

Faculty of Law

The law degree



Students undertaking law study at Otago will obviously be enrolled in the LLB. Most will be doing the LLB alongside another degree and some will be either doing or hoping to do LLB Honours, maybe in conjunction with another degree. This fact sheet sets out the formal requirements for each of these options.

Other fact sheets explain the compulsory skills development programme (LAWS298, LAWS398, LAWS499 and LAWS498) and give guidance on how you might select the papers that will best suit your needs. If you have questions or want further advice, please email law.courseadvice@otago.ac.nz.

LLB by itself

The LLB is typically a four year programme, comprised of the following elements:

- LAWS101 Legal System;
- Six non-law papers at any level;
- Four 200 level law papers – Criminal Law, Contract Law, Property Law and Public Law;
- LAWS298 Writing Skills;
- LAWS301 Law of Torts and LAWS302 Jurisprudence;
- LAWS 398 Research Skills and LAWS 499 Advocacy Skills;
- LAWS463 Legal Ethics (required for admission as a Barrister and Solicitor);
- 195 points of elective papers – the equivalent of 13 single semester papers;
- LAWS498 Research and Writing.

In your first year, you will have completed LAWS101 Legal System and several non-law papers, perhaps all six although five is more normal. Second year is devoted to the 200 level papers (including LAWS298): enrolment in other papers is not permitted except in exceptional circumstances.

Going into third year allows you to start to make choices about the papers you want to do. At this stage, you will have 270 points to complete in order to finish your degree plus any of the six non-law papers not yet completed. This means that you should aim at doing the equivalent of nine or ten single semester papers in third year (300 level papers are full year papers and therefore count as two single semester papers). You are required to do LAWS398 at the beginning of this year and

are expected to do LAWS301 Torts unless there is a very good reason not to. Every student doing LAWS301 must do the LAWS499 moot in the same year. Because you have five research and writing exercises for LAWS498, you should complete at least two in your third year.

In your fourth (and final) year, you'll obviously be focussed on completing the balance of the papers you need for the LLB. While it is good to do LAWS302 Jurisprudence in third year, many students put it off until their final year. They do the same with LAWS463 Legal Ethics. Just be aware that if you are unfortunate enough to not pass one or both of these papers, you'll need to repeat them in the following year. You must enrol in LAWS498 Research and Writing in your final year, so that you can be given credit for the exercises you complete. Non-completion of these requirements will mean you cannot graduate.

Double degrees

Most law students do two degrees, which typically adds a fifth year to their time here. Your first and second years will be the same as those doing just a law degree, with one exception. Your other degree will have its own requirements – pre-requisites that you can or must complete in your first year in order to proceed with your major.

Your degree will typically require you to do ten papers on top of the six non-law papers you'll need to do anyway for the LLB. These ten papers will be comprised of three 200 level papers, four 300 level papers and three more or less random papers – the precise requirements will be set by the regulations for the other degree. You can see how this all works on the double degree template available on the Faculty website. If you have any doubts about what you must do for your other degree, consult the Department that is offering it. This will be particularly important if you propose to do a double major or a minor.

Going into third year allows you to resume study on your other degree and start to make choices about the law papers you want to do. At this stage, you will have 450 points to complete in order to finish your degrees (plus any of the six non-law papers not yet completed). The 450 points are the 270 points needed to complete the law degree together with 180 points for your other degree – the ten papers mentioned in the previous paragraph.

This means that you should aim at doing the equivalent of nine or ten single semester papers in third year (300 level papers are full year papers and therefore count as two single semester papers). You are required to do LAWS398 at the beginning of this year and are expected to do LAWS301 Torts unless there is a very good reason not to. Every student doing LAWS301 must do the LAWS499 moot in the same year. Because you have five research and writing exercises for LAWS498, you should complete at least two in your third year. Aim at doing six law and four non-law papers to ensure steady progress through both degrees.

Your fourth year will be very similar to third year in terms of the number of papers to take. If you do not do LAWS302 Jurisprudence in third year, consider doing it this year, along with LAWS463 Legal Ethics. Although many students put these papers off until their final year, just be aware that if you do that and are then unfortunate enough to not pass one or both of these papers, you'll

need repeat them in the following year. It would be good to do two more of the research and writing exercises this year.

In your fifth (and final) year, you'll obviously be focussed on completing the balance of the papers you need for your degrees. Ensure that you complete all the remaining compulsory papers for the law degree and the major requirements for your other degree. You must enrol in LAWS498 Research and Writing in your final year and ensure that you have satisfactorily completed all five of the exercises. Only then will you be given credit for the research and writing exercises and be able to graduate.

LLB Honours

You may be invited into Honours as a result of exceptional performance in your second year law papers. There are also opportunities to apply for Honours at the end of your third year (and possibly your fourth year if you have a substantial part of your degree to complete). The Honours programme is undertaken at the same time as completing the LLB or double degree requirements and imposes the following additional requirements:

- LAWS380 Preliminary Honours;
- Attending at least two seminars run by other Honours students;
- Running a one hour seminar on the topic of your dissertation;
- LAWS490 Dissertation.

Preliminary Honours requires you to achieve at least a B+ (75%) average on two pieces of research and writing (which you will be doing for LAWS498) in the same year. If you are invited into Honours after second year, you will do these in your third year, so that should be the year in which you enrol. If you are applying to enter the Honours programme, you will need to meet this requirement to qualify for entry, but you will still need to enrol in LAWS380 in the year after you are accepted.

The dissertation is a supervised piece of writing of about 15,000 words and is to be completed in your final year of study, along with the seminar. This work adds 60 points to your workload, which makes it difficult to complete in the same four or five year time-frame as a LLB or double degree without some summer school papers.

Much more detailed information about the Honours programme is contained on the LLB Honours page on the Faculty website.

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