

**Degree Level Expectations for Graduates Receiving the
Degree of Juris Doctor (J.D.)
Faculty of Law
University of Toronto**

1 Introduction

The University of Toronto Faculty of Law is a vibrant intellectual community of scholars of international stature and an academically gifted student body. In addition to outstanding Faculty and students, our small class sizes, public interest and clinical programs, research-intensive courses, interdisciplinary focus, international opportunities, and an enormous range of volunteer placements in the community all combine to make our law school one of the best legal educations available in the world. Our leadership position within Canada has also enabled us to serve as a forum for rigorous debate on domestic and international policy in a range of different contexts.

2 Degree Learning Objectives and Requirements

The Juris Doctor (J.D.) Program provides a rich and diverse legal education for students pursuing their first degree in law. We admit a class of about 175 students each year who have a range of diverse interests and backgrounds. These students are united by a commitment to academic excellence and intellectual rigour and demonstrate unusual promise for distinguished performance at the law school, and, subsequently, in the legal profession and community. The Faculty considers a number of factors in its admissions process, including academic achievement; LSAT score; nonacademic achievement; the response to disadvantage due to adverse personal or socio-economic circumstances or to barriers faced by cultural (including racial or ethnic) or linguistic minorities; motivation and involvement in academic and non-academic activities; and the impact of temporary or permanent physical disabilities. All students have completed at least three to four years of an undergraduate degree and many have completed a graduate degree in their respective field of study. The median entering GPA and median LSAT for our admitted students is the highest in country and ranks favourably with the top law schools from around the world.

FIRST YEAR PROGRAM

The first-year program offers a great deal of substantive contact between students and Faculty. All courses are taught by full-time Faculty members directly, without mediation by teaching assistants. Our first-year curriculum includes the standard six core courses: Legal Process, Constitutional Law, Contracts, Criminal Law, Property and Torts. Through these courses, the students are introduced to a wide range of views and a diversity of perspectives on law and legal reasoning. Four additional elements enrich the first-year student experience and make our program distinctive: the Small Group Program, the Perspectives on Law Program, the First-Year Elective Course, and Academic Orientation.

(a) The Small Group

The cornerstone of our first-year curriculum is the small group. Each first-year student studies one of her six core courses in close, personal interaction with fellow students and a law professor, in a group of 18-20. The small group class meets for 3 hours a week both terms, allowing more time for in-depth discussion than is allotted to the larger section classes. The intimate environment of the small group

format also provides students with a greater opportunity to complete and obtain feedback on written work, as well as gain exposure to the basics of legal research.

Evaluation varies from one small group to another, but in every case Faculty rules guarantee that students will be assessed largely on the basis of their written work and research, and that student workload will be roughly equivalent across small groups. Small groups are generally evaluated by way of a number of written assignments that account for most of the grade. Aside from graded assignments, instructors may ask students to complete optional ungraded assignments, such as case briefs.

(b) Perspectives on Law Program

For two weeks each year, all regular courses are put on hold for the running of the Perspectives Program. Also known as the first-year “bridge program”, the week’s aim is to introduce students to different perspectives on law and how these perspectives illuminate various dimensions of a particular legal problem. The first of the two weeks is devoted to the study of Legal Ethics and Professionalism. The second week is devoted to issues such as public inquiries, immigration law, or terrorism. In addition to the two dedicated weeks during the school year, a series of Friday sessions throughout the year is devoted to the study of a challenging legal problem from a multi-perspective approach rooted in the six core first-year courses.

(c) First-year Global Perspective Elective

Students are permitted to select one of a number of elective courses which allow them to pursue more advanced work in an area of their choice. While the mix of courses might differ year to year, these courses introduce students to core concepts, frameworks and approaches to global law in areas such as international, transnational, foreign and/or comparative law.

(d) Academic Orientation

Consisting of several lunch-time sessions held at the beginning of first year, these information sessions conducted by Faculty members, law students, and law librarians provide students with an overview of the legal system, common law reasoning and research, legislative interpretation and research, and how different perspectives on law shape legal analysis and understanding.

First-year students are also welcome to attend any of the upper-year workshop sessions described below.

UPPER YEAR PROGRAM

The upper-year program at the U of T Faculty of Law is rich and varied, with more than 100 courses offered each year. There are no required courses. Students undertake a mixture of doctrinal, theoretical, perspective, and in-depth courses. The breadth and diversity of the curriculum allows students to tailor programs of study to meet their individual needs and ambitions. Students are encouraged to pursue their own interests and to undertake advanced work, including independent study under the supervision of a Faculty member.

(a) Writing and Directed Research

In the upper years, students have many opportunities to embark upon ambitious writing projects under the close supervision of Faculty members, either in seminars or directed research. For example, the Supervised Upper Year Research Paper (SUYP) which must be completed in either second or third year, provides an excellent opportunity to conduct rigorous legal research and writing in consultation with a supervising professor in an area of mutual interest.

(b) Compulsory Moot

All students must complete either a moot in which they present written and oral arguments to a mock bench. The moot is termed either “competitive”, in which students compete against students from other Canadian law schools, or “non-competitive”, in which students moot against other U of T law students.

(c) Perspective Course

In either second or third year, students must take at least one perspective course worth a minimum of two credits. A perspective course is one which is concerned with the nature, sources, and purposes of legal regulation in general rather than with the study of legal doctrine in a particular area. Directed Research may also be undertaken as a perspective course upon successful application to the Directed Research Committee.

(d) The Distinguished Visiting Faculty Program

A defining feature of the Faculty's upper-year program is the Distinguished Visiting Faculty Program which each year brings approximately 20 world-renowned academics to the Faculty to teach two-week intensive courses in their area of specialty. This program allows students to learn from some of the best legal scholars, jurists, and policy-makers in the world.

(e) Co-Curricular International Opportunities

Through various student exchange programs and internships, upper-year students have many opportunities to work in community organizations across Canada and around the world, including Africa, India, Hungary, Singapore, France, Netherlands, New Zealand, the UK, Scotland, China, Australia, and Japan. Along with first-year students, the upper-year program offers second- and third-year students opportunities to learn through a clinical education program that includes six legal clinics, four student run law journals, and a highly regarded moot program.

(f) The Capstone Program

A highlight of the final year of law school, this program gives students the unique opportunity to have an intensive, academically rigorous and meaningful Faculty-supervised opportunity, with participation by leading external experts. Notable Capstone courses have included a focus on equity and diversity in the legal profession, Ontario's electoral system, HIV/AIDS, and the use of forced labour in Burma.

(g) The Academic Stream Intensive

In their final year of study, students also have the opportunity to conduct original research and writing in an advanced workshop setting with other like-minded students. This includes a pedagogical skills-training component.

(h) Combined Degree Programs

The U of T Faculty of Law offers a number of special combined degree programs. Students must apply to and be admitted separately by both the Faculty of Law and the corresponding department or Faculty within the University, meeting all admission requirements for each. Our current combined programs are: • JD/MBA • JD/MSW • JD/Certificate in Environmental Studies • JD/Collaborative MA in International Relations • JD/MA in Criminology • JD/MA and PhD Economics • JD/MA European Russian and Eurasian Studies • JD/PhD Philosophy • JD/M Information Studies.

2.1 Overall Learning Objectives

The Faculty is recognized as an international leader in legal education and research, and to offering our students a rigorous liberal education in law. Academic rigour is a hallmark of our program. We are committed to exposing students to the foundations of legal analysis and providing them with interdisciplinary, diverse, and multiple theoretical and practical perspectives on the law, thus equipping them with the tools they need to achieve success in their varied academic and professional careers. We are dedicated to the public good, and we make efforts to expose our students to the inherent value of public service. We aim to do all of this against the backdrop of the overarching values of academic freedom and excellence in research.

2.2 Requirements to Graduate

The Juris Doctor degree is conferred upon students who have satisfactorily completed the program of law study prescribed by the regulations of the Faculty of Law. This includes three years in fulltime residence or six years in half-time residence, or the equivalent, and the satisfactory completion of fifty-six credits in addition to the hours of credit allocated to required first year courses. The period of attendance may be reduced proportionately for students who enter with advanced standing credit, but in no case will the degree be conferred upon any student who has not been in residence for two full-time academic years or four half-time academic years.

FIRST YEAR

The first year curriculum consists of six full-year courses (see “Degree Learning Objectives and Requirements” above), one half-year course – Legal Process, and a second term elective course. Apart from the second term elective course, there is no course selection in first year. Students are assigned to one of two sections and to a small group. Each student will take courses in a section of approximately 60-90 students and one course in a small group of approximately 18 students. The second term global perspective program courses will each have approximately 40 – 50 students. The Perspectives on Law course (commonly known as the “Bridge” sessions) brings together the entire first year class for two intensive weeks and three half-day classes at regular intervals throughout the year.

Faculty rules mandate that each of the full-year large section courses be evaluated by a final examination worth at least 60% of the grade (a component of which may be the fail-safe December examination grade, see below). The evaluation for other courses, including Legal Process, small group courses, second term electives and for Perspectives on Law varies somewhat. However, all students write mandatory December examinations/tests in all of their first term courses except for Perspectives on Law. The December examination for Legal Process is the final examination in the course. All other December examinations (for the full-year courses) are hour-long “fail-safe” tests, whose principal purpose is to allow students to practice problem-type law school examinations. However, the December test will count for 20% of the student’s final examination mark if it is to the student’s advantage to do so, as indicated above. It is expected that instructors will grade the exams and return them by the end of the first teaching week in the second term. In this way, any problems a student is experiencing can be identified, and hopefully resolved, before the second term is under way.

Each student takes one of the first year courses in the small group format, as described above. Aside from graded assignments, instructors may ask students to complete optional ungraded assignments, such as case briefs.

UPPER YEARS

Academic Requirements

To be eligible for the J.D. degree, **all** candidates are required to:

- (a) Successfully complete the first year of the program (or equivalent) according to the standing rules of the Faculty or any special standing requirements of combined programs.
- (b) Satisfy the prescribed minimum and maximum credits in the upper years as required by the relevant program.
- (c) Successfully complete a compulsory or competitive moot (described above).
- (d) Successfully complete a perspective course (described above) in one of the upper years. This requirement cannot be fulfilled while away on exchange.
- (e) Satisfy the SUYRP (formerly extended paper) writing requirement in one of the upper years. This requirement must be supervised by a full-time Faculty member at this Faculty and cannot be fulfilled while away on exchange. (A course which is designated **both** a Perspective Course and a SUYRP course will satisfy both requirements.)

Three-year year J.D. Program

Take a minimum of 13 and a maximum of 16 credits each term.

Take a minimum of 28 and a maximum of 32 credits each year.

Half-Time J.D. Program

Take a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 8 credits each term.

Take a minimum of 14 and a maximum of 16 credits each year.

Honours Standing Requirements

In the upper years of the program, individual courses may be graded on a letter grading scale, credit/no credit, or Honours/Pass/Fail according to the University of Toronto grading scale as set out under Grading Policy. The Faculty of Law awards only a standing of A (Honours). This standing is determined on the basis of the student's weighted average in each year of the academic program, only for law courses.

Only courses which are graded on the letter scale are included in the weighted average, although all courses must be successfully completed in order for a student to be eligible to proceed in the program. In order to be eligible to receive a letter standing of A (Honours) in any year, the following rules apply:

(a) Students in the 3 year J.D. program or in the Half-Time Program must complete a minimum of 22 graded credits in each program year.

(b) Students participating in a one term exchange program (including the Downtown Legal Services (DLS) Public Interest Advocacy Intensive Term, or studying for a term on a letter of permission in another law program), must complete a minimum of 14 graded credits during the term which is spent at the Faculty of Law.

(c) Students in combined programs must complete a minimum of 22 graded credits at the Faculty of Law in each program year or complete a minimum of 13 graded credits in one term of that year.

Perspective Course Requirement

In either second or third year, students must take at least one perspective course worth a minimum of two credits. A perspective course is one which is concerned with the nature, sources, and purposes of legal regulation in general rather than with the study of legal doctrine in a particular area. Directed Research may also be undertaken as a perspective course upon successful application to the Directed Research Committee.

Supervised Upper Year Research Paper Requirement

In either second or third year, students must complete a SUYRP (defined above). A SUYRP is written under the supervision of a University of Toronto Faculty of Law full-time Faculty member, who will discuss topic choice with the student, review a detailed outline (and bibliography), and review a draft. The SUYRP is meant to be not simply a longer research paper, but rather a serious attempt at legal scholarship. Thus, supervision by a full-time Faculty member is integral to the requirement; Adjunct Faculty may not supervise the Supervised Upper Year Research Paper. The length of the paper can be determined between the Faculty member and student but cannot be less than 30 pages in total (excluding the bibliography).

Moot Requirement

In either second or third year, students must satisfy the "moot" requirement through participation in either the compulsory moot program, or by participation in one of a series of selected competitive moots.

3 Degree Level Expectations for the JD Program

The Faculty of Law has adopted the six categories of degree level expectations, as outlined in the OCAV Guidelines. The following section describes how these expectations are met by students meeting the degree requirements outlined in Section 2.2.

3.1 *Depth and Breadth of Knowledge*

The Faculty ensures that a student has mastered a body of knowledge with appropriate depth by requiring that each student complete three years of law school comprised of a first year program with six compulsory courses (contracts, torts, criminal, property, legal process, global perspective elective), two bridge weeks, and an upper year program containing mandatory components (SUYRP, perspective course, moot). The Faculty ensures that the student has a breadth of knowledge by requiring each student to meet complete certain mandatory components of the program and, at the same time, allowing the student to elect courses that accord with their specific interests. The credit requirements can only be fulfilled by taking a wide range of substantive and perspective courses.

3.2 *Knowledge of Methodologies*

Each mandatory requirement seeks to ensure that the student gains an understanding of the appropriate substantive aspects in areas of study as well as developing students' legal analytical skills. For example, the SUYRP compels the student to think deeply and critically about the area of law in which she writes the major paper. The compulsory moot requirement ensures that students are exposed to and forced to make legal oral arguments before a particular audience of legal experts. In the curriculum also, students have the opportunity to participate in research courses that familiarize them with the specific methodologies currently in use in the development of knowledge in that area of law.

3.3 *Application of Knowledge*

A student completing the J.D. program will have demonstrated the ability to use a range of established techniques to initiate, make critical use of primary sources of law, and undertake critical evaluation of legal arguments and concepts. This is accomplished through a number of pedagogical tools, including supervised research opportunities, small seminar classes and other inquiry-based activities that involve use of the case method, substantial investigation, synthesis of knowledge, and communication of results of the inquiry. A high percentage of our students participate in clinical activities through all three years of the program, which by definition involve a high degree of client communication and contact.

3.4 *Communication Skills*

The Faculty expects all of its students to have participated in a first-year small seminar, a compulsory or competitive moot, and to have written significant research and writing assignments. These requirements foster effective communication skills and are thus integral to the J.D. program.

3.5 *Awareness of Limits of Knowledge*

The course content is designed, in part, to provide students with an appreciation of the uncertainties, ambiguities and limitations of the law and its various subareas, and the analytical tools to know how to respond.

3.6 *Autonomy and Professional Capacity*

Students take responsibility for the selection and successful completion of their courses required to satisfy the degree requirements. In so doing, they demonstrate an ability to make decisions and act independently and with responsibility for those decisions. The Faculty also reinforces the values of ethical decision-making as a legal professional through the Bridge Week and other programs. Finally, in completing their course requirements, the Faculty requires students to adhere to the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters, which requires students to be intolerant (and discourage creation) of an environment of cheating, misrepresentation or unfairness.