



**Juris Doctor (JD) Program
Final Assessment Report &
Implementation Plan**

Faculty / Affiliated University College	Faculty of Law
Degrees Offered	Juris Doctor (JD)
Modules Reviewed	N/A
External Reviewers	<p>Jeff Berryman Distinguished University Professor of Law Faculty of Law University of Windsor</p> <p>Ian Lee Associate Professor Faculty of Law University of Toronto</p>
Internal Reviewers	<p>Dr. Kathryn Hibbert Associate Dean, Teacher Education Faculty of Education</p> <p>Iman Berry Undergraduate Student Ivey School of Business</p>
Date of Site Visit	March 14-16, 2022
Evaluation	Good Quality
Approval Dates	<p>SUPR-U: June 29, 2022 ACA: September 7, 2022 Senate (for information only): September 16, 2022</p>
Year of Next Review	Year of next cyclical review: 2029-2030

Overview of Western’s Cyclical Review Assessment Reporting Process

In accordance with Western’s Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the Final Assessment Report (FAR) provides a summary of the cyclical review, internal responses and assessment and evaluation of the undergraduate module delivered by the Juris Doctor Program at the Faculty of Law.

This FAR considers the following documents:

- the program’s self-study brief;
- the external reviewers’ report;
- the response from the program; and
- the response from the Dean’s Office.

The FAR identifies the strengths of the program, opportunities for program enhancement and improvement, and details the recommendations of the external reviewers – noting those recommendations to be prioritized for implementation.

The Implementation Plan details the recommendations from the FAR that have been selected for implementation, identifies who is responsible for approving and acting on the recommendations, specifies any action or follow-up that is required, and defines the timeline for completion.

The FAR (including Implementation Plan) is sent for approval through the Senate Undergraduate Program Review Committee (SUPR-U) and ACA, then for information to Senate and to the Ontario Universities’ Council on Quality Assurance. Subsequently, it is publicly accessible on Western’s IQAP website. The FAR is the only document resulting from the undergraduate cyclical review process that is made public; all other documents are confidential to the Program/School/Faculty and SUPR-U.

Executive Summary

Western Law’s academic program is designed to equip students for success in the evolving legal profession. The first-year curriculum focuses on foundational subjects and on legal research, writing and advocacy skills. In upper years, students will build on these skills through a range of advanced courses, clinical and experiential opportunities, research seminars, and advocacy training.

With an entering class of approximately 185 students, the JD program takes three years of full-time study to complete, although there is also an option for students to complete the degree on an extended-time basis over up to six years.

To inform the self-study for this cyclical review, the program held a faculty retreat in Spring 2021 to review program-level learning outcomes and discuss strategic priorities. The retreat accompanied a renewed curriculum mapping exercise and the

administration of a survey to 2nd and 3rd year Law students as well as alumni from 2014-2016.

The external reviewers shared a positive assessment of the JD Program. They offer several constructive considerations for further program enhancement and conclude their report with five recommendations.

Strengths and Innovative Features Identified by the Program

- Graduates have a very high rate of articling placement and continue to excel in an increasingly competitive legal market.
- Students take one of their first-year substantive courses, along with Legal Research, Writing, and Advocacy (LRWA), in a small group setting (18-24 students).
- The January Intensive Period is an intensive term in which students take only one course associated with LRWA in small groups allowing first year students to experience their first “moot”.
 - o Upper year students are frequently taught, during this period, by high-profile visiting scholars and eminent practitioners.
- In 2015-2016, Western Law became the first law school in Canada to give first-year students the option to take Corporate Law.
- Western Law sends teams to a variety of external appellate moot competitions, providing excellent training in problem-based legal research and the drafting of written arguments.
- Very active exchange program with roughly one in five students participating in an exchange during their upper years.
- Offers a number of co-curricular opportunities that allow students to build their personal and professional skills. For instance, 1) Clinical Programs such as the Community Legal Services, Western Business Law Clinic, Pro Bono Students Canada, and the Dispute Resolution Centre; 2) Internal Moot Competitions; 3) Summer Law Internships; and 4) Law Journals.
- Offers a number of courses in areas that reflect diverse perspectives on the law, such as: Gendered Violence and the Law, Sex Discrimination and the Law, Human Rights and the Environment, Indigenous Legal Traditions, Advanced Constitutional Law (Charter of Rights), Disability, Discrimination, Rights and the Law, Social Welfare Advocacy, Criminal Defense in Developing Countries, Racial Profiling, and Pluralizing Inclusion: Equality and Non-Discrimination in a Globalizing World.
- Offers a range of combined and special degree programs, such as: JD/HBA, JD/MBA, JD/BESc, JD/MSc (Geology or Geophysics), JD/MA (History), Western/Laval (common law + civil law degrees), JD (UWO)/LLM (Gronigen, Netherlands).

Concerns and Areas of Improvement Identified by the Program

- Sustainability of maintaining the January Intensive Period given its expense and labour-intensive nature.
 - o Whether to decouple the Legal Research, Writing, and Advocacy (LRWA) program from the small group program and, if so, how to staff the LRWA program.
- Perception that the efforts of the Careers and Professional Development Office (CPDO) are geared primarily toward Toronto employers and that more should be done for those students wishing to practice in regional firms, or in non-traditional legal markets.
- A number of classrooms in the law building are underused due to their small size and awkward configuration.

Review Process

As part of the external review, the review committee, comprising two external reviewers and two internal reviewers (faculty and student), were provided with Volume I and II of the self-study brief in advance of the scheduled review and then met virtually (due to pandemic restrictions) over two days with the:

- Acting Vice-Provost of Academic Programs
- Vice-Provost (Academic Planning, Policy and Faculty)
- Director of Academic Quality and Enhancement
- Dean, Faculty of Law
- Associate Dean (Academic)
- Associate Dean (Research and Graduate Studies)
- Assistant Dean (Admissions and Recruitment)
- Director, Career and Professional Development
- Director of Clinics & Practical Skills and Executive Director, Community Legal Services
- International Programs Officer
- Director, John & Dotsa Bitove Family Law Library
- Deputy Chief Librarian
- Program Faculty
- Program Students

Following the virtual site visit, the external reviewers submitted a comprehensive report of their findings which was sent to the Program and Dean for review and response. Formative documents, including Volumes I and II of the Self-Study, the External Report, and the Program and Decanal responses form the basis of this Final Assessment Report (FAR) of the JD Program at the Faculty of Law. The FAR is collated and submitted to SUPR-U by the Internal Reviewer with the support of the Office of Academic Quality and Enhancement.

Summative Assessment – External Reviewers’ Report

The external reviewers indicated that *“Our overall impression of the Faculty of Law’s JD Program is that it is a successful academic program of which the University can justly be proud. The curriculum is appropriate, overall, for the achievement of the Faculty’s learning objectives; faculty and staff members form a highly engaged and committed community; and students report high rates of satisfaction with the quality of teaching and with their learning.”*

Strengths of the Program

- Quality of all faculty members and particularly the academic credentials, publication and external grant records of recent hires.
 - o Strong positive feedback from students about the quality of instruction delivered by professors.
 - o The number of endowed chairs and fellowships is also a testament to the Faculty’s ability to recruit and support accomplished faculty members.
- In addition to the standard Fall/Winter terms, the inclusion of an intensive 3-week January term that features small group learning formats that promote the development of students’ legal reasoning skills through active in-class pedagogies.
- In addition to five full-year core courses, first-year students must take a sixth course during the Winter Term — students may choose either Corporate Law or Legal Ethics and Professionalism.
- Combined HBA/JD degree with Ivey Business School remains attractive to students.
- Range of offerings in clinical settings, moot programs and internships demonstrates a significant commitment of resources by the faculty.
- Number and diversity of clinical legal education offerings is impressive.

Areas of Concern or Prospective Improvement

- Organization and alignment of appropriate staff to handle the amount of work that is now falling within the Office of the Associate Dean (Academic).
- The ethnic diversity of the faculty complement.
- Small number of Indigenous students registering in the program.
- Students indicated a high degree of variation between small groups in the January Intensive term: in particular, the number of hours of direct instruction seemed to vary significantly from one small group to another.
- Only one qualified law librarian to meet the needs of faculty and students.
- Perception that the CPDO is primarily focused upon employment opportunities on “Bay Street” Toronto.
- Space constraints on classroom size that limits some forms of teaching.

Summary of the Reviewers’ Key Recommendations and Program / Faculty Responses

The following are the recommendations in the order listed by the external reviewers. Recommendations requiring implementation have been marked with an asterisk (*).

Reviewers’ Recommendations	Program / Faculty Response
<p>1. Review the workload of the Associate Dean (Academic) and find ways to allow the office holder more time to devote to academic program matters rather than personal accommodation requests.</p>	<p>Program: The Program/Faculty has created a new Academic Counsellor position in the Faculty of Law to alleviate some of the burdens that currently fall on the Associate Dean (Academic). A search to fill this position is currently being conducted.</p> <p>Faculty: The Dean’s Office recognizes the need for an Academic Counsellor to adjudicate and implement student requests for accommodation, among other things. The Faculty has been reviewing the needs of the Student Services Office and related offices (e.g., Careers and Professional Development Office, International Office, and Admissions and Recruitment Office) over the past year. Pursuant to that review, the Faculty will be adjusting some staff roles in the summer of 2022 in addition to hiring a new Academic Counsellor. The Faculty intends to create more overlap/intersection among roles/tasks so that student services staff can assist one another during peak periods of the year or when someone is ill or otherwise unable to work.</p>
<p>2. Redouble its efforts to increase the diversity of its faculty membership and, in particular, that it use proactive recruitment strategies, as well as the opportunity afforded in impending new hiring, to broaden the professorship.</p>	<p>Program: Western Law is committed to fostering diversity in its faculty complement, in its student body, and in its scholarly and pedagogical approaches to the study and teaching of law. The Faculty recently hired an excellent young Indigenous legal scholar and is currently considering hiring another Indigenous law scholar through Western’s PARF initiative.</p> <p>Faculty: Enhancing faculty diversity is a priority. The Faculty’s ability to hire new faculty is restrained by the availability of base operating funds and the university’s approval of new tenure track faculty positions. These, in turn, depend on matters like retirements and, possibly, enrolment growth in the Faculty. It may also depend whether teaching needs become acute in some fields, which may attract a more limited pool of qualified candidates. The Faculty is supportive of university-wide efforts to improve faculty diversity (such as the current PARF cluster hiring programs for Indigenous and Black scholars), and hope that these will continue in the future. Further, to the extent that there is flexibility in terms of areas of scholarly expertise, the Appointments Committee will discuss whether to target hiring toward areas that are more likely to attract a diverse pool of candidates, such as human rights, law and disability, or critical race theory.</p>

<p>3. Approach the question of whether to decouple LRWA from the Small Group Program by first determining, as a Faculty, what its goals are in offering instruction in legal research, writing and advocacy in first year. *</p>	<p>Program: The Program has engaged in an ongoing discussion of this issue for several years in the context of the Programs Committee and also through more general faculty discussions. Although there is considerable interest in this issue, members of the program have yet to reach any consensus. The Program will continue to discuss the issue at an upcoming Faculty retreat and through the work of the 2022-23 Programs Committee.</p> <p>Faculty: Endorsed by the Dean’s Office.</p>
<p>4. Consider expanding the range of Winter term first-year electives to include other upper-year core courses, particularly highly-subscribed courses that serve as prerequisites for more advanced courses and that can profitably be studied without having completed the core first-year curriculum. *</p>	<p>Program: This is an issue that will need to be discussed in the Programs Committee first, and then brought before the Faculty for a more general discussion. Whether an expansion of the range of Winter term upper-year courses is feasible or desirable will require a careful assessment of our current teaching resources and a discussion about how best to deploy them.</p> <p>Faculty: Endorsed by the Dean’s Office.</p>
<p>5. Review the curriculum and pedagogical goals of the January Term; determine whether they are still relevant, and if so, determine whether the current structure is the optimal approach to achieve those goals. *</p>	<p>Program: The Program has engaged in an ongoing discussion of this issue for a number of years already in the context of the Programs Committee and also through more general faculty discussions. To this point, however, no consensus has been reached. Some colleagues are of the view that the January term should be done away with entirely; others believe that the January term has an important place in our curriculum but needs to be reinvigorated; and others believe that there is nothing wrong in principle with the way in which the January term currently works. The Program will continue to have discussions about this aspect of the JD program.</p> <p>Faculty: Endorsed by the Dean’s Office.</p>

Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan provides a summary of the recommendations that require action and/or follow-up. The Program Chair, in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty will be responsible for monitoring the Implementation Plan.

The number of recommendations prioritized for implementation has been reduced as some have been, or are already being, actioned as described in the program and Faculty responses above (#1 and #2). As a result, the recommendations listed in the preceding sentence will not appear in the implementation table.

Recommendation	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
<p>Recommendation #3, #4 and #5</p> <p>Discuss: 1) decoupling LRWA from the Small Group Program; 2) expanding the range of Winter term first-year electives to include other upper-year core courses; 3) the continued relevance and structure of the January Intensive Period.</p>	<p>Focus conversations at an upcoming Faculty retreat on the themes associated with these recommendations and determine a feasible outcome for each. Following the retreat, draft an action plan and timeline for agreed upon changes.</p> <p>Determine a governance process that establishes a protocol for what to do when consensus can't be achieved in order for progress on these recommendations to be made.</p>	<p>Programs Committee Associate Dean (Academic)</p>	<p>May 2023</p>

Other Opportunities for Program Enhancement

- It may be worth considering gathering qualitative data (free-form text responses or focus groups) as part of regular student feedback, given the limited usefulness of small-sample quantitative data.
- Consider undertaking a comparison of faculty load measured by number of courses x number of students in course x course credit hours to create an index of faculty workload.
- Consider reviewing the program's brand proposition to see if there is a way to brand that encompasses the sentiment, 'business law but not just business law'. This may help address concerns of disconnect felt by some students.
- Encourage all faculty members to participate in the EDI sessions offered by the University (or any offered specifically to the members of the Faculty of Law).