

LW6100E: ADVANCED LEGAL RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Effective Term

Semester A 2025/26

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Advanced Legal Research Methodology

Subject Code

LW - Law

Course Number

6100E

Academic Unit

School of Law (FL)

College/School

School of Law (FL)

Course Duration

One Semester

Credit Units

3

Level

P5, P6 - Postgraduate Degree

Medium of Instruction

English

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

Nil

Precursors

Nil

Equivalent Courses

LW6700/LW8700D/LW8709D Advanced Legal Research Methodology
LW6700 and LW8700D are the old course codes for LW8709D

Exclusive Courses

LW6703 Globalisation and Legal Research Methodology

Part II Course Details

Abstract

This module aims to enhance research students' skills in research and writing. It provides a comprehensive overview of the skills in relation to legal reasoning, research methods, and legal writing, combining theoretical insights and practical applications. The course covers understanding the nature of studying law and legal reasoning, the distinct features of legal research, formulating legal questions, research design, ensuring originality, exploring various research methods, sourcing research materials, legal referencing and citation best practices, preventing plagiarism, maintaining academic integrity, and integrating technology into legal research. Students will sharpen their critical thinking abilities and learn to distinguish between analytical and research approaches. Active participation in class discussions is encouraged, with students often receiving handouts—including sample writings—for analysis, discussion, and critique. Artificial intelligence (AI) will be used to foster curiosity, skill-building, and creative problem-solving, though overreliance on AI is to be avoided.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs	Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Understand and demonstrate various kinds of research skills which are essential for conducting legal research at an advanced level.	x	x	x
2	Demonstrate critical thinking and reasoning skills through paper writing and class discussions	x	x	x

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs	Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Lectures	Weekly lectures on key topics in the field of Legal Research Methodology. The Course Leader will also lecture on "literature search" and illustrate it with examples.	1, 2
2	Research Proposal	Students are required to conduct independent research and write a research proposal.	1, 2

3	Class Presentation	Students are required to give one class presentation on their research project/ proposal, and specifically the methodology of their project.	1, 2	
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Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

	ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("-" for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	A research proposal of 6,000 words	1, 2	60	<p>While generally students are not encouraged to rely on AI, they are permitted to use GenAI for assignment completion. The pedagogical objectives limit the use of AI to three specific purposes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Utilizing AI instead of traditional search engines to gather sources; 2. Developing the skills to pose questions to AI that effectively prompt useful answers; 3. Garnering inspiration from the points of knowledge/ideas/ thoughts generated by AI. <p>Students are strictly prohibited from directly incorporating sentences or expressions produced by Gen AI into their assignments. This would be viewed as plagiarism. When AI has been utilized in their work, it is crucial that students acknowledge this fact.</p>	Yes

2	Class participation and presentation	1, 2	40	<p>While generally students are not encouraged to rely on AI, they are permitted to use GenAI for assignment completion. The pedagogical objectives limit the use of AI to three specific purposes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Utilizing AI instead of traditional search engines to gather sources; 2. Developing the skills to pose questions to AI that effectively prompt useful answers; 3. Garnering inspiration from the points of knowledge/ideas/ thoughts generated by AI. <p>Students are strictly prohibited from directly incorporating sentences or expressions produced by Gen AI into their assignments. This would be viewed as plagiarism. When AI has been utilized in their work, it is crucial that students acknowledge this fact.</p>	Yes
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Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Minimum Continuous Assessment Passing Requirement (%)

40

Additional Information for ATs

Applicable to students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter

Students must obtain a minimum mark of 40% in both research proposal, class participation and presentation, and an overall mark of 40% in order to pass the course.

Applicable to students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024

Students must obtain a minimum mark of 50% in both research proposal, class participation and presentation, and an overall mark of 50% in order to pass the course.

Assessment Rubrics (AR)

Assessment Task

Class participation and presentation (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter)

Criterion

Students are required to attend at least 70% of the classes (lectures, seminars, presentations). If a student does not meet this requirement, he/she may be disqualified for assessment.

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) Strong evidence of original thinking; good organisation, capacity to analyse and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter; evidence of extensive knowledge base.

Good

(B+, B, B-) Evidence of grasp of subject, some evidence of critical capacity and analytical ability; reasonable understanding of issues; evidence of familiarity with literature.

Fair

(C+, C, C-) Student who is profiting from the university experience; understanding of the subject; ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material.

Marginal

(D) Sufficient familiarity with the subject matter to enable the student to progress without repeating the course.

Failure

(F) Little evidence of familiarity with the subject matter; weakness in critical and analytical skills; limited or irrelevant use of literature.

Assessment Task

A research proposal of 6,000 words (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter)

Criterion

- Selection of topic
- Formulation of aims and objectives of research including reasons for the selection of topic, why it is worthy of study, research question(s) etc.
- Procedure including design of proposed research and literature review
- Data collection and methods of analysis
- Literature review and bibliography
- Timetable

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) Strong evidence of original thinking; good organisation, capacity to analyse and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter; evidence of extensive knowledge base.

Good

(B+, B, B-) Evidence of grasp of subject, some evidence of critical capacity and analytical ability; reasonable understanding of issues; evidence of familiarity with literature.

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(C+, C, C-) Student who is profiting from the university experience; understanding of the subject; ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material.

Marginal

(D) Sufficient familiarity with the subject matter to enable the student to progress without repeating the course.

Failure

(F) Little evidence of familiarity with the subject matter; weakness in critical and analytical skills; limited or irrelevant use of literature.

Assessment Task

Class participation and presentation (for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

Criterion

Students are required to attend at least 70% of the classes (lectures, seminars, presentations). If a student does not meet this requirement, he/she may be disqualified for assessment.

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) High

Good

(B+, B) Significant

Marginal

(B-, C+, C) Moderate

Failure

(F) Inadequate

Assessment Task

A research proposal of 6,000 words (for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

Criterion

- Selection of topic
- Formulation of aims and objectives of research including reasons for the selection of topic, why it is worthy of study, research question(s) etc.
- Procedure including design of proposed research and literature review
- Data collection and methods of analysis
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Excellent

(A+, A, A-) High

Good

(B+, B) Significant

Marginal

(B-, C+, C) Moderate

Failure

(F) Inadequate

Part III Other Information

Keyword Syllabus

The course covers the following topics:

- a. Nature, objectives and structure of research in legal studies
- b. Argument making, critical thinking, and reasoning
- c. Doctrinal research
- d. Empirical legal research
- e. Comparative law research methods
- f. Legal theories and legal research
- g. Interdisciplinary research: law, society, politics, economics, and history
- h. Artificial intelligence and legal research

Reading List

Compulsory Readings

Title	
1	Compulsory readings will be provided in the form of course packs prepared by the lecturer which will be uploaded to Canvas (the "Files" section) each week before the class. The course packs comprises not only materials about legal research methods but also sample writings including journal articles and book chapters to illustrate the use of research methods in various ways.

Additional Readings

Title	
1	Recommended Readings:
2	Lee Epstein and Andrew D. Martin, <i>An Introduction to Empirical Legal Research</i> (Oxford University Press, 2014)
3	Frans L. Leeuw (with Hans Schmeets), <i>Empirical Legal Research: A Guidance Book for Lawyers, Legislators and Regulators</i> (Edward Elgar: 2016)
4	Watkins, Dawn and Burton, Mandy <i>Research Methods in Law</i> (Routledge, 2018)
5	Mike McConville and Wing Hong Chui, <i>Research Methodologies for Law</i> (Edinburg University Press, 2007)
6	Simon Halliday and Patrick Schmidt, <i>Conducting Law and Society Research</i> (Cambridge University Press, 2009)
7	Michael Head and Scott Mann, <i>Law in Perspective: Ethics, Society and Critical Thinking</i> (UNSW Press, 2005)
8	Kenneth J. Vandavelde, <i>Thinking Like a Lawyer</i> (Westview Press, 2010)
9	Friedrich V. Kratochwil, <i>Rules, Norms and Decisions: On the Conditions of Practical and Legal Reasoning in International Relations and Domestic Affairs</i> (Cambridge University Press, 1989)
10	Wayne C. Booth et al., <i>The Craft of Research</i> (University of Chicago Press, 2017)