The LLB has a number of compulsory substantive law papers - In addition to Legal System and the four 200 level law papers, there are also LAWS301 Torts and LAWS302 Jurisprudence. Because LAWS463 Legal Ethics is required if you wish to be admitted as a lawyer, it is in a practical sense to be seen as compulsory.

There are four other compulsory elements in the LLB and LLB(Hons) programmes, aimed at building up essential skills lawyers are expected to have. They are all completed relatively quickly and none carry any points. You will need to enrol in these at the appropriate time: they must be completed in order to graduate.

**LAWS298 – Legal Writing**

This paper is completed at the beginning of second year. You do three workshops very early in semester one, and then a fourth workshop towards the end of April, after you have completed the first assignment required by the 200 level LAWS papers. Their objectives are to develop your ability to prepare and write legal opinions and to improve your writing skills generally. The first three workshops result in the writing of a legal opinion. The idea behind the fourth is that the first assignment will have been marked and returned: this workshop provides an opportunity to reflect on your performance in this assignment.

**LAWS 398 - Legal Research Skills**

The focus in second year is on having you make use of legal materials provided to you in order to write legal opinions. Your assignments do not expect you to go outside these materials. In third year, the expectation changes: you will be writing opinions and essays that require you to engage in your own research. The goals of LAWS398 is to have you develop the legal research skills that you will need to complete this work and to start you on the path of being able to function independently as a lawyer.

The Faculty has prepared a detailed *Legal Research & Writing Guide*, to be collected with other course materials. You will need to complete exercises and training sessions in library research (both hard copy and database resources). The timing of these sessions will show up in eVision and on the student App, if you’re using it. Please make sure you enrol in Laws 398 in the year that you do your first 300 or 400 level law paper: for most of you, this will be third year.
All summer school papers are 400 level papers, so the assignments for these papers will all require you to research. Because second year students will not have done LAWS398, they will not be able to complete the optional research assignment for summer school papers. This is one of a number of reasons for the Faculty recommending that students coming out of second year not attempt summer school papers.

**LAWS499 - Advocacy Skills**

In Criminal Law, you will have done the plea in mitigation, which is your first taste of presenting an oral legal argument. Advocacy Skills (i.e. the moot) takes you further down this track, by requiring you to prepare written submissions and then to present an oral argument. You do this in a team of two in the Moot Court (which adopts High Court procedures as nearly as may be). Moots are usually judged by local practitioners.

You enrol in this paper in the year that you enrol in Torts: the moots are in semester two.

If you find that you enjoy oral advocacy, consider enrolling in LAWS 464 (Advocacy). Be aware that there are restrictions on entry into this paper: students must have completed evidence and be in their final year of law study.

**LAWS 498 - Research and Writing Programme**

As mentioned in relation to LAWS398, from third year onwards, you will be writing opinions and essays that require you to engage in your own research. Every LAWS 300 and 400 level paper will give you the opportunity to write at least one piece of research and writing. You will receive a mark for it that will count towards the final mark for that paper.

While these pieces are often optional for the particular paper that offers them, there is an overall requirement that you do (and pass) at least five of them in order to graduate. These should be spread out across the years in which you will be doing 300 and 400 level papers: it is a very good idea to do one in the first semester of third year, to put the LAWS398 knowledge to immediate use. The Faculty maintains a record of the marks given for these research and writing pieces: you formally enrol in Laws 498 in your last semester of law study to get credit for them.

Although you can go on overseas exchange and study law and, in extremely limited circumstances might be permitted to credit law papers from another New Zealand university to your Otago LLB, you must complete the five papers at Otago and while enrolled in a 300 or 400 level paper for the LLB degree.

Doing five is a minimum requirement: many students will do more, because doing them builds up substantive legal knowledge and develops your research and writing skills. Both skills are essential tools for lawyers. Of course, employers are interested in your degree (what you took and how well you did) but they are going to be even more interested in seeing that you can do
the work typically expected of law graduates - undertaking independent research and writing a coherent opinion on a point of law.

When asked to rank skills in order of importance, employers of law graduates have ranked the skills to find and assess information, and written communication skills top equal with 'conceptual and analytical skills' and 'a willingness to learn'. When asked more narrowly what they expect graduates to gain specifically from a law degree, the employers placed ability to find relevant legal materials third equal with 'ability to apply legal knowledge/understanding to resolve practical problems'. Only 'capacity to analyse legal materials' and 'capacity to critically evaluate argument' ranked higher.

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