

<b>1</b>	<b>Awarding institution/body</b>	University of Oxford
<b>2</b>	<b>Teaching institution</b>	University of Oxford
<b>3</b>	<b>Programme accredited</b>	n/a
<b>4</b>	<b>Final award</b>	BCL
<b>5</b>	<b>Programme</b>	Bachelor of Civil Law
<b>6</b>	<b>UCAS code</b>	n/a (postgraduate course)
<b>7</b>	<b>Relevant subject benchmark statement</b>	Law
<b>8</b>	<b>Date of Programme Specification preparation</b>	July 2007 (Specifying programme in force at October 2007)

<b>9</b>	<b>Educational aims of the programme</b>
	<p>The BCL is a one-year postgraduate degree programme for those already holding an undergraduate law degree (or equivalent). It aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>bring students into advanced intellectual engagement with some of the most difficult issues in law and legal theory, an engagement distinguished by rigour, depth and conceptual sophistication, and requiring immersion in law as an academic discipline as well as informed openness to neighbouring disciplines;</li> <li>raise students to the highest level of professionalism in analysis and argument, equipping them intellectually for legal practice or work as a legal academic at the highest level, as well as for a wide range of other intellectually demanding roles;</li> <li>constitute an intense learning experience characterised by a demanding schedule of independent study, highly participative round-table seminars, and a complementary diet of close individual or small-group contact with tutors.</li> </ul>

<b>10</b>	<b>Programme outcomes</b>
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<i>10A</i>	<i>Knowledge and understanding</i>	<i>Teaching/learning methods and strategies</i>
	A thorough knowledge and deep understanding of between four new legal or legally-related subjects – these being subjects which, at undergraduate level, were either not studied at all, or were only studied in a more elementary way.	All BCL subjects (listed at <a href="http://denning.law.ox.ac.uk/postgraduate/bclcourses.phtml">http://denning.law.ox.ac.uk/postgraduate/bclcourses.phtml</a> ) are designed and taught with a view to adding value beyond that of an undergraduate law degree. All are designed so as to be more specialised and more intellectually demanding than undergraduate courses in the same field, and many are also designed to cut across the boundaries between traditional undergraduate courses, so as to enable to a more holistic grasp of the subject.
	A knowledge and understanding of neighbouring academic disciplines sufficient for a mature appreciation of the place of law in the world and a mature critical attitude towards law.	Several BCL courses are avowedly cross-disciplinary, and therefore by their natures require immersion in advanced academic literature from other disciplines (e.g. philosophy in the case of Philosophical Foundations of the Common Law, quantitative social science in the case of Crime, Justice and the Penal System). However a less formal attention to extra-legal materials and ideas pervades the BCL as a whole. All courses are designed to invite discussions of legal doctrines, not only in their own terms, but also in terms of economic, moral, and political theories and/or in the light of their social effects.
	A knowledge and understanding of the values and techniques of advanced legal scholarship and/or the advanced interdisciplinary study of law.	The course has an academic emphasis and students are required to master the advanced academic literature of a subject. Students who take the dissertation option and those who take the Jurisprudence and Political Theory course (examined by essays) are encouraged to engage in research and writing of a professional scholarly kind, and those who achieve distinction marks in these options are likely to have reached close to publishable standards. In some BCL courses the teachers and/or visiting speakers will present or circulate their own work-in-progress for the class to criticise and comment upon

### **Assessment**

Summative: The formal assessment of knowledge and understanding is by written examinations, held in July at the end of the year (in the first month of what would be the Summer vacation for undergraduate students). One course – Jurisprudence and Political Theory – is instead examined by the submission of three essays written unsupervised and unaided during the Easter vacation on topics prescribed by the examiners. Students may also opt to write a short supervised dissertation on a topic nominated by them and approved by the Faculty, in place of one examination paper.

Formative: There is also much assessment of a less formal character. Some seminar series offer students the opportunity to present their own papers. All courses on the BCL have a tutorial component (typically four tutorials) with the associated opportunity to write essays and receive detailed feedback (orally and/or in writing) from their tutor. Students also have the opportunity – although as postgraduate students they are generally not required – to sit practice examinations for marking by their tutors. Performance in both tutorials and practice examinations is recorded by tutors on the student's college file, and may be used later in the writing of references. These continuous assessments are not, however, part of the degree classification process.

<i>10B</i>	<i>Intellectual Skills</i>	<i>Teaching/learning methods and strategies</i>
	A highly-developed ability to parse a problem into its component sub-problems.	The intensive dialogic character of argument in seminars and tutorials is designed to encourage students to distinguish between different issues and to tackle them one at a time.
	An ability immediately to see the same legal or legally-related problems from a variety of intellectual angles, using different legal classifications and perspectives gleaned from different academic perspectives.	Many courses on the BCL are centrally concerned with the contrasts and relationships between different legal classifications (e.g. tort and contract) or between different legal systems (e.g. English and German). Others are centrally concerned with the non-legal analysis of legal problems (e.g. their philosophical foundations). The seminar format encourages students to challenge each other and the seminar convenors repeatedly and thereby gradually to reconceptualise the issues. BCL students are drawn from the whole range of common law jurisdictions and therefore every BCL course is enriched by insights from a variety of legal cultures. In addition many BCL courses are shared with the MJur, allowing an enormous variety of non-common-law perspectives to be added to the debate.

An ability to build a complete, convincing argument from the ground up, and to build a complete and convincing critique of the argument of another.	Again the seminar format is conducive to sustained argument under pressure, with different students adopting and developing rival positions and gaining support or opposition from their peers. The tutorial essay encourages students to do the same, but this time representing both sides in the argument.
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*Assessment*

The three intellectual skills mentioned above are highly prized and rewarded in the summative BCL examinations. More generally, the examinations strongly emphasise the use of critical, analytical and synthetical skills under pressure. The formative assessment which the tutorial system makes possible also plays a major role in monitoring as well as cultivating these intellectual skills.

<i>10C</i>	<i>Practical skills</i>	
	A highly-developed ability to conduct legal research and legal or legally-related academic research	The programme calls for a great deal of advanced independent study using primary materials. Students make full use of library materials from around the world and advanced electronic research tools, including legal databases and scholarly research networks. Library orientation and an introduction to electronic research tools is provided at the start of the programme.
	A highly-developed ability to write for specialist legal and academic audiences	Where the programme has a writing component (in the dissertation option, in tutorial essays, in the examinations) sophisticated written communication skills are expected. Students are continuously exposed to exemplary judicial and scholarly writings.
	A highly-developed ability to read and digest complex legal and legally-related materials accurately at speed	The workload on this programme is high, especially in respect of the volume of reading that a successful student can be expected to cover. At the same time, seminars and tutorials emphasise accuracy and perceptiveness in interpretation.
<i>Assessment</i>		These are necessary conditions of achieving the intellectual outcomes mentioned in 10A and 10B above, and are therefore assessed indirectly through the assessment mechanisms already mentioned.

<i>10D</i>	<i>Transferable Skills</i>	
	A highly-developed ability to communicate orally and in writing.	Both seminars and tutorials, with their high levels of student participation, help to cultivate strong oral communication skills. Tutorial essays, and of course the examinations, emphasise economical, clear and highly structured writing.
	A highly-developed ability to master and organise complex information.	A typical BCL reading list contains material of several types with diverse sources, sometimes from several disciplines or jurisdictions. The student's first task is to survey and synthesise this material.
	A highly-developed ability to plan and organise the use of one's time.	The programme sets tough demands in terms of reading and preparation, as well as providing a very full diet of seminars, lectures and classes. The centrality of independent study to success in the programme means that students quickly refine the developed time-management skills that they will have acquired in their previous legal education.
	The ability to thrive in a competitive and intellectually challenging environment	The BCL programme is competitive at point of entry and throughout. Students are among their intellectual equals, and are drawn from the very brightest law graduates in the common law world. The programme therefore demands a great deal of its students intellectually and in terms of application and motivation. The difference between sheer ability and sheer ability coupled with hard work is reliability detected by the intensive teaching and assessment systems.
<p><i>Assessment</i></p> <p>These are necessary conditions of achieving the intellectual outcomes mentioned in 10A and 10B above, and are therefore assessed indirectly through the assessment mechanisms already mentioned.</p>		

10E	<p><i>General teaching/learning methods and strategies</i></p>
	<p>Each course on the programme has its own distinctive teaching and learning strategy, to reflect its distinctive subject-matter. Each BCL course falls under the jurisdiction of a 'subject group' comprising members of academic staff teaching and actively researching in the field of the course. These 'subject groups' take charge of customising the delivery of the course to suit its subject matter and its pedagogical role. All options (other than the supervised dissertation) make use of the seminar and tutorial formats in varying proportions. Some use is also made of lectures.</p> <p><b>Seminars:</b> The centrality of the seminar is the key feature of the BCL programme that differentiates it from the Law Faculty's BA programme. Seminars are organised at Faculty level and are open to all students taking the BCL course and (in general) to any other interested postgraduate student from the law faculty or beyond. Many BCL seminars are convened jointly by two or three members of the relevant subject group. Some BCL seminars have a tradition of attracting senior academic visitors and research students in addition to BCL students. Some attract postgraduate students from other faculties (e.g. politics, philosophy). Some are also taken by MJur students sharing the same course. Such intellectual and international cross-pollinations are welcomed and encouraged by many subject groups. In some courses there is one core seminar series closely corresponding to the syllabus; in others the syllabus is covered by a selection of different seminar series from which the students take their pick according to interest and intended intellectual emphasis. BCL students taking some interdisciplinary courses are encouraged to attend seminars in other relevant faculties. Every BCL seminar series is accompanied by published reading lists that are used by students in preparing for the seminars and in organising their study. Many students use the seminar reading lists as starting points for their own self-prescribed research and reading, rather than regarding the listed materials as sufficient for real mastery of the subject. However the listed materials in each course do represent the level and range of materials which the examiners are entitled to expect the students to have mastered.</p> <p>At a seminar – typically one-and-a-half to two hours long - the topic will be introduced by one of the conveners, or one of the students, or sometimes an invited speaker. There will then ensue detailed and intense questioning and argument involving, so far as possible, the whole group. Depending on the BCL course, seminars range in size from a handful to upwards of 40 participants. Convenors allow seminars to develop in a more orchestrated or spontaneous way depending on the size of the group and the nature of the material or ideas under discussion.</p> <p><b>Tutorials:</b> In Oxford, a tutorial is a meeting lasting at least one hour and often 90 minutes, at which a single member of the subject group meets with between one and five students. The tutorial system, managed and budgeted at College level, is the second major teaching/learning component of the BCL programme. In view of the extensive diet of seminars, however, BCL tutorials do not generally provide full coverage of the course. Students are instead typically invited to nominate around four topics for tutorial discussion, typically using the seminar reading lists as the basis of preparation. Each selected tutorial topic is also typically associated with an essay question or a legal problem question (or a choice of such questions) suggested by the tutor, which might be drawn from a past examination paper or specially devised. Typically students write an essay or problem answer for each tutorial, which is then used as the basis for tutorial discussion. Often, although not always, tutorials are provided at or near the end of the seminar provision for the year so as to allow for consolidation and revision.</p>

**Lectures:** Lectures are typically less central to the learning experience of BCL students than that of their undergraduate counterparts. However lectures are more often provided in those BCL courses in which there is a great deal of new legal information to master. BCL students are also welcome to, and often do, attend undergraduate lectures to update and refresh their basic knowledge in subject areas in which they are now working at a more advanced level. Some BCL students also attend lectures in other faculties to assist with their grasp of neighbouring academic disciplines.

11	<b>Programme structures and features</b>
	<p>The programme is a one-year course leading to the degree of Bachelor of Civil Law. It is a postgraduate programme open only to those who have performed to the highest standards in an undergraduate law degree (or equivalent). In spite of its different labelling, the degree is structurally similar to what in some other UK universities would be called the LLM, or Master of Laws.</p> <p>The degree is non-modular. Students take all their courses from within the Law Faculty's own list and in an order determined by the availability of the relevant seminars and tutorials. Examinations are saved up for taking as a batch at the end of the year, rather than taken at the end of each course. Being of exceptional intellectual capacity, application, and independence, many BCL students continue to engage in self-programmed study in all of their BCL courses throughout the year according to their own informed assessment of their learning needs.</p> <p>BCL students are required to take four courses. The list of courses available on the BCL, is found at : <a href="http://denning.law.ox.ac.uk/postgraduate/bclcourses.phtml">http://denning.law.ox.ac.uk/postgraduate/bclcourses.phtml</a>.</p> <p>The supervised dissertation option can be offered in lieu of one taught option. The availability of the dissertation option is subject to the availability of a suitable supervisor as well as approval of the topic by the Faculty's Graduate Studies Committee.</p> <p><i>Assessment:</i></p> <p>The dissertation option requires a dissertation of not more than 12,500 words, to be delivered in May (before the examinations).</p> <p>The Jurisprudence and Political Theory course requires the writing of three essays (aggregate 5000 words minimum, 8000 words maximum) on topics prescribed by the examiners. The topics are published in March (at the start of Easter vacation) and essays must be submitted in April (exactly six weeks later).</p> <p>Other courses are examined by unseen examination papers administered in July. Typically the examination instructions require students to answer three or four questions over three hours.</p> <p>Student papers presented at seminars and essays written for tutorials, and practice examinations where applicable, also allow student progress to be assessed in the course of the year. These assessments, however, have no role in degree classification.</p>

**Libraries:** Reflecting the centrality of advanced independent study to this programme, students have use of multiple library facilities:

- The Bodleian Law Library, a research library of international importance, provides all students with access to a book and journal collection covering all of their conceivable academic needs, almost all on open shelves. It also has many CDROM and web resources on site-license. In term time, the Library is open into late evening during the week and during the day at weekends. It also remains open weekdays until 7pm during the vacations. The professional library staff provide induction tours for newly arrived students, as well as ongoing help and advice.
- Each College also maintains a separate law library, often accessible 24 hours a day 7 days a week, containing materials to meet the students' daily needs (major UK law reports, major law journals, leading monographs and edited collections, major reference works). Unlike the Bodleian Law Library these libraries typically allow borrowing, but are unlikely to have staff on duty. College librarians may generally be sought out if required.
- For the purposes of cross-disciplinary subjects (e.g. Jurisprudence and Political Theory, Philosophical Foundations of the Common Law, Legal History, and Crime, Justice and the Penal System) students also have access to the extensive collections of the main Bodleian Library and of various Faculty and College libraries in philosophy, social studies, and history. The Bodleian Law Library and College law libraries also maintain extensive holdings in these areas where regular access by law students is expected.

**Information and communication technologies:** There is extensive use of ICT, and provision of ICT resources, for the support of student learning across the Faculty, the University and the Colleges.

- The Faculty maintains an IT room in the Bodleian Law Library for student use, in addition to the library's public access workstations for catalogue searches, CDROM use, and online research.
- The Faculty has two full-time IT officers working on interactive learning and other web developments, as well as catering for the ICT aspects of the Legal Research Skills course, and offering other occasional training to students.
- Both email and the web are widely used in the Faculty for communication with students. The student handbook is available online and some subject groups have their own web-sites for delivery of course materials. There are general email circulation lists for students on all programmes, as well as a bulletin board.
- The University Computing Service provides a wide range of services available to all members of the University, including public access workstations at its own site, computing courses, site-licensed software, special deals for the purchase of hardware and peripherals, and of course email and web-space accounts for all.
- Many students have ethernet points provided in their College accommodation, for connection to their own personal computers. Colleges have computing officers to assist with networking and provide other help and advice, as well as computer rooms with public access workstations connected to the University network.

**Academic advice and support:** An enduring strength of the College-centred tutorial system is the availability of highly personalised academic advice and support on a day-to-day basis. Students and academic staff often inhabit the same buildings in College and may well see each other daily in passing, as well as weekly for tutorials and termly for induction and again for the communication of reports. Apart from the ongoing feedback on tutorial work and practice examinations, tutors provide a number of specific services. They are responsible for detailed and tailored academic induction. They also advise on choice of courses, and arrange the necessary tutorials (on an intercollegiate basis if necessary). In association with College Secretaries they oversee examination entries and the passing of medical information and other mitigating circumstances to the examiners. They write references and nominate students for prizes and scholarships on the strength of exam results or tutorial performance. Where necessary they provide additional contact hours with individual students to tackle academic difficulties, on top of the regular tutorials.

Colleges also have Senior Tutors who oversee the management and budgeting of the tutorial system and are available to students to deal with academic problems that cannot be resolved with the law tutors, or in the event of a law tutor's absence.

Being relatively small academic communities, colleges also have a strong tradition of peer support in academic matters and the existence of college law libraries separate from the rest of the college library often intensifies this tradition in the case of law.

- The Faculty augments all this personalised provision with a great deal of more general information and advice. There is a comprehensive graduate student handbook (distributed on paper at the start of the academic year and continuously available online) laying out full details of the programme. The Faculty also offers induction in respect of matters uniformly applicable to all students (e.g. talks about each of the courses available on the programme). The Faculty Office maintains stocks of lecture handouts and similar course paperwork. Some courses on the programme also have information, advice and documentation online.

**Pastoral and welfare support:** Academic tutors also have a significant pastoral role built into their function and often assist with personal guidance and practical problem-solving (e.g. in dealings with agencies outside the college on behalf of students when so requested by students). In some colleges, each student has a designated 'moral tutor' in addition to subject tutors. Colleges also have various appointees with specific pastoral and welfare responsibilities, e.g. advisors to women students, chaplains, resident assistant deans appointed from the postgraduate community, etc. There are often part-time college nurses on site and all students are registered with college doctors based at nearby surgeries. Domestic bursars are charged with meeting special living needs, e.g. in respect of students with disabilities or students who fall ill or students in need of emergency accommodation. The head of college also often plays a role in ensuring that students are settled and adequately supported. The Middle Common Room (college graduate student union) often has its own welfare officer who acts as a source of information and an advocate. The tradition of extensive college-level peer support in academic matters extends to non-academic matters as well. In general the relatively communal aspect of college life makes for extremely easy access to confidential support in respect of non-academic matters, including support from people who know the student well, as well as more anonymous advice and support from professionals when necessary.

The University Counselling Service provides advice and support both immediate and long-term to students in need, and makes referrals to more specialist services beyond the University. Both the University and the colleges dispense hardship funds.

13	<p><b>Criteria for Admission</b></p> <p>Applicants apply to the Faculty of Law using a single application form. Once accepted by the Faculty, a student is guaranteed to receive an offer from a college but not necessarily the college of the candidate's first choice. Applications are considered in a single gathered field during the academic year in January.</p> <p>Successful applicants for admission to the BCL and MJur programmes possess the following qualities and the admissions process is designed to identify which applicants possess them in the greatest measure:</p> <p><b>Application:</b> exceptional academic motivation; capacity for sustained and intense work; developed ability to organise time and set own agenda for study; intrepid attitude towards investigation and learning.</p> <p><b>Knowledge:</b> a broad, deep, advanced, and integrated understanding of the main branches of law of at least one municipal legal system.</p> <p><b>Reasoning ability:</b> outstanding analytical abilities, including the ability to draw and maintain fine distinctions, the ability speedily to separate the relevant from the irrelevant, and the ability to develop and sustain complex arguments under pressure; capacities for accurate observation and insightful criticism, including willingness and ability to engage with disciplines other than law and to bring their insights to bear on legal problems; originality and creativity of thought, open-mindedness, and capacity for lateral thinking; excellent powers of synthesis and economy of thought.</p> <p><b>Communication:</b> willingness and ability to express highly complex ideas clearly and effectively in English, with a particular eye to finesse and economy; ability to conduct a mature debate leaving room for the contributions of others; aspiration to professional standards of style and organisation in legal and scholarly writing.</p> <p>Faculty and colleges alike are looking for law graduates of high achievement and exceptional promise. A first class degree – or the nearest equivalent in overseas systems of degree classification - is the standard requirement for entry. However entry to the programme is extremely competitive and most students accepted onto the programme will have been placed among the top handful of students in their first law degree. Occasionally students are admitted to the BCL who have degrees in other disciplines than law but who have completed a conversion programme such as the Common Professional Examination. This is an extremely unusual profile and only a student of quite exceptional intellectual calibre – with firsts in both the non-law undergraduate degree and the CPE – would ever be admitted from this background.</p> <p>Admissions interviews are not held for this programme. Admission decisions are made on the strength of a paper dossier of material submitted by the applicant, including a transcript of higher education achievement to date, a sample of written work (&lt;2000 words) and a personal statement. Particular importance is attached to confidential academic recommendations, of which three are required. Applicants for whom English is not a first language must meet standard English language testing requirements.</p>
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## Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning

### Staff appointment, training and appraisal:

- Teaching ability is directly assessed as part of recruitment and selection process for academic posts carrying tutorial responsibilities. Candidates make a brief presentation on a topic of their choosing. Normally the instruction given to candidates is to address the selection panel as if it were a year 2/3 undergraduate student audience. Some colleges are experimenting with having selected year 3 students (close to leaving the college, and hence not apt to be taught by the appointee) attend these presentations and comment to the selection panel on the virtues and vices of the presentation as a learning experience.
- Newly appointed members of academic staff are required to attend a training programme organised by the University's Learning Institute.
- A senior member of academic staff is also assigned to each more junior appointee as an advisor, with a brief to provide advice and support pro-actively on teaching matters as well as other aspects of professional development.
- Teaching by recently appointed members of academic staff is witnessed and evaluated by a more senior member of academic staff (not the advisor) before the appointment is confirmed at the five-year-point.
- Teaching assessment and self-assessment also play an important part in the Faculty's system of continuing staff appraisal.

Advanced research students (BCL students) are able to apply to become Graduate Teaching Assistant in areas of Faculty need. GTAs are appointed annually to provide tutorials at College level. They are licensed to teach only on condition that they have participated in a series of Faculty workshops on teaching and learning (not available to BCL students).

### Curriculum review and course management:

- BCL Subject Groups, reporting to the Faculty's Graduate Studies Committee, have responsibility for keeping individual courses under review. They meet at least annually to update and if necessary redraw the syllabus, to co-ordinate seminars and lectures, to ensure the adequacy of tutorial provision, and to plan ahead for the following year. They take account of student feedback as well as input from individual teachers. Each Subject Group has a convenor who organises meetings, writes reports, and where necessary implements changes.
- The Director of Graduate Studies (Taught Courses) receives reports from Subject Groups on behalf of the Graduate Studies Committee and satisfies himself or herself of their effective operation. The Graduate Studies Committee also has responsibility for keeping the programme as a whole under review, e.g. by considering amendments to the regulations, approving the establishment of new courses, reviewing the student handbook, and securing and reacting to general student feedback.

- The Faculty's Director of Graduate Studies (Taught Courses) co-convenes the Graduate Studies Committee with the Director of Graduate Studies (Research). He or she exercises some executive powers on behalf of the committee (notably during the summer vacation). He or she also performs many informal functions involving liaison with Subject Groups and responding to student concerns, etc.
- The Graduate Studies Committee reports to the Law Faculty Board, which reports in turn to the Social Sciences Divisional Board. These Boards take an active interest in major curriculum changes as well as academic appointments. However, routine supervision of the BCL curriculum is delegated to the Graduate Studies Committee and the Director of Graduate Studies (Taught Courses).
- Examination Boards may also comment in their reports on the programme as a whole and/or on the conduct of particular courses as evidenced by performance in the public examinations. Such reports are taken very seriously by the Graduate Studies Committee, by the Examinations Committee, and by Subject Groups.
- The BCL programme was fully reviewed by the Faculty in 2006. The Director of Graduate Studies (Taught Courses) is in the process of implementing the reform agenda agreed to by the Law Board.
- The University prescribes procedures for changing examination regulations.

**Student feedback:**

- The Faculty has an on-line end-of-course questionnaire that is made available to all BCL students with requests for detailed comments on the teaching and learning experience.
- In addition the Faculty operates a system of feedback on individual lecture and seminar series using a standard questionnaire (format under review). Evaluations and comments are subsequently drawn to the attention of the lecturer.
- Colleges operate questionnaire systems for receiving student feedback on tutorials, administered by their Senior Tutors.
- The Faculty Board and the Graduate Studies Committee include graduate student representatives for much of their business. Representatives to these Committee are elected through a process organised by the Graduate Law Students' Society at the start of each academic year.
- The Director of Graduate Studies (Taught Courses) and other officers of the Faculty often engage in informal liaison with students and their representatives.

**Review beyond the faculty:**

- The reports of external examiners a major source of insight into the programme's strengths and weaknesses.
- The Divisional Board and the University's Educational Policy and Standards Committee issue guidance and provide general supervision.
- The Faculty is subject to six-yearly reviews by the University as well as the currently prevailing review systems of the Quality Assurance Agency.
- The very high expectations that the UK and Commonwealth legal professions have of this programme exert a great pressure for exacting standards.
- A like pressure is also exerted by the very high expectations that other academic institutions in the UK and worldwide have of this programme, often relying on its exacting standards in making junior academic appointments.
- A like pressure is also exerted by the very high expectations of major providers of student scholarships and awards (the AHRB, the Rhodes Trust, the Fulbright Commission, the Commonwealth Fund, etc.).

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### **Regulation of Assessment**

The formative assessment of the tutorial system is governed by the academic authorities at college level (generally senior tutors and tutorial committees) and is closely monitored by college tutors who receive reports from their colleagues.

The summative assessment of all public examinations, including those for the BCL, is regulated by the University's Examination Regulations, and compliance with these is supervised by the University Proctors (a judicial authority appointed independently of the administration). In addition the University and the Social Science Division have general policy guidelines relating to the examination process. Examination conventions specific to this programme, governing matters not dealt with in the Regulations, are approved by the Faculty's Examinations Committee, reporting to the Faculty Board. The Examinations Committee also appoints Boards of Examiners and supervises the conduct of examinations.

Boards of Examiners are responsible for the setting of papers and for the marking of scripts. University Regulations permit them to be assisted in setting and marking by Assessors, and many members of academic staff in the Law Faculty serve as Assessors in the BCL. Assessors submit marks to the Board of Examiners but do not participate in classification, which is undertaken by the Board of Examiners acting alone. The practice of the Faculty is to double mark scripts close to classification borderlines, or where a failing mark is given, or where a mark on a certain paper is out of line with the others awarded to the same candidate, or in order to determine the best script for the award of a prize.

A key role in the process is played by the external examiners who serve on each Board of Examiners and report annually to the Vice-Chancellor. Their reports are considered by the Faculty, the Division, and the University. They serve two functions:

1. To confirm that standards are appropriate to the degree awarded, in part by comparison with the standards of comparable institutions, and to ensure that the assessment procedures and the regulations and conventions governing them are fair;
2. To ensure that the conduct of the examination and the determination of awards has been fairly conducted, and in particular that individual student performance has been judged in accordance with the applicable regulations and conventions. The external examiner signs the Class List to indicate that the latter standards were met.

The Faculty's Examinations Committee and Graduate Studies Committee, and where appropriate the Faculty Board, gives extremely careful attention to any adverse comment by external examiners.

The following marking scales and conventions of assessment apply to this programme, and are published to all candidates.

Class	Mark (%)	Qualities
Distinction	<p><math>\geq 70</math></p> <p>(For the award of a Distinction in BCL a candidate must secure marks of 70 or above on at least two of the subjects taken, and no other mark lower than 60.)</p>	<p>Distinction answers are those that represent an excellent level of attainment for a student at BCL level. They exhibit the following qualities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• acute attention to the question asked;</li> <li>• a deep and detailed knowledge and understanding of the topic addressed and its place in the surrounding context;</li> <li>• excellent synthesis and analysis of materials, with no or almost no substantial errors or omissions, and coverage of at least some less obvious angles;</li> <li>• excellent clarity and appropriateness of structure, argument, integration of information and ideas, and expression;</li> <li>• identification of more than one possible line of argument;</li> <li>• advanced appreciation of theoretical arguments concerning the topic, substantial critical facility, and personal contribution to debate on the topic.</li> </ul>

Pass	50-69  (For the award of the degree of BCL there must be no mark lower than 50. A mark lower than 50 but greater than 40 may be compensated by very good performance elsewhere, but a mark below 40 is not susceptible of any compensation.)	Pass answers represent a level of attainment which, for a student at BCL level, are within the range acceptable to very good. They exhibit the following qualities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• attention to the question asked;</li> <li>• a clear and fairly detailed knowledge and understanding of the topic addressed and its place in the surrounding context;</li> <li>• good synthesis and analysis of materials, with few substantial errors or omissions;</li> <li>• a clear and appropriate structure, argument, integration of information and ideas, and expression;</li> <li>• identification of more than one possible line of argument;</li> <li>• familiarity with theoretical arguments concerning the topic, and (especially in the case of high pass answers) a significant degree of critical facility.</li> </ul>
Fail	<50	Qualities required for a pass answer are absent.
In assessing the optional dissertation examiners are particularly instructed by the Examination Regulations to judge 'the extent to which a dissertation affords evidence of significant analytical ability on the part of the candidate'.		

16	<b>Indicators of quality and standards</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The independent Teaching Quality Assessment undertaken in 1993 by HEFCE concluded that teaching quality on the programme was excellent.</li> <li>▪ A Review of Law was undertaken by the University in 1997 under the chairmanship of Dr John Rowett, Warden of Rhodes House. The review committee reported that 'the Law Faculty has established an outstanding national and extremely high international reputation in teaching, research and scholarship.' This very positive assessment was repeated in 2004 by the Social Sciences Division in a subsequent review of the Law Faculty.</li> <li>▪ Returns from the end-of-year student questionnaire report a very high degree of satisfaction with programme delivery.</li> <li>▪ External examiners regularly point to the very high standards that are attained in the BCL. Under the supervision of external examiners, 38.7% of students are awarded distinctions (averaged over the last three years).</li> <li>▪ A less formal measure of the quality of the graduates from the programme is the very great success that they enjoy in the employment market. The programme is held in very high esteem by leading law firms and bar chambers worldwide, and in University law schools appointing to junior academic positions.</li> <li>▪ Less formally still: In advising and supporting their most talented students interested in postgraduate study, major international student funders and overseas Universities, especially but not only in the Commonwealth, continue to regard the BCL as the gold standard degree in law at taught postgraduate level.</li> </ul>
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