, you will need to clearly structure your response – headings are an easy way to do this! It will signpost to the reader which issues you are talking about where, and help the marker identify that you have addressed the relevant issues.

Most students combine their headings and issues to use their word count more efficiently. This is the recommended approach! You should phrase your headings as questions, like 'Is Tom guilty of an offence under section 1C of the Act?' or 'Did Bob owe Sam a duty of care?'. Remember that your headings should be straight to the point – there's not many marks to gain for perfectly worded headings!

Rule statements

The rule statement should be the first sentence in each paragraph within your HIRAC response. This is where you state the relevant legal principle which applies in the situation.
This could be a statute (legislation) or a rule from a case. It may be straightforward, or include several elements which you have to prove (e.g. to prove theft you need to identify (1) the property was removed, (2) the property belonged to someone else, (3) the owner did not consent, (4) you intended to permanently deprive the owner of their property and (5) that you acted dishonestly).

Some students often make the mistake of only engaging with cases in their rule statements. As we discuss below, you should only be referring to the authority within your rule statement – make sure you are leaving cases available to analogise and distinguish from in your application section!

Application

This is where you apply the above rule to the facts in your problem question. It is the most important part of your HIRAC, as it is the space where the most marks are available, and a clear opportunity for you to set your response aside from others. For these reasons, it should be the largest section in each of your HIRAC paragraphs.

In this section, you need to make a clear argument about how (and why) the law should be applied in a particular way. This will likely be difficult, considering the problem question is designed to test your understanding of the law, and the law is not always crystal clear so you will likely be engaging with complexities!

A key thing you should be doing in the application section is analogising to and distinguishing from other cases you have learnt in the course. This follows the development of jurisprudence – the law should be applied in a consistent way, so if two cases have similar facts and issues, they should have similar conclusions. As you are reading the problem question, you should be identifying facts which are similar to or different from those in the cases you've read. Where you can identify these, clearly refer back to the case in your application section – for example, 'in *Donoghue v Stevenson,* the Court held that the manufacturer owed Ms Donoghue a duty of care given she purchased and consumed their product. A court would likely apply the same reasoning to find that Bob owes Steve a duty of care as he is also a manufacturer of the product that Steve bought.'

The application section of your HIRAC response is also an opportunity to raise any counter arguments. These identify the flaws in your argument (or the strengths in the opposing side's arguments) and seek to pre-emptively respond to these issues. Know that you should be raising counter-arguments intentionally, where they are appropriate – you don't need to raise them for every issue. Make sure that when you raise counter-arguments, you actually dismiss them and emphasise why your argument is stronger.

Know that the application section of HIRAC in particular is quite difficult – we highly recommend coming to a PAL session to practice these skills and see some example answers!

Conclusion
Your conclusion should be short and simple – it does not need to summarise the arguments you have previously made like an essay would, but only needs to directly respond to the issue you identified in your heading. For example, if your heading was 'did Sam intend to enter into a contract', your conclusion might be 'a court would likely find that Sam intended to enter into a contract'. It may sound odd at first, but you should be aiming for a one sentence conclusion here!

Students often worry about reaching the 'right' conclusion through their HIRAC analysis. Rest assured that there are generally no right or wrong answers – as long as you are making a strong argument which responds to the facts and is supported by relevant case law, your answer will be rewarded. Just make sure you have got a conclusion and aren't sitting on the fence! Despite this, PAL recommends that you use qualifiers or tentative language like 'may', 'could', or 'would likely' in stating your conclusions. After all, you are only making an argument in support of one party – you're not the judge!

Planning a HIRAC response
As with all other aspects of law school, taking the time to plan your HIRAC response will help you in the long run. It's important to think through how you will approach your arguments and analysis before you start doing it!

Issue-spotting
The first part of planning a HIRAC response is identifying each of the issues presented by the fact scenario. This could be something broad like 'is Dave guilty of an offence?', or something more narrow that forms part of a larger HIRAC like 'did Dave intend to harm Lara?'. When you are issue spotting, you will need to read the fact scenario multiple times. On your first reading, you should only be trying to understand what is happening – sometimes these fact

scenarios can be hard to understand! On a second reading, you can start highlighting key facts that stand out, annotating relevant cases that seem similar to the facts, and labelling key elements of the law.

Once you have identified a list of issues you need to advise on, consider what issues are contentious and which are not. Non-contentious issues are ones where the conclusion is quite obvious – they can be things like the jurisdiction, or whether a certain piece of law was in force at the time. You won't need to spend much time on these, as there's not many arguments you can reasonably make.

Contentious issues, however, are ones where reasonable people could debate how the law applies to the facts and reach different conclusions. These are matters where you will need to run full HIRAC analyses, and spend more time on!

Planning your rule statements
From here, you can plan out your rule statements. Many students develop pre-written rule statements as they prepare for assessments or write their notes – these are short statements of relevant legislation or cases, which you can copy directly into your HIRAC response. If you choose to adopt this strategy, ensure you are abiding by your academic integrity obligations – these should be rule statements which you have prepared individually, in your own words.

Planning your arguments and conclusion
During your planning time, it's important to identify what arguments you intend to make in the application section. Here are some things to consider:

- Are you advising a specific party? If so, what would their ideal outcome be? What arguments would you need to make to achieve this?
- Does the fact pattern remind you of any cases from the course? Could you analogise to or distinguish from any of these?
- What counter-arguments would the other party raise? Can you incorporate this into your response to pre-emptively respond to them?

Make sure that you have decided which way you will conclude during your planning time – this will save you a lot of stress and ensure that you are making a strong argument!

How to write a HIRAC
As above, your HIRAC response should follow the standard HIRAC structure – Heading/Issue, Rule, Application and then Conclusion.

In the past, we have seen some students misunderstand how HIRAC is structured where there are multiple issues. Each paragraph in your response should be its own individual HIRAC structure – don't have separate sections that group all of the issues in the response all together!

It's also important to emphasise that you shouldn't be writing an essay style introduction or conclusion for your HIRAC assessments – this isn't necessary, and will eat into your word count!

HIRAC is a very specific style of writing, and is really difficult to understand at first. We highly recommend that you attend a PAL session to see examples and work through problem questions with our mentor's guidance.

Key differences between take-home and exam HIRAC
There are a few different contexts in which you will have HIRAC assessments. For most standard law courses you will have a mid-semester take-home HIRAC assessment where you may have a week or two to complete it, and you will have a HIRAC style exam where you will have 2 or 3 hours to respond to an unseen problem question. These different contexts can change how you approach and write a HIRAC response.

For a take-home HIRAC response, you have more time to plan your response, consult your notes and rewatch lectures or reread cases if you want to. However, under exam conditions, you don't have the time to do these things. Despite this, many of our mentors prefer doing exam HIRACs – they are an opportunity to show off what you have learnt, and you have less time to overthink!

The key thing to know is that for exam HIRACs, markers have slightly lower expectations. Whilst you need to have a logical argument, you don't have to have perfectly polished language – what you say is more important than how you say it!

Here are a few of the structural and content differences between take-home and exam HIRACs:

Structural differences	Content differences
• Whilst you need to have a clear structure for both styles of HIRACs, it can be more important in exams. Your marker doesn't have a lot of time to read your response, and neither do you – having clear, numbered headings from the start will help you both! • You can consider using a short paragraph that sets out each of the different elements you need to prove to make out an offence at the beginning of your exam response. This can serve as a checklist for your response and ensure you have dealt with each issue! • For exam HIRACs, consider highlighting the headings to clearly designate them.	• In exams, your language will be much more relaxed due to the time pressure. You only write as much as you need to in order to get your point across – there's no extra time to waffle! • You should also use shorter sentences in exams. A conclusion can be as simple as 'likely yes', and headings can be very short, like 'duty of care?' or 'breach?'. • You will also want to use abbreviations and informal citations in exams – you are not expected to follow the AGLC rules for citations like you need to in take-home HIRACs! Make sure that you follow your convenor's guidance on short-hand referencing, but normally you only need to refer to the case's short name (e.g. *Donoghue*).

We highly encourage you to attend PAL sessions to learn more about HIRAC. We provide excellent examples and tips in a welcoming space where you can meet other law students and ask our experienced mentors questions.

Chapter 4: Legal Research

Legal research is an important skill to develop. This information will be helpful to give you an overview of how to approach, plan, and complete a research task (like an essay). You may find this most helpful when you are beginning an assessment like a research essay.

Planning legal research
Breaking down the question

When you are given a research task, it will normally be in the form of a broad topic or a research question. To start, you will need to break down this topic or research question to identify how you will approach the response.

Start by identifying what the question is asking you to do: normally, this will be identifying the action word. Some examples are provided in the box below:

- Compare and contrast: provide at least two examples or case studies illustrating the topic you're discussing, and analyse key similarities and differences.
- Discuss: identify different sides of the argument, argue for which you believe is right and critique the one you believe is wrong.
- Make recommendations: identify a problem, what causes it, and have suggestions on how to address the issue. You must be able to justify these recommendations.
- Why or why not: identify a side of the argument you agree with, and justify it.
- Should (included in a hypothetical question): make an argument about why something is or is not better than the present situation.

Remember that, regardless of the language used in the question, you will <u>always</u> need an overarching argument with evidence supporting it.

In this process, you should also be identifying key terms and legal concepts included in the topic/question. If you don't understand them, check a legal encyclopedia, your lecture and/or reading notes.

Planning your research

From this point, you can move on to planning your research. Whilst the process of planning beyond breaking down the question can seem frustrating, it will save you time in the long run! Start by brainstorming your ideas: what do you already know about the topic, potential arguments or examples? You may find it helpful to consider sub-questions which you would need to answer to answer your overarching question.
For example, if your question is 'Should Australia introduce a Bill of Rights?' you may have sub-questions like:

- What is the current approach to protecting constitutional rights in Australia? Is it adequate?
- What is a bill of rights, and what would it look like?
- How would a bill of rights improve the status quo?
- What are the possible negative consequences of a bill of rights?

Now, you can consider the sorts of sources you will need to answer the questions you have identified. Are journal articles, books, legislation or cases going to be most helpful? Remember that you will most likely wish to use a combination of different types of sources.

Preliminary research

As part of planning your research, conducting preliminary research may be helpful to give you an overview of the specific arguments and examples relevant to your particular topic. This will help you narrow the topic and argument you want to make slightly (which will make your response more specific and direct).

You can often start your preliminary research with the sources the convenor has made available to you (e.g. a recommended reading list, or suggested further readings). Otherwise, doing a quick google search or a search of relevant legal encyclopedias may provide you with relevant information.

Whilst you are conducting preliminary research, remember that you are only aiming to get an overview of the topic, rather than a deep understanding. You should therefore only skim read sources you believe will be relevant – you can normally identify this by skim reading the abstract, introduction and conclusion. Normally, preliminary research does not include cases or legislation unless your essay question directly mentions them. Make sure that you're not reading too widely during the preliminary research stage – this could lead to confusion. Once you have a good idea about what specific topic you will be talking about (and a rough idea of the argument you will be making), you are ready to progress to the research stage.

Conducting legal research

There are four key aspects to consider when approaching legal research: finding sources, what search tips will be useful, how to keep track of your research and preventing over researching.

Finding sources

Once you have an idea of the specific argument you want to make, and what sources you need to make it, you can begin searching for them. For legal research, this generally involves identifying what specific databases would contain the information you need.

As a starting point, you should look at the ANU Law Library subject guide: this will provide you links to access each database, and outline what purposes each database is helpful for. You can access it here: Welcome - Law - LibGuides at The Australian National University. Bear in mind that there are also subject guides for more specific areas of law (like international law or human rights) which may be helpful depending on the course. You can access the full list of law subject guides here: Law | Library.

PAL suggests using our below table to identify what databases are going to be most helpful depending on the source you are trying to find.

What you're looking for	Where to find it	Why this database
Cases	Westlaw or LexisNexis	Between these two databases, you be able to find almost all reported decisions of Australian courts. They allow you to search for cases based on key terms,

		the legislation and other cases they cite which can be particularly helpful.
Legislation	Federal or state registers of legislation	These are the most accurate sources of legislation. You can also find the legislative history at the end of each individual Act, which is helpful if you need to identify when certain amendments were made. Make sure that you are referring to the in
	Westlaw and LexisNexis	force version of each Act, and not the historical version! Additionally, Westlaw and LexisNexis include some sections of legislation which is frequently referenced in cases. They can provide commentary and/or guidance on interpreting the statute which can be helpful for more complex legislation. Otherwise, they will also link you to cases which consider the legislation which can be helpful if your research requires examples of how legislation has been interpreted.
Secondary sources (journal articles, encyclopedias, books)	Westlaw and LexisNexis	Both of these databases also include peer-reviewed, legal-specific journal articles. You can use our search tips to refine your search to ensure it returns the most relevant sources.
	ANU Supersearch	This is the database you have access to through the ANU Library. PAL finds it is more helpful for certain types of legal research, especially where you are looking for journal articles rather than statute or case law. However, remember that it is not a law-specific database, and will not return all the sources you have access to!
	HeinOnline	HeinOnline is a specific legal database which includes many journal articles, book chapters, and case notes. Many of our mentors find that (whether directly or indirectly) a significant number of sources they 0use when completing research comes from HeinOnline!

| Parliamentary materials (helpful for finding sources regarding legislative purposes or legislative history) | ParlInfo & Federal or state registers of legislation | Whilst most students don't refer to parliamentary materials frequently during their research, these sources can be helpful for particular assignments where identifying legislative purposes or history is relevant.

ParlInfo and various federal and state registers of legislation will provide you with access to explanatory memorandum, second reading speeches, and Hansard records. |

Remember, there are many other research strategies and databases that might be helpful – we recommend attending PAL's legal research and writing sessions to hear these additional tips!

Search tips

Whilst you can use legal databases like Google (i.e. by searching key terms like 'Bill of Rights in Australia'), they will be most helpful if you use search tips to refine your search results. You can do this in a number of ways, including using Boolean terms like AND, "", OR, and *, or by using synonyms in your search to find more sources.

Some examples of using this include:

- Court OR judiciary OR judicial OR case law OR legal*
- Criminal liability OR criminal responsibility OR culpability OR accountability

This will provide you with sources that mention at least one of these specific words.

- "Causation" AND "intervening act" OR "novus actus interveniens" AND "traffic accident"

This will identify specific sources which discuss cases where a traffic accident has occurred and is discussed as an intervening act in determining causation in a torts case.

- "Legal Profession (Barristers) Rules ACT" AND "return* brief"

This will identify sources which refer to the specific legislation you're researching (i.e. the ACT Bar rules), in the context of the topic you're researching (e.g. where barristers can return their briefs).

Keeping track of your research

Whilst conducting the research is important, ensuring you have a record of your notes and opinions is just as important. When you begin your research, ensure you have a clear and organised system for your research notes.

Our PAL mentors have several different approaches to research notes. This can include tables, notes organised by each different source, and notes organised by topic and argument. We encourage you to attend a PAL session to see some of our mentor's examples!

However you choose to record your reading notes, make sure you are keeping full records of your sources so you can reference them later. This includes the citation (or enough information to find it again), and specific page numbers for pinpoint citations. Trust us – it saves a lot of time to do this as you go rather than needing to go back through your search history when it comes to doing your citations!

Preventing over-researching
Many of our mentors find that over-researching is a key problem to avoid. When there are so many sources of information and directions you could take your assignment in, researching for longer than what you need to can become a form of procrastinating moving to the writing stage. However, being aware of the risk of over-researching can help you avoid falling into it and rushing the writing stage.

So, how do you know when you've researched enough? Normally, it will be when you are re-reading the same information over and over again, where you're not finding any new ideas or arguments, or where the sources you're reading are consistently not as related to your research.

Sometimes it can just be better to move on to planning your essay response and begin writing rather than continue researching if you think you might be approaching the point of over researching. Remember, you can always come back to this stage if you haven't done enough research!

We highly encourage you to attend PAL sessions to learn more about Legal Research. We provide excellent examples and tips in a welcoming space where you can meet other law students and ask our experienced mentors questions.

Chapter 5: Legal Writing
This information will be most useful when you are ready to start planning, drafting and editing your assessment response. Whilst these tips are targeted towards assignments like research essays, they may also be helpful for other law assignments including HIRAC style assessments and case briefs.

Planning your response
As with your research, taking the time to plan your response is an important step of legal writing. One of the key criteria your marker will be focusing on is structure and how your argument is presented. Spending time planning your response can help you with these areas. You can plan your essay in a number of different ways. Most of our mentors start by identifying key themes and arguments they want to draw on (which come from their research notes), and shape it into a thesis statement. You may find printing and annotating your research notes, making a mind map or doing a brain dump helpful with this process. Taking the opportunity to organise your research notes into each of these themes/arguments may also be useful.

Your next step should be creating a plan. Consider the following points:

- How many paragraphs should focus on each argument/theme? What is each paragraph going to be aimed at achieving?
- How will your arguments link? Do you need to prove one argument first before you discuss your next?
- How many words should you spend on each argument?

Remember that the more detailed your plan is, the easier it will be to write. You may want to plan each paragraph in greater detail when you get to it, but you will still need an overarching plan that supports your thesis from the beginning. It can also be helpful to compare your plan to the rubric and advice from the convenor to ensure you are responding to the marking criteria.

Essay structure
Most law essays will follow the same general structure outlined below. However, there may be instances where you need to tweak certain things – discuss with your convenor
where you're uncertain!

Essay section	Tips
Introduction	- This should generally be approximately 10% of your word count. It could be longer if you have definitions/context that you need to outline first though. - This sets up your overarching thesis and argument. It should be 1-3 sentences long, and be straight to the point. You do not need to spend significant time outlining why your essay question is relevant or important – instead use these words on your argument. - It should be as clear as possible. Consider starting with 'this essay argues' and outlining each of your sub-arguments: 'In Part 1 I argue… Part 2 outlines…' - You need to establish the scope of your essay and justify any narrowing of the scope at this point.
Body paragraphs	- Remember you will have multiple body paragraphs – one for each new idea or argument. - These paragraphs can be adapted as relevant, but most students find a TEEL or STEEL approach helpful: start with a topic sentence outlining your argument, then provide relevant evidence, evaluate or explain it in the context of your argument, and providing a linking statement back to your overarching thesis. - Try to keep all your body paragraphs to relatively uniform lengths. - Ensure you are integrating counterarguments into your body paragraphs. When you introduce a counterargument, you should evaluate it and argue why it is not applicable or strong. This should serve to strengthen your overall argument, and highlight how you are interacting with different perspectives on your topic.
Conclusion	The conclusion is your opportunity to strongly and clearly reiterate your argument. You should be using the same language that you have

> used in your introduction and your essay – don't suddenly change or vary your argument from before!
> - If you have the words to do so, it can be helpful to point out further research which should be done within the topic. This should be done sparingly, and generally only if there are implications for your argument: e.g. your essay has argued that mediation conferences can help resolve matters sooner, therefore reducing a court's case load. Your conclusion could suggest that such conferences are made mandatory before certain matters proceed to trial.

Whilst law essays tend to be similar to humanities or arts essays, there are a few unique stylistic features to be aware of:

- Signposting: Clearly identifying what different sections of your essay are about can help your marker follow your argument. For example, 'The previous section discussed X. In this section, I discuss Y'.
- Headings: Using headings and sub-headings in your essay will help break it into sections, and clearly identify to your marker which part of your argument you are discussing. Remember that your headings shouldn't be very long – they should be the first place you go to if you need to cut words!
- Clear and concise writing: Keep in mind that your marker has limited time with your response, so writing as clearly and concisely as possible will tend to be rewarded. Make sure you're aware of using active voice instead of passive voice, and avoid overly complicated sentences or any Latin phrases.

Editing

There can be several purposes for editing: cutting down words, improving your language, checking you have an argument that makes sense, and ensuring you are meeting the marking criteria. You should be editing every assignment you submit – whether you have 1-2 days to edit with fresh eyes, or 30 minutes to pick up on typos or obvious errors.

If you have time, try to review your essay multiple times, focusing on a different goal each time. PAL's specific tips for various concerns are below:

Concern	Tips
Cutting words	• Check the word count for each specific section – is there a section which uses lots of words, but is not adding lots of value? • Start by focusing on the introduction, conclusion and explanations of concepts. • Shorten headings and sub-headings • If you're really over the word count, consider cutting your weakest argument.
Checking you are making an argument	• Write a sentence for each paragraph summarising the argument and how it is furthering your overall argument. This will help you identify where you are only discussing ideas, rather than making a clear argument.

	• Highlight the parts of your essay that are your own analysis or argument, as opposed to just summarising or quoting other people's ideas.
Improving clarity and conciseness	• Use the Turnitin Practice site – this can help with demonstrating where you may have accidently quoted instead of paraphrasing.
	• Attend an Academic Skills Peer Writer Drop-In session to have someone else read your work!
	• Consider giving your assignment to a non-law friend or family member.
	• Change the format of your essay to help you pick out mistakes – get Word to read it aloud to you, print a copy and annotate it with a pen, or change the colour and font of the text.

Remember that legal writing is another skill that takes time to develop. We highly encourage you to attend PAL sessions to learn more about Legal Writing. We provide excellent examples and tips in a welcoming space where you can meet other law students and ask our experienced mentors questions.

Chapter 6: Feedback

This information can be particularly helpful after you have received a grade, especially if you are disappointed and want to find ways to improve.

Throughout law school, you will complete many assignments for many different courses. At some point in their studies, all students will receive a mark which they're disappointed with. This is the nature of law school, especially in your first year – you're learning new skills, practicing them in a new setting, often for the first time. You're going to make mistakes, however it's important to focus on where you can improve.

Put things into perspective

When you have received a grade which you're not happy with, it can be hard to accept it. PAL recommends trying to approach this situation with grace and treating every assessment as what it is: a learning experience.

It can help to put marks into perspective. One assignment, even where it's worth 40-50% of your course grade, does not make or break your degree. You will have space to improve on other assessments within the course. This is also only one mark in one course of the 32-40 courses which you will complete over the course of your degree.

If you are unhappy with your marks, ensure that you are looking after your mental health. Give yourself some time to process it and to have a break. Spend time with your friends, continue your hobbies, and remember that grades do not define your worth. Come to a PAL session to hear more from our mentors about what they do after receiving a disappointing mark! Know that you are under no obligation to share your mark with anyone. The ANU will never disclose your marks to others, including your family, so it is your choice whether you wish to share them.

Going through your feedback

When you receive a grade, you will also receive feedback from your marker. You may find that in law school you receive less feedback than what you are used to, especially if you have just finished high school. Considering this, it's important to spend time going through your feedback and identifying strategies to improve.

Spend time gathering your individual feedback that was specific to your assignment. Download the feedback from Turnitin, look at any comments that have been left throughout the document. Some markers use a highlighted rubric or voice note, so make sure to look out for these. If your convenor has released general feedback, make sure you have read this as well. Once you have gathered and read all your feedback, try dividing it into assessment-specific feedback (i.e. feedback that may not apply to assessments in other courses) and general feedback (i.e. feedback that relates to key skills or writing style). Some examples of this are below:

Assessment-specific feedback	General feedback
• Points of law specific to the course, especially where that content will not be assessed again • Lack of consideration of specific sources, authors or perspectives	• Writing style or structure (e.g. HIRAC structure, depth of analysis, tone) • Citation mistakes • Grammar or language mistakes

Whilst it's important to take on all feedback, PAL encourages you to focus on general feedback. Assessment-specific feedback, like a misunderstanding of what constitutes an offer in contract law, will not necessarily be something you encounter again, especially if the final exam does not cover content which the mid-semester assessment tested. However, you will use the same strategies and skills that general feedback relates to for future assessments. These are the areas where you should focus on.

Making a plan for improvement

We recommend using your general feedback to create a plan for improvement. This plan looks different for different people: it could be a checklist of reminders for your next assignment, a few specific and achievable goals for next semester, or strategies which you can implement. Come to one of our PAL sessions on feedback to learn about how our different mentors make plans for improvement! Remember that our PAL sessions are a great place to ask questions and learn about how to improve based on your feedback.

Appeals

If you believe that your feedback is unclear or there has been a mistake with your grade, you can consider seeking clarification or appealing your mark.

When you seek clarification, you are not trying to get your mark changed: you are instead seeking more information to understand your feedback and improve in the future. You may want to do this where you have received limited feedback, the feedback doesn't explain why a particular mark was given, or you disagree with the feedback. To seek clarification, ask the convenor over email or in person during their office hours. Make sure that you are specific about what you want clarification on – you can include quotes or screenshots if that makes it easier for you to explain. Importantly, if the convenor has instructed you not to contact them within 24

hours of grades being released, make sure you follow these instructions. Know that some convenors (especially those for compulsory courses with large cohorts) may not have the time to reply to all requests for clarification. For more guidance about whether you should seek clarification, come ask one of our friendly mentors during a PAL session.

If you wish to appeal your mark, you must follow the formal ANU Law appeals policy, available here [Assessment Review and Appeals | ANU Law School](). For guidance on how to navigate this process, feel free to contact the College Student and Education Support team or ask one of our PAL mentors during a session.

We highly encourage you to attend PAL sessions to learn more about learning from feedback. We provide excellent examples and tips in a welcoming space where you can meet other law students and ask our experienced mentors questions.

Chapter 7: Catching Up
This information can be particularly helpful if you have fallen behind with class content, especially around the assessment period or in the lead up to exams.
First, know that all law students fall behind at some point. Law school is demanding, and finding the time to complete readings or watch lectures can be particularly difficult when you're busy, especially around exam season. The important thing to remember is that you can come back from this point with the below tips.

Taking stock
Before jumping into the 'catching up' part of catching up, make sure you begin with a plan. Start by making a list of things that you need to do: this may include assignments, lectures, readings, or tutorial practice questions. Know that what you actually need to do frequently depends on the course: for some courses, certain readings may not be essential to completing the assessments.

Prioritising
From this point, you should revise your list to be in priority-order. Tasks like assessments (particularly ones which are due soon and have high weightings) should be at the top of your list. After this, watching lectures and attending tutorials – know that you should keep attending tutorials even if you haven't caught up with lectures, as having some tutorial notes (even ones you don't understand yet) is always better than having no tutorial notes. Finally, readings – when you are behind, consider whether completing your readings is crucial to your understanding. Where possible, prioritise doing case readings over textbook readings.

Creating a plan
Then, you can plan out your time. Consider making a weekly or a monthly plan to help you catch up, with your highest priority items being completed first. Make sure that this plan is realistic – you shouldn't expect yourself to be highly productive for 6 weeks straight, as this will result in burn out. Ensure you have factored in breaks, and have pre-arranged things that you can now (e.g. changing your work shifts to fit in exams, or meal prepping for upcoming busy times). For examples of how our mentors create their catch up plans, come to one of our PAL sessions focusing on catching up.

Remember that when you're catching up, it's important to not just try and speed through all the content without actually internalising or learning it. Whilst watching lectures on 2x speed might help you catch up quicker, it won't be helpful in the long run if you don't actually understand the content. Taking the time to ensure that you understand key concepts and content will save you from having to watch lectures twice (trust us!).

We highly encourage you to attend PAL sessions to learn more about catching up. We provide excellent examples and tips in a welcoming space where you can meet other law students and ask our experienced mentors questions.

Chapter 8: AGLC

This information gives you a brief overview of how to use the Australian Guide to Legal Citation (AGLC), which is required for your assessments at ANU Law. This will be most helpful as you prepare written assignments.

The AGLC is a footnote referencing system produced by the Melbourne University Law Review Association and provides Australia with a uniform system of legal citation. It is designed for academics, legal professionals, law students, and the judiciary. You are required to use it for your studies at ANU Law.

These guidelines are published in a physical or electronic book. Know that learning the AGLC system at first is difficult and overwhelming, and you will likely make some mistakes at the start. However, following our tips and taking your time with your referencing will build the key skills you will need to use the AGLC confidently.

PAL believes it is better to understand the process of using the AGLC than to try and memorise every single rule -- there's too many of them to do that!

Why do we cite?

Citation is a key part of academic integrity and avoiding academic misconduct. It makes your response more credible, and demonstrates that you have engaged with academic literature and legal sources to develop your assessment response. It will almost always form part of the marking criteria, and it is something which markers check. Remember that failing to cite your sources does count as plagiarism, and could amount to academic misconduct – it's important that you take it seriously!

Approaches to citation

There are several different approaches to citation. Some students prefer to cite as they research and write (meaning that you write out the full citation in a footnote as you draft your response), or do it all at the end.

Regardless of your approach, you need to ensure you have kept a record of what sources you have relied on for different specific parts of your essay, and know what specific pages or paragraphs of the source you have used (this forms part of your pinpoint citation).
A key warning: if you choose to do your citations at the end (as lots of students do), make sure you have allocated enough time to finish them before you submit your assignment – citations tend to take longer than you think they will!

How to navigate the AGLC

It is important to understand how to actually navigate the AGLC and find the rules you need for each specific source. First, you should identify whether your source is a domestic, international or secondary source. This will tell you what Part of the AGLC you will find the relevant instructions in. From here, use the contents section of the AGLC to find the correct page to look at.

You will also need to know what your source is – sometimes it can be obvious (e.g. a case or legislation), but it can be more complicated if you're using international sources or more random sources (e.g. US code, an ICJ decision, a speech or a website). Some citations can be very specific – there is a big difference between citing a book or a chapter from an edited book!

Make sure you are also familiar with the general rules. You don't need to memorise them, but it's important that you know there are rules about certain things (e.g. headings, numbers, court names, authors) and remember to consult the general rules section as you cite. PAL also encourages you to refer to the examples provided in the AGLC for each source type – these are really helpful to model your footnotes and citations off of.

Common mistakes

There are several mistakes which students frequently make in their citations. This list is not intended to be exhaustive – make sure you are referring back to the AGLC as your guide!

- Forgetting to include a full stop at the end of every footnote;
- Positioning the footnote before relevant punctuation – it should be after!;
- Not including a pinpoint reference for every single footnote;
- Not using the subsequent referencing rules (i.e. using (n ?) where you refer to a source multiple times, with ? being replaced by the number of the original footnote you have the full citation in);
- Not using ibid when you are citing the same source in the footnote immediately above;
- Not using short titles;
- Misunderstanding how bibliographies are structured – they should include all sources you rely upon (not just those that are specifically referenced in your footnotes), are ordered by the surname of the first order, have no full stops at the end, and are grouped based on source type and in alphabetical order.

As we said, the AGLC is hard to use at first and the reality is that you won't get your citation all right all the time. Make sure that you look at feedback you receive on your citation, and make a note so you don't repeat it. Some of our mentors leave a comment/annotation on their copy of the AGLC to ensure they are reminded of it the next time they go to cite the same type of source again!

Final tips

A few things to keep in mind:

- Make sure you aren't including your footnotes in the word count – ensure you have set your document settings correctly!

- Use the Turnitin Practice site to ensure you don't have any accidental quotes you need to be citing.
- There is no quick hack to AGLC citation – referencing tools generally don't work well. Make sure you take the time to learn and engage with the process.
- Leave yourself plenty of time – all our PAL mentors have horror stories about finishing their referencing only minutes before submitting their assignment!

We highly encourage you to attend PAL sessions to learn more about the AGLC. We provide excellent examples and tips in a welcoming space where you can meet other law students and ask our experienced mentors questions.

Chapter 9: Exam Summaries

This information can be particularly helpful in the lead up to exams.

Most law exams are open-book, meaning that you can take notes into the exam. The majority of students therefore make a summary of their notes to help them during the exam. Whilst having the summary is useful, the process of making your exam summary is an important stage of revision.

When to start

One of the common issues students experience is deciding when to start making their exam summaries. Many law students (especially those who have just graduated high school) are used to developing study guides or summaries throughout the semester, or intend to progressively draft their exam summaries week-by-week. However, in our experience, these strategies are not always the best.

PAL recommends the earliest you should start your exam summary is in the last two weeks of the semester (i.e. Week 11 or Week 12). If you start earlier, you run the risk of not quite understanding how the course content fits together, which may mean you need to re-revise the content again. However, you should still consider other factors including when your other assessments are due, your workload, and your availability after classes have ended in Week 12. Know that it is never too late to start your exam summaries: some of our mentors have started their summaries a week out from the exam (or in some cases even the day before the exam) -- having some parts of your summary is better than having nothing!

How to start

It is important to know that the structure and look of summaries varies a lot between students. However, most students start with a similar approach which we have outlined here.

First, list out all the topics that are being assessed. Consider what order you would address these topics in in a HIRAC analysis (noting that this is generally the same order you have been taught the content in). You may also want to think about how comfortable you feel with each topic – you can use a traffic light system and 'rate' each topic depending on how much time you think you will need to spend revising it.

Then, turn your topics into HIRAC style questions and sub-questions. For example, if the topic is negligence, your broad question may be 'is X liable for negligence'. Your relevant sub-questions should be the elements necessary to answer the larger question, e.g. 'did X owe Y a duty of care', 'did X breach their duty of care', and 'did X's breach cause Y's injury'. Taking the time to structure your notes in a HIRAC format will save you time during the exam!

From here, you can start adding your lecture, tutorial and reading notes into your HIRAC structured headings. Make sure that you are not just copying and pasting all your notes into one document – actually go through and summarise it to ensure you understand the content and can summarise into a short and concise set of notes.

What to include

In writing your notes, make sure that you are guided by what will help you during the exam: summaries are not necessarily supposed to cover everything that was taught in the course! It may be helpful to skim read a practice exam to understand how the content is being assessed before you start your summary.

Key things to add to your summary include:

- Cases and legislation
- Legal tests
- Rule statements
- Definitions and terminology (especially where your convenor has emphasised it)
- Headings and potential issues
- Things that help you understand how everything works (e.g. examples)
- Reminders of what the convenor is looking for and past mistakes

You don't necessarily need to include history/context of the law's development for black letter law courses, full case citations, non-assessable content, or large paragraphs of information (especially quotes). Equally, you shouldn't include anything that you don't understand – it probably won't magically make sense during the exam, so make sure you ask questions to figure it out before!

What it could look like

There are a range of different formats or presentation styles which students use to create their summaries. No one person's summaries will look the same, so it's important that you find what works best for you. Regardless of your approach, we recommend organising your summary in the way you would approach the exam (i.e. the problem-solving structure using relevant HIRAC formatting as above).

Some different approaches include:

- **Scaffold**: A scaffold is where you write out the steps of the problem-solving structure in a HIRAC format – i.e. drafting heading/issue questions, and including relevant legislation and case law you would need to refer to.
- **Flow chart:** These can be helpful as a visual to demonstrate how different steps or elements fit together as part of the one process. It tends to work best where your conclusion depends on previous shorter conclusions (e.g. if this element is not proven then do X, if it is proven do Y).
- **Case table:** You may want to have a case table where you have a particularly case or fact heavy course, and you need to analogise or distinguish quite closely.

- **Check list**: This could sit separately to the rest of your notes, with reminders about past mistakes you have made or comments your convenor has made about things students forget or ways to improve your response.

Remember that you might find multiple formats helpful, e.g. you could use a scaffold with case tables integrated into it, and a check list as a final reminder sheet for reference.
Because your summary will be used in an exam under significant time pressure, it is important that you can navigate it and find relevant information easily. Some things to consider are:

- Including a contents page, page numbers or tabs/flags on the side of the page;
- Having a colour-coding system;
- Leaving plenty of blank or white space on your document;
- Using dot points rather than large paragraphs/blocks of text;
- Splitting information into different documents; and
- Having a short summary/breakdown at the start of your notes (e.g. a front page).

Seeing examples can really help you in formatting your own exam summaries. Make sure you set aside time to attend PAL's sessions on exam summaries so you can see our mentor's examples and ask questions!

Refine your summary
After you have drafted your exam summary (and if you have enough time), PAL encourages you to test it out before the exam. You can do this by using it to do a practice exam.

Consider whether the information in your summary is easy to find, whether you are missing any details, and whether the structure is helpful. Some of our mentors take this opportunity to annotate their summaries and add notes on what mistakes they made.

PAL knows that making an exam summary (especially for the first time, or for a difficult course) is hard. We highly encourage you to attend PAL sessions to learn more about Exam Summaries. We provide excellent examples and tips in a welcoming space where you can meet other law students and ask our experienced mentors questions.

Chapter 10: Exam Preparation
Whilst exam summaries are an important stage in the exam preparation process, they are not the only step. This chapter provides guidance on organising and planning your time over the exam period, how to use practice exams, and what to do if you don't understand your content.

Organisation and planning
You may already have a formal or an informal plan regarding how you have spent your time during the semester, but the increased expectations and pressure of the lead-up to exams may mean you need to adapt this plan!

Step 1: Take Stock
It is common for students to have fallen behind on content in the lead up to exams. No matter how behind (or on top) of content you are, taking a step back to plan out what you need to do and how you are going to manage your time should be your first priority.

Consider how much time you have before your exams, and what assessments you have. Decide how you want to split your time between each of your courses: you may wish to spend less time on courses you're more confident in, and more time on courses you're less confident with. You can also create a checklist of all the things you want to do for each of your courses before the exams. Make sure that this list is reasonable – if you know you are likely to list more tasks than what you can feasibly do, try to avoid this to avoid the stress.

Step 2: Make a timetable

From your list, you can then allocate time to each specific task. Make sure that you are considering how you work best (e.g. doing the hard tasks when you have the most energy) and are scheduling time to socialise and exercise to avoid burnout.

Step 3: Consider your non-study commitments

In the stressful exam period, it can be helpful to reduce your non-study commitments to avoid becoming overwhelmed. A lot of students organise to take time off work or reduce their working hours during the exam period. You could also consider meal-prepping or scheduling any medical appointments earlier to reduce the number of things you need to think about.

Step 4: Think about how you can stay focused when studying

It can be particularly easy to become distracted whilst studying when you're stressed. PAL has a range of strategies you can try to ensure your study sessions are efficient and productive:

- Set timers on your social media;
- Put your phone and laptop on do not disturb;
- Communicate with the people you live with – tell your housemates that you're studying during set times;
- Outsource motivation to focus by studying in a public place;
- Consider studying with other productive people; and
- Use the pomodoro method or watch a study with me video.

Practice exams

Practice exams can be a really valuable part of your exam preparation. However, we frequently don't have many to use, so it's important that you use them strategically to get the most out of them.

One of the most important things to consider is when to do your practice exams:

- If you only have one, you may want to wait until you have finished your exam summary so you can get the most out of it.
- If your lecturer is running a session where they work through the problem, watch it after you have completed the exam if the session is recorded.
- Don't do a full practice exam the night before an exam! It will tire you out, and if it doesn't go well it will impact your confidence and you won't have much time to fix it.

Ideally, you will want to do a full, hand-written practice exam in exam conditions. This means sitting the full time (including reading time) in one go, being silent and only referring to your printed summaries. However, if you don't have time to do a full practice exam, it is still useful to spend 10 minutes doing issue spotting or planning your response for each practice exam you

have. If you take this approach, try to constrain your planning to the amount of reading/planning time you will have during the exam (often 30 minutes).

When you have finished the practice exam, make sure you take the time to mark it if you have been given a feedback guide. Consider any previous mistakes you have made in the course, and consider discussing the exam with a friend if they have also attempted it. Make a list of any questions you have or things you would like clarified, and reflect and adjust your summaries to ensure they are helpful. Know that even if you feel like the practice exam didn't go well, you will do better in the real exam because you took the time to do a practice exam.

What to do if you don't understand course content

Try not to stress if you don't understand particular aspects of the course content: it's normal, and it's better if you figure out what you don't understand before the exam when you have time to address it!

PAL recommends creating a system to track what you don't understand. This might be adding comments into or annotating your exam summary, creating a checklist, or having an email chain going. Remember that if you have clear questions rather than broad topics which you don't understand, it's much easier to address them!

Once you have your list of questions, try to work out the answers yourself first (whilst this is difficult, you'll gain the most out of doing the revision to work it out). Otherwise, you can ask friends, tutors (during or after the tutorial) or lecturers (either during the lecture, during drop-in hours, on a Canvas forum, via email, or in the Week 12 revision session).

Remember, once you have the information, update your exam summary and test your understanding by doing a practice exam or redoing a tutorial question.

PAL knows that exams can be overwhelming and anxiety-provoking. We highly encourage you to attend PAL sessions to learn more about Exam Preparation. We provide excellent examples and tips in a welcoming space where you can meet other law students and ask our experienced mentors questions.

Chapter 11: Exam Technique

This information covers the final things you need to know before sitting your exams. It will be most helpful around 2 weeks prior to your exams.
Exams are difficult, and law exams can be even harder. It's important to know how to reduce your stress before exams, what exams are actually like, what you need to do during the exam, and what happens if everything goes wrong.

How to reduce stress before exams

You want to perform as well as possible for exams. A key part of this is trying to reduce your stress before the exam.

To do this, make sure you spend time doing things that make you feel confident before the exam. This might be following your normal morning routine, exercising beforehand, or having something fun planned for after the exam.

You should also aim to limit the things that can increase your stress. If you have a morning exam, don't try to review significant amounts of content the morning of your exam. You may want to consider whether talking to people outside the exam room will help you relax or stress you out further. Make sure your exam summaries are printed at least the day before the exam, and ensure you know where your exam is, how to get there, and what you need.

It is also important to know what you can do if you are feeling stressed during the exam. Have a planned response for how to ground yourself which might be doing box breathing, observing your surroundings, counting chairs, or saying affirmations. Thinking about what you can control (e.g. your preparation) may also help.

What exams are actually like

Exams at university can be quite overwhelming. You will wait outside the exam hall with a large number of other students, and will need to show your identification document (e.g. drivers licence) to enter the room. You will have an assigned seat number, and will need to find your desk. Know that the desks are often quite small, but you can keep notes and water underneath your desk if that is helpful.

There will also be invigilators walking around and sitting at the front. If you need something during the exam, you need to raise your hand and they will come to you. Although slightly unexpected, there can be a lot of noises during exams: other people are turning pages, writing, muttering and coughing. This can be quite off-putting, so consider practicing exam techniques or studying in public spaces so you can get used to the experience.
There are restrictions on what you can and can't take into exams:

Things you can take into exams	Things you cannot take into exams
- An ANU Student ID, passport or drivers' licence: this is <u>required</u> to prove your identity. - Pens, highlighters, tabs and post-it notes - Exam summaries (there's no limit on how many pages you can bring in!) - Spare planning paper - Water in a clear, unlabelled plastic bottle - Tissues - Textbooks (but not ANU Library books)	- Any electronic device including mobile phones, ANY watches (analogue, digital, or smartwatch), electronic notebooks, calculators, laptops, smart glasses, headphones etc. - Food or drink other than water (unless you have an EAP allowing this) - ANU Library books and materials (if you have your own personal copy of the textbook, that's okay!)

What to do during the exam

Before the exam starts, try to ground yourself: take some deep breaths and have a sip of water.

Reading time

During reading time you are allowed to highlight and write on essentially everything except the writing booklet. You should use this time to (1) develop a plan for how you will use your time and (2) develop a plan for how you will respond to the question.

1. Making a time plan

A time plan will tell you how much time you will spend on each question within the exam. Sometimes convenors will tell you how many questions there are during exam revision sessions, so you may be able to develop this plan prior to the exam. If not, spending 2 minutes at the start of the exam making this plan will save you time in the long run.

Think about how much time you have, how many questions you have, and how many marks each question is worth. From this, decide how much time you will spend on each question. Remember that the number of marks a question is worth can be indicative of how many contentious issues there are, and how much time you should spend on each question.

- If there are three questions each with equal weightings and you have three hours for your exam, spend an hour on each question.
- If you have a 10 mark question, you might want to spend 25 minutes on it. If you have a 20 mark question, you might want to spend an hour on it.

From this, you can then create time based deadlines on when you should be starting and finishing each question. Considering how easy it can be to spend all your time addressing one question and rushing to finish the remaining questions, having this clear plan can help keep you on track.

2. Planning your response

During the reading/planning time, you will also want to plan your answer to each of the questions. This will be the time where you are thinking and using your exam summary the most – ideally, you will be able to follow your plan for the rest of the exam.

There are two main approaches for planning your exam response. You could (1) read through the fact scenario first and then the question, or (2) read the question first and then the fact scenario. There are benefits to both approaches – using practice exams to trial each one might help you figure out what works best for you.

Regardless of the approach you take, the first time you read through the facts you are simply trying to understand the story. On the second and third reading, you can then start highlighting. As you are doing your annotations, you should look out for key facts or issues, note down cases which the fact pattern reminds you of, or flag issues that seem particularly contentious. Make sure that you keep coming back to what the question is actually asking you – what parties do you care about, and what issues are important?

After you have done this, you can start making your plan. Identify the relevant issues and elements you need to analyse under each question, and use your exam summary to identify relevant rules (from legislation and cases), facts you want to draw on, points you want to raise in your analysis, and the conclusion you will draw on each issue. Think about structuring your plan in a HIRAC pattern.

It is very common not to have finished planning your entire exam response by the time reading time is finished – don't be afraid to keep planning! In PAL's experience, taking an extra 5-10 minutes to plan your response will mean you can write more quickly in the long run.

Writing time

Once the writing time begins, most students don't really finish writing until the end of the exam. Doing some handwriting practice can be really helpful here.

As you are writing, try to remember these key tips:

- Don't get stuck aiming for perfection: your markers know you are under a time pressure, and it's more important to finish your analysis than to write in perfect prose!
- Try and make your answer as easy to read as possible: you can write on every second line, highlight your issues or headings, and write the question number at the top of each page.
- Stick to your time plan, even if you haven't finished your answer yet: it's better to move on to the next question than to write a perfect answer.

If you get stuck during the exam, pause and take a breath. Re-read what you have written, consult your plan, and identify where you need to go from there. If you are really stuck, leave a page to finish the answer and move onto the next question – you can come back and finish it later!

If you are running out of time, you can dot point your issues, rules, application and conclusion out. It is better to dot point out the rest of your answer and move onto the next question on time than writing out the answer in full and being left with no time to answer the next question. If you are really stuck, you can copy your plan into the writing booklet – this will award you some marks which is better than nothing.

Remember that academic integrity rules still apply in exams. If you are directly quoting something, you must put it in quotation marks. You need to reference which cases and statutes your rules have come from (although this does not have to be AGLC compliant – e.g. 'Donoghue' or 'Constitution s 109'). Also ensure you're not colluding or working with others to develop your exam summary – convenors and markers can tell when people are using the same pre-written rules. For more guidance on complying with your academic integrity requirements, please visit Understanding Academic Integrity | ANU Law School.

What to do if everything goes wrong

Whilst we hope that your assessments go smoothly and you don't have to use this information, you should know what to do if everything goes wrong.

If your ability to complete a specific assessment task has been impacted by unforeseen and unavoidable circumstances, you can apply for an Extenuating Circumstances Application (ECA). Generally, this will mean that you could have your exam or assessment deferred until a later date, or the weighting of the assessment adjusted. You will need to provide documentation and evidence as part of your application, and submit a form via ANU Hub. For more information, please visit https://www.anu.edu.au/students/program-administration/assessments-exams/extenuating-circumstances-application.

If something happens on the way to your exam, know that you can start the exam up to 30 minutes late. You won't be able to have 'extra time' to finish the exam, but this will allow you to sit the exam where your circumstances wouldn't qualify for an ECA. Remember, if

the circumstances which caused you to be late were beyond your control, get evidence and documentation and submit an ECA.

If you become sick during an exam and are unable to complete it, you should raise your hand and speak to an invigilator. They will give you an information sheet which explains your options. If you choose to leave the exam, make sure you seek medical advice and documentation, and submit an ECA.

Remember, there are processes in place for when things don't go right – things will be okay! If you are confused or want to discuss your options, you can contact the Law student admin team. Whilst they don't manage ECAs, they know a lot about the process and can point you in the right direction.

We highly encourage you to attend PAL sessions to learn more about Exam Technique. We provide excellent examples and tips in a welcoming space where you can meet other law students and ask our experienced mentors questions.

Chapter 12: Group Work and Presentations

This information will be most useful when you are preparing for an assessment involving group work or presentations.

As you likely know from previous studies or work experience, group work can be challenging. Thankfully, the majority of assignments in your law degree will not be done in a group. However, small projects or presentations worth a small portion of your grade (including discussant roles, presentations, moots, or leading tutorials) are becoming more and more common.

Planning group work assignments

To begin, identify what portion of your grade the group assignment is worth. A lot of group tasks are worth 20% or less – this can help put things into perspective and help take some of the stress away.

From here, you should be proactive and send out an email or message to everyone in your group as early as possible to arrange a time to meet.

At your first meeting, you should aim to:

- Set expectations about how frequently you will meet and communicate. Make sure everyone knows how you are communicating – e.g. over messenger, emails, Instagram
- Divide the task into clear sections, and assign each person a section.
- Create a shared document or slides deck to put all your information into – this will keep it easy to track who is doing what, and to limit overlap.
- Set a timeline for check-ins, and key dates for drafts/deadlines etc.
- Take notes on everything you have discussed as a group and email/message it around to everyone so you are all on the same page.

Specific tips for presentations

In our experience, the majority of group projects are presentations or discussion/tutorial leader roles. There are a few things you should keep in mind when starting to prepare a presentation (whether you're doing it individually or as a group).

First, your presentation should not just be a complete summary of what information was covered in the lecture – you will be marked down for this. Your presentation should be offering new content, or new examples.

Make sure that you have prepared what you will be saying. PAL doesn't recommend writing and reading directly from a script, as this makes it harder to maintain eye contact and is often less engaging. Instead, practice what you will say and focus on getting across the key ideas rather than rehearsing your exact phrasing.

You will generally need to develop some sort of visual aid to go along with your presentation. For most students, this will be a PowerPoint presentation, but there are several other options you could explore (e.g. slido, pressi, quizlet, kahoot). When designing these materials, ensure you are keeping them minimal – you shouldn't have a wall of text behind you, as you want people to listen to you rather than just read the slides behind you. You may want to use a template to make your slides look more professional. It's also worth checking whether you need to reference the images and sources you use on your slides – this is a question you can direct towards your tutor.

Challenges with working in a group

There are a few key challenges our mentors have experienced when working in groups. These include unresponsive group members and unequal divisions of labour between group members. To manage these issues, PAL recommends:

- Keeping a record of every meeting, what things have been discussed, and what tasks have been allocated to everyone. Consider drafting this in an email which you send to all your group members so everyone has a record.
- Set deadlines for tasks early on in your discussions, and arrange meetings ahead of time.
- Outline any expectations around editing, formatting, and writing styles early in discussions.
- Be prepared to compromise and be respectful to your group members when they offer differing ideas.

In most cases, convenors will not wish to get involved in disagreements between you and your group members. If you have an issue where a group member is not participating at all, you should speak to your convenor or tutor (having a record of all tasks and meetings can be helpful to prove this).

Group projects and presentations can be hard. We highly encourage you to attend PAL sessions to learn more about how to approach Group Projects and Presentations. We provide excellent examples and tips in a welcoming space where you can meet other law students and ask our experienced mentors questions.

Chapter 13: Responsible AI and Translation Software Use

PAL knows that class content and assessments in law school can be hard to manage, and students may wish to use generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools or translation software to support them in their learning. If you are considering using these tools, you must be aware of the College's policies on such technology (and the implications of improper use on your university career and admission to legal practice).

Use of Generative AI Tools in Assessment

All work you submit for assessment at the ANU Law School must be your own independent and original work.

This means that generative AI tools must *not* be used to draft assessment content, *unless explicitly instructed by the course convenor*. While limited use of AI tools to support your learning may be permitted, for example, to assist with expression, structure, or refining your ideas, you cannot use AI to generate your primary text, legal analysis or any substantive content.

Inappropriate use of AI may constitute a breach of the [Academic Integrity Rule 2021.](#) If you are intending to be admitted to practice as a lawyer, academic integrity breaches may have serious professional consequences, as breaches must be disclosed to the relevant admissions authority.

Students are at university to develop critical skills in legal reasoning, analysis, and written communication. This requires active engagement with assessment tasks and the drafting and refinement of your own work. While AI tools may assist with polishing expression or organisation, they must not replace your reasoning, judgment, or authorship.

Used appropriately, AI can be a helpful tool for editing, planning, and limited refinement. However, AI should only be applied to small portion of text. Submitting work generated in large part by AI increases the risk of poor academic outcomes and academic integrity concerns. Where AI or other assistive technologies are used, students must comply with all disclosure requirements that are available on the course Canvas site. This includes explicitly declaring the name(s) of the application(s) you have used, the purpose of their use (e.g. grammar editing, structure suggestions) and the extent and frequency of their use. You should include this declaration in the first footnote. For examples of disclosures, please visit [Use of Generative AI Tools in Assessment: Guidance for ANU Law Students | ANU Law School](#)

If you do choose to use AI tools in the development of your assessment content, you must:

- Thoroughly review any AI content, including references;
- Ensure you agree with, and understand, the work you submit;
- Declare when you have used AI tools and how; and
- Retain records of all prompts entered into AI tools and all outputs of those tools, as they may be requested by the Convenor.

Use of Translation Software and Assistive Technology in Assessment
All work submitted for assessment at the College must be your own independent work. This means that it must be composed and written by you, *in English*, without reliance on translation software to generate your initial draft.

The use of assistive technology (including translation tools) is permitted only to support the refinement of work you have personally written in English. You cannot draft an assessment task in a language other than English and use translation software to convert the work into English. If a piece of work shows signs of having been machine-translated or heavily reliant on non-human text generation, it may be investigated for academic misconduct or poor academic practice.

In any piece of submitted work where you have used assistive or translation technologies, you must explicitly declare in your first footnote the name(s) of the application(s) used, the purpose of their use (e.g. grammar checking, word-level translation) and the extent and frequency of their use.

Failure to declare the use of translation or assistive technologies – or declaring them inaccurately – may lead to a finding of academic misconduct or poor academic practice, consistent with ANU's <ins>Academic Integrity Rule 2021.</ins>

For more information, please refer to the College's <ins>Use of Translation Software and Assistive Technology in Assessment: Guidance for ANU Law Students | ANU Law School.</ins>
All information in this guide is general advice only. Last updated on 13 February 2026.