Statement of Provision for BCL and Magister Juris

This template relates to the BCL and MJur course; there is a separate document covering the MLF, and M.Sc. and M.Phil. in Criminology

1. Who is the Course Director with overall responsibility for students on this course?

The course director is the Director of Graduate Studies for taught courses, Mr W. Swadling, Brasenose College. Queries about course administration should be directed in the first instance to the Academic Administrator, Mr P. Burns.

2. What induction arrangements will be made?

Induction arrangements are preceded by a letter sent by email during the summer to all those students due to start the course in October, informing them of which course options will be available, giving details of when students need to arrive in Oxford, and providing a list of frequently asked questions. This is then followed by a further communication later in the summer giving students passwords to the Faculty’s induction website, which contains the induction timetable, handbooks, etc.

The induction programme itself takes place in -1st Week and 0th Week preceding Michaelmas term, and includes registration with the Faculty, and a social event; a question and answer session about the course and the Faculty more generally; a programme of taster lectures familiarising students with the course options available to them; IT sessions introducing students to electronic resources; and a library induction, introducing students to the Bodleian Law Library.

The induction arrangements aim to provide students with information about course content, and the Faculty’s facilities and resources, as well as providing opportunities for students to meet and get to know their classmates.

3. What is the overall length of the course, and for how many weeks are students expected to work in Oxford?

The BCL/MJur course takes slightly over nine months, from initial induction through to the final examinations, so typically students will need to be in Oxford from late September through to mid July. Oxford University has three terms, each of 8 weeks duration. These terms are called: Michaelmas Term (October to December); Hilary Term (January to March); Trinity Term (April to June). You will be expected to be in residence at Oxford for each of the 8 weeks of term. You will be free to leave Oxford after the end of each term but are advised to return during the week prior to the start of the next term (referred to as 0th week). Written examinations will take place shortly after Trinity Term (typically late June/early July) and you will need to make sure that you do not leave Oxford until your examinations have finished. Examination results will normally be published in mid to late July.

4. What is the pattern of lectures, classes, seminars, tutorials and self-directed work for this course?

BCL students make their choices from a section of 30 or so courses. Each student takes either four courses, or three courses and a dissertation (students must receive approval for their proposed dissertation topic before they are permitted to commit to this option). Teaching is organised by the Faculty and typically comprises 16 two-hour seminars and two to four tutorials per option, though this may vary from one option to another; and in some cases, options will involve lectures as well as seminars. All examinations, except the essay-based examination for Jurisprudence and Political Theory, and the dissertation option, take place at the end of the year, in late June/early July. In addition to the courses available to BCL students, MJur students may also choose one subject from a range of options available to students in the undergraduate Jurisprudence degree; teaching for these may be organised either by the Faculty or the student’s college, depending on the option in question.
For all options, students will be expected to undertake substantial amounts of reading arising from lectures, seminars, and tutorials, and will also be required to submit written work for some of the seminars, and for most tutorials.

5. What one-to-one or small group teaching will students on this course receive?

Small group teaching is provided through the tutorials that form an integral part of all BCL/MJur courses, and which provide direct interaction between students and leading experts in the relevant field. A student can expect to receive two to four tutorials for any given option. While one-to-one tutorials are unlikely (2-5 is the norm), those writing dissertations also receive a number of one-to-one sessions with their dissertation supervisors.

6. Who will take overall responsibility for an individual student’s progress and for completing the GSS report form in each term of the course?

Students are invited to report on their own progress using the Graduate Supervisory System (GSS) and their reports are viewed by the Director of Graduate Studies for taught courses, who will address any problems identified in the reports. However, the tutorial nature of teaching for the BCL and MJur means that there is no joint progress report on GSS. Instead, the tutors’ own reports are completed on the OxCORT system as for undergraduate tutorials, and college advisors view these reports and will bring any problems to the attention of the Director of Graduate Studies.

7. What are the provisions for formative and summative assessment? What formatively assessed work in the first term will receive written feedback, and which piece(s) of summative assessment (if any) will receive written feedback in addition to final dissertations/theses of 5000 words or more?

Formative assessment (that is, assessment that does not contribute towards the final grades with which the student graduates) takes the form of written comments on students’ essays or dissertation drafts (for those choosing the dissertation option); and verbal feedback given in tutorials (in the course of which essays are discussed) or in discussions with dissertation supervisors. The structure of the BCL and MJur means that in most cases the first formative assessment takes place in the second term rather than the first term and will be provided for the essays students are required to write for each option. The exception may be the dissertation option, in respect of which students may receive written and verbal feedback in the first term. Summative assessment refers to the final marks awarded for each option taken. Additional comments are provided for in respect of marks attained for dissertations but not for marks attained in any other option.

8. What workspace will be provided? What IT support/library facilities/experimental facilities will be available?

BCL/MJur students share with research students the Bodleian Law Library Graduate Reading Room, which has wireless access and Ethernet sockets. Public access PCs are provided on all three floors of the library and wireless network coverage includes the central part of the library, which also contains a number of Ethernet sockets for readers’ use. There are PC training rooms in both the Law Faculty and the Bodleian Library, and both the Faculty and the Library have IT Training and Development Officers, who offer general support and specific training in the use of the many legal databases the Library services provide.

The Bodleian Law Library is one of the largest faculty-based libraries in the University, and offers almost all of its paper holdings – some 400,000 items – on open shelves. It has excellent US and Commonwealth materials, strong European and international collections, and extensive holdings in the philosophy and sociology of law and in criminology.
9. What training needs analysis will be carried out with students and what formal graduate research skills and transferable skills training will be provided? What opportunities are provided for students to take part in research seminars or groups?

Analysis of training needs and provision of training is carried out by means of the induction course which involves sessions on use of library resources and legal databases, understanding common law sources and EU legal sources, and an introduction to common law for students with a civil law background, and to civil law for students with a common law background. There are also two workshops on essay writing and problem-solving, aimed principally at MJur students and an introductory session provided for those choosing to write a dissertation. There is an extensive programme of research seminars in which BCL and MJur students are welcome to participate. These are supplemented by a number of discussion groups which have regular lunchtime meetings at which members (graduate students or Faculty members) present work in progress or introduce a discussion of a particular issue or new case. These may involve guest speakers from the Faculty and beyond.

10. What are the arrangements for receiving feedback from students on provision and for responding to student concerns? What are the arrangements for appointing student representatives to (G)JCCs, Departmental Committees and to for the Divisional PGT student discussion forum?

Concerns that relate to a particular course option should be discussed with the course convenor in the first instance, or the Director of Graduate Studies for taught courses if the student prefers. Concerns of a more general nature should be discussed with the College Advisor or with the Director of Graduate Studies for taught courses.

Students may also raise issues through the Graduate Studies Committee. The Committee includes both a BCL and an MJur student representative whose roles are to put to the Committee any issues brought to their attention by the students they represent. Beyond the Faculty, the Oxford University Student Union also has considerable expertise in the area of academic welfare and offers several publications and services that may be of use to students. These include the provision of study skills sessions with an expert in this area. Information can be found on their web site at http://www.ousu.org.

11. What arrangements for accommodation, meals and social facilities will be made for students on a graduate taught course?

Many colleges will be able to provide accommodation. Generally speaking, colleges will provide meals through the year, but provision will vary from college to college, especially during vacations, and students will need to familiarise themselves with their college’s detailed arrangements. In addition, there are usually self-catering facilities available in graduate accommodation. Students will be members of the Middle Common Room, or equivalent, of the college, which is the main social centre for graduates. The MCR provides a common room and usually organises a programme of social events throughout the year. The college will also provide a bar, some computing facilities and a library, and may often have dedicated funds for research (conference and field grants). The MCR also represents the interests of its members to the college through an elected committee or through elected representatives to college committees. Again, details will vary from college to college. Graduates are also welcome to participate in all other social and sporting activities of the college. Please see individual college websites for further details about all aspects of college provision.

12. What arrangements are in place for pastoral and welfare support? (please refer to Department, College and central provision)

There is an extensive framework of support for graduates within each college. A student’s college will allocate a College Advisor from among its senior Members, usually in a cognate subject, who will arrange to see the student from time to time and who the student may
contact for additional advice and support on academic and other matters. In college, students may also approach the Tutor for Graduates and/or the Senior Tutor for advice. The Tutor for Graduates is a fellow of the college with particular responsibility for the interests and welfare of graduate students. In some colleges, the Senior Tutor will also have the role of Tutor for Graduates. Each college will also have other named individuals who can offer individual advice.

At Faculty level, both the Academic Administrator and Director of Graduate Studies for taught courses are generally available to discuss any problems a student may encounter.

At central University level, the student union, OUSU, can offer advice and help through its Student Advice Service; details can be found at http://www.ousu.org/help-and-advice/. The University also has a Student Counselling Service, and details are available at http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/shw/counselling/.

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