



Postgraduate Laws Programme: Frequently Asked Questions

Which University of London College developed the Postgraduate Laws Programme and where is it in the rankings?

The Postgraduate Laws Programme was developed and is managed from an academic perspective by the law departments of UCL and Queen Mary, both constituent colleges of the University of London. These two law departments are responsible for all academic aspects of the Programme, such as the syllabuses, Study Guides, exams, marking, etc. There are no official rankings for postgraduate law courses. However the law departments of both Colleges have outstanding reputations for the quality of their teaching and research. They have both received a '5 Star' ('International Excellence') rating for the quality of their research – the highest possible rating - by the UK Government appointed Higher Education and Research Organisation (HERO). Only eight law departments in the United Kingdom received a '5 Star' rating. The Postgraduate Laws Programme is the only distance-learning Master of Laws (LLM) programme offered by a '5 Star' law department.

How will the LLM help me in my career?

When you have achieved a University of London Master of Laws (LLM), your current or future employer will know that you have a highly valuable qualification from a university with an international reputation, which demonstrates not only your specialist knowledge of law, but also your motivation and commitment to your career.

Achieving an LLM can help you develop your career in a number of different ways. If you are a practicing lawyer or barrister, it can help you develop sought-after, in-depth, specialist knowledge in your current area which will set you apart from others in your field. Alternatively, it could help you change the direction or emphasis of your career if you choose to specialize in aspects of the law which are new to you. Finally, it could help you broaden the scope of your current role, if for example, you are in a generalist management role, it could allow you to take on legally-related aspects.

What is the difference between the Master of Laws (LLM), the Postgraduate Diploma and the Postgraduate Certificate?

The Postgraduate Laws Programme is built up from courses which cover a particular aspect of law. Each course is divided into four self-contained but integrated 'sections'. To gain an LLM you must study four full courses – which make up 16 sections; for the Postgraduate Diploma you must study 10 sections, chosen from no more than four courses; for the Postgraduate Certificate you must study five sections, again chosen from no more than four courses.

How do I progress from the Postgraduate Certificate to the Postgraduate Diploma, and on to the LLM?

Once you complete the five sections for the Postgraduate Certificate, you will progress automatically to study for the Postgraduate Diploma. Similarly, once you complete the

10 sections for the Postgraduate Diploma, you will progress automatically to study for the LLM.

Can I specialise in a particular area of law?

You are not required to specialise in your studies, but most students choose to focus their work and receive a specialisation.

If you would like to develop your specialist knowledge in a particular field it is possible to choose your courses to enable you to do this. This will allow you to receive your award with a particular named specialisation on your certificate.

We offer courses in 30 specialist areas. To have a particular specialisation on your certificate you need to follow the path outlined below:

For the Master of Laws (LLM) you must complete three (or four) courses chosen from those on the list which qualify for a particular specialisation. For the Postgraduate Diploma you must complete eight sections chosen from one specialisation list. For the Postgraduate Certificate you must complete four sections chosen from one specialisation list.

It is possible that there will be different specialisations for each of the Postgraduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma and the Master of Laws (LLM).

What advice can you give on studying by distance learning?

Distance learning is much more flexible than traditional face-to-face teaching. It allows you to study whenever and wherever is convenient to you, and to fit your studies in around professional or personal commitments. You can study wherever you live in the world - if you move country with your job for example, you can still continue with your studies.

However, studying by distance learning requires you to be highly motivated and disciplined in your approach, and will require you to be able to master complex problems independently. Many students find such self-directed study to be challenging, but the outcome is incredibly rewarding. As well as developing in-depth understanding of the subject, students improve their confidence and self esteem as a result of the process, increasing their self reliance, problems solving and time management skills.

How can I fit my studies into my schedule? And how many sections do you recommend studying at one time?

It is up to you how you schedule your studies, depending on your work and personal commitments as well as your study situation and study style. However it is recommended that you will need to dedicate a total of approximately 115 hours for each section you study – which means it will take about 1,800 hours total to complete the full Master of Laws (LLM). Regular, probably daily, study and a place which helps you to concentrate are the keys.

Most students appear to study one course (all four sections) twice a year. In this way, they would finish the entire LLM within two years.

However you have up to five years to complete your studies on the Postgraduate Laws Programme, allowing you to balance the workload with any other commitments you may have.

Can I succeed in the LLM - particularly as the course is at postgraduate level and my first degree is not in law?

If you are motivated, well organized and prepared to take on a challenge you can succeed! Half of the students currently enrolled are not practicing lawyers, and a high proportion does not have English as their first language, yet the pass rate in the examinations in 2006 was 86.5% while in 2007 it rose to 88.6%. This is not because the examinations are easy to pass, not at all, but because you are able to study for individual sections of the Programme in easily manageable parts. More importantly, the comprehensive study materials are effective in enabling you to understand the study requirements and get to grips with the subject. They are written by experts in the subject and tested by external advisers to make sure that they are effective for those studying independently.

We supply three Skills Guides free of charge to all students. One is in Legal English, another in Study Skills and the third in Assessment Skills. These will help you in a more general way with the Programme.

What support can I get for my studies?

The study materials are designed for independent study. You will have access to a specialist library online with more than 10 databases. We also provide past examination papers and, for most courses, Reports from Examiners on the exam results. In addition you may find it useful to meet online with other Postgraduate Laws students and participate in discussion groups. Face to face support classes may be offered by teaching institutions in your city. To find out what is available, please visit our website and go to:

http://www.londonexternal.ac.uk/prospective_students/postgraduate/laws/study.shtml

What is the format of the exams?

Each section is assessed by a 45-minute written examination, with five minutes reading time, in which you will have a choice of two previously unseen questions from which you must answer one. The questions may be essay type or problem questions. Examinations take place twice a year, in May and October, over one week. This means if you miss an exam session you only have to wait six months for the next one.

How many times can I repeat exams?

You may repeat an examination once. If you fail it for a second time your registration with the University of London for the Postgraduate Laws Programme will cease.

There is no separate fee to sit the exam the first time for each section; that fee is part of your normal section fee. There is a fee to repeat an examination, which is currently £32 per section.

Am I eligible to apply?

You can start your studies on the Postgraduate Laws Programme if you have any undergraduate degree from a recognised university or five years relevant work experience. Your first degree does not need to be in law. You would start by taking the

Postgraduate Certificate and, when you completed that, you will automatically move onto the Postgraduate Diploma and from that to the LLM.

If you have a degree in any subject from a recognised university with the equivalent of Second Class Honours or a Masters degree in any subject, you can start immediately working on your Postgraduate Diploma. (Of course, on your way to completing the 10 sections for the Postgraduate Diploma, you will complete five sections and so qualify to receive the Postgraduate Certificate.) When you completed your Postgraduate Diploma, you will automatically move onto the LLM.

If you have a law degree from a recognised university with the equivalent of Second Class Honours or are a practising lawyer or barrister or the equivalent, you can start studying for your LLM. (Again, on your way to completing the LLM, you will complete five sections and so qualify to receive the Postgraduate Certificate and 10 sections for the Postgraduate Diploma.)

In the end, everyone who passes their exams can continue on to receive the LLM, wherever they started in the process.

You will also need to have passed examinations to show you have a good standard of English if your first language is not English.

If you apply for the Master of Laws (LLM) or Postgraduate Diploma and we do not believe you have the necessary qualifications, we will also automatically consider whether you would qualify to start studying for the Postgraduate Certificate. Of course, it will speed up the process for you if you apply to study for the appropriate award based upon your qualifications!

The course seems expensive – how can I spread the costs?

The fee reflects the fact that the degree is designed to meet the specialised needs of working professionals. The learning materials are an outcome of extensive research and development by world-class academics and many other staff members.

The fee of £6,390 (2009 prices) for the Master of Laws (LLM) degree is much cheaper than the £12,000+ fees it would cost if you were to study for an LLM at the University of London on campus, at Queen Mary or UCL for example. And to that you would need to add living expenses of at least another £10,000. Plus we provide all the textbooks as part of your fees.

And studying by distance learning allows you to continue to earn while you study and not interrupt your career.

After paying the Registration Fee, most people choose to pay the fees as they study, section by section. If you wish you can pay the entire fee upfront in one go.

Are there any scholarships available?

We don't offer any scholarships, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't try to obtain one elsewhere. We would recommend that you try contacting your British Council office to see if they know of any scholarships or funding that may be available to you. You may also wish to try an educational charity or your employer to see if they would sponsor you.

What is the relationship between independent teaching institutions and the University of London?

From early 2009, the University will be implementing a new policy framework to cover our relationships with the teaching institutions which provide support for External students. The framework is designed to recognize Centres that meet a set of specific quality criteria, and to guide University of London External students towards these Centres. Please check our website regularly for further information.

Currently we provide details of institutions that we know to be offering tuition to our students. However, this listing does not currently constitute any recommendation or endorsement of that institution by the University of London.

What documents will I receive when I graduate?

When you graduate with a degree, diploma or certificate from the University of London you will be sent two documents - a final diploma (i.e. the parchment you receive on graduation) and a Diploma Supplement.

The final diploma will indicate that you were registered with the University of London and awarded a University of London degree, and give the name of the Lead Colleges which conducted the examinations – that is to say Queen Mary and UCL are given for Postgraduate Laws. The University of London logo and signature of the Vice-Chancellor of the University of London are incorporated.

The Diploma Supplement will describe the nature, level and content of the programme you successfully completed and include a transcript of courses taken and marks achieved, as well as the overall classification. It also provides further information about the role of the Lead College and method of study. It explains that there is no difference between the standards of awards whether they are obtained by external study or face-to-face at a College of the University of London.