

**PhD in Law
Program Guidelines and Requirements
2020-2022**

Below is an overview of the suggested course of study for doctoral students in law (Ph.D.). However, a student may have to follow a slightly different schedule depending on his/her research topic and personal and professional demands. If that is the case, the student must first consult with his/her thesis supervisor and members of the thesis committee. Students must take into consideration the following elements when establishing their schedule and course of study; they must remain registered full-time for the duration of the program (maximum 5 years).

When it is necessary to make changes to a student's course of study (i.e. request an extension, request for leave of absence, etc.) the student must submit a **Service Request** through their uoZone portal under applications. Once submitted the approval process will begin and student will be notified once all approvals have been received.

Suggested course of study:

Term	Courses/Activities
Year 1	DCL 8330 – Legal Research Methodology and Theory (*usually offered in the fall) DCL 9998 – Comprehensive Exam (Must remain registered in this course until completed)(Should complete no later than term 4 of PhD program)
Year 1	DCL 9998 – Comprehensive Exam 1 Elective course (related to the thesis research area)
Year 1	DCL 9998 – Comprehensive Examination
Year 2	DCL 9998 – Comprehensive Examination DCL 9997 – Thesis Proposal Examination (Must remain registered in this course until completed)(Must complete prior to submitting thesis for evaluation)
Year 3 & 4	DCL 9997 – Thesis Proposal Examination
Year 3 & 4	THD 9999 – PhD Thesis

DCL 8330: Legal Research Methodology and Theory

This course provides an overview of important methodological and epistemological questions as well as methods used in legal research and writing. This course is compulsory for all PhD in Law students.

Elective Courses

Students are required to complete one elective course as part of their PhD program. The elective course is chosen from the bank of graduate courses offered at the Faculty of Law or, where appropriate, from another faculty at the University of Ottawa. The course must be relevant to the student's doctoral research and must be approved by the student's supervisor.

DCL 9998: Comprehensive Exam

The comprehensive exam course is intended to provide the student with an opportunity to read and master materials tailored to his/her particular area of study, taking into account his/her previous training.

The student will complete this course under the direction of his/her supervisor and two other proposed committee members. By the end of the student's third or fourth term in the program, they are generally expected to have completed both the written and oral parts of the comprehensive exam.

a) Setting up a committee:

The student's supervisor is responsible for approaching two or three colleagues (whether from the Faculty of Law, other faculties on campus or from other Universities) to serve as committee members that participate in and evaluate DCL 9998 and DCL 9997. Members selected for the committee can also serve as examiners in the evaluation process of the PhD thesis evaluation.

Supervisors are encouraged to have the committee established soon after the student arrives and commences the PhD program, so that a reading list may be prepared in time for the student to make significant progress during their first term of registration.

b) Preparing the reading list:

Once the committee has been established, its members should begin working with the student to design a list of readings. The premise is that the readings assigned to the student will be works with which the student is not familiar or, if familiar, be works that require substantial additional study beyond what the student may have already done in connection with them.

The reading list can be organized in different ways and should be left to the discretion of the supervisor and committee members.

Nevertheless, here are some examples of how the list could be prepared:

The student may complete readings in one single area related to their thesis proposal under the supervision of their supervisor and committee members. Then the supervisor and each committee member would then supervise the part of the reading list with which he/she is the most familiar.

Alternatively, the list may be organized around two or three "fields" chosen with reference to the student's thesis proposal.

Fields may be substantive or methodological or both. Examples of fields include:

- The effectiveness of law
- A comparison of labour law
- Classical theories on punishment
- Critical theories of international law
- Legal ethnology
- Epistemological and ethical aspects of research on Aboriginal subjects
- Feminist theories of law
- The concept of prevention in international law

- etc.

Despite the fact that this might not be appropriate for every course of study and despite the fact that this is not mandatory, we encourage students to include one interdisciplinary field in their reading list, a field that seeks to combine study of the law with insights from a discipline other than law (such as economics, history, criminology, sociology, philosophy, political science, population health, and so on).

As an indicator, each field should include around 1000-1500 pages up to a maximum of 3500 pages. The total number of pages if readings relate to one single field should be around 3000 with a maximum of 3500 pages.

c) **Submitting the reading list:**

The student must submit a **preliminary list** with full bibliographical references (electronic version) to their supervisor and committee members no later than **the end of the first term at the PhD**. The preliminary list should contain a sufficient number of readings to allow for suitable progress pending the submission of a final list. This being said, this could mean that the student has yet to submit the name(s) of one of their committee members or that some readings are missing under one field or another. The reading list should be accompanied by the form DCL9998 “*Confirmation of Comprehensive Exam Committee Members*” available on the Graduate Studies in Law website: (<https://llm.phd.uottawa.ca/en>) under the “Student Hub” section.

We understand that the list may be modified as the student progresses in their readings and develops new ideas and interests. However, it is important to have a final list of readings that the student, supervisor and committee members agree will be the basis of evaluation. This **final list** should be submitted, electronically, to the supervisor, committee members and Graduate Studies in Law office (etudgrad@uottawa.ca), no later than the **end of the student’s second term**.

d) **Completing the readings:**

The student must meet with their supervisor and each member of their thesis committee **at least twice** to discuss the readings.

Within this context, supervisor, committee members and student are free to establish their own approach based on their needs and availability.

For example, these meetings could take place once a term for each field or on a schedule agreed to by the student, supervisor and committee members. The student might elect, for example, to do the readings in a specific field during the first term and those in another field in the second term depending on the availability of the supervisor and each of the committee members. The supervisor and members of the committee might also elect to meet as a group with the student to discuss a series of readings.

These meetings can have several formats. For example, one member might ask the student to provide a brief summary (1 to 2 pages) of the readings completed and the key issues they raise before each meeting in order to provide a framework for the discussions and to facilitate the task of the supervisor and committee member. Another approach might be to submit a series of questions on the readings to the student prior to the meeting and then to discuss the questions during the meeting.

e) **Evaluating the student:**

The thesis committee (led by the supervisor) has the freedom to determine the content and format of the two examinations related to the comprehensive examination. In addition, the student’s supervisor must keep the Graduate Studies in Law office in cc (etudgrad@uottawa.ca) when submitting the written exam as well as confirming the oral exam. Also, the student must cc (etudgrad@uottawa.ca) the Graduate Studies in Law Office when submitting the written responses.

Written Examination

The first evaluation of the comprehensive exam activity is a **written** examination for which a grade of **satisfactory/not satisfactory** will be assigned. The student must pass the written examination before being permitted to proceed to the oral examination.

The suggested format is a take-home style exam of one to two weeks duration for which each committee member would contribute a question and subsequently evaluate the student's answers. Alternatively, the Committee could agree on one single question, the student's answer then being assessed by all members. The target length of the written answer(s) should be approximately 30 pages (double-spaced) in total.

When the committee and the student are ready to proceed with the exam, the supervisor should inform the Graduate Studies Office (etudgrad@uottawa.ca) of the date of the exam. The supervisor should then arrange for the student to receive the exam questions. Once the student has completed the exam, he/she should submit electronic version to the supervisor, each committee member and copy to the Graduate Studies office (etudgrad@uottawa.ca).

Once the committee has reviewed the exam, they should submit the Comprehensive Exam Written Evaluation form and include any comments; this form is submitted to the Graduate Studies in Law Office or by PDF attachment to etudgrad@uottawa.ca. This form is available on the Graduate Studies in Law website under the "Student Hub" section.

If a majority of the members, supervisor and committee members, consider the work to be "**not satisfactory**", the Vice-Dean of Graduate Studies will be informed and may contact each committee member. The committee members and the Vice-Dean of Graduate Studies will then decide whether or not it is appropriate to allow the student to continue in the program and to take a supplemental examination. If a supplemental examination is offered, the supervisor and committee members will decide on what modifications the student must make.

"5.1.2 Failure of a course, comprehensive examination, thesis proposal or major research paper

Supplemental examinations are not allowed in graduate studies courses (including in undergraduate courses taken for credit in graduate programs, qualifying program courses or supplementary courses). If a student fails a course, the student may repeat the course or retake the comprehensive examination, revise and resubmit the thesis proposal or major research paper, or take another course specified by the academic unit. The failing grade will remain on the transcript even if the student successfully repeats the course, retakes the comprehensive examination, or resubmits the thesis proposal or major research paper.

Students whose progress is unsatisfactory, or who do not meet the requirements of their program, will be withdrawn from the program. Reasons for withdrawal include:

- two failures in the program, whether of courses, the major research paper, the comprehensive examination or the thesis proposal (unless otherwise specified in regulations specific to the program); "

If the written part of the comprehensive exam is deemed "**Satisfactory**" then the student will proceed to the oral part of the comprehensive exam.

Oral Examination

The Oral Examination is the second component of the student's mastery of the list of readings prepared for DCL 9998. This second component is an oral examination of approximately 1 hour to 1 ½ hours in length. It is an opportunity for the supervisor and all committee members to ask further questions that go beyond the written examination and/or to examine connections between the works and the student's project. **The student must have all comments from the written examination before proceeding to the oral examination.**

The oral examination is to be held on a date chosen by the supervisor and all committee members and may take place in the supervisor's office. The location and time of the exam are to be organized by the supervisor. Once established, we ask that the supervisor inform the Graduate Studies in Law office, of the date and time of the oral examination in an email to (etudgrad@uottawa.ca).

The oral examination is not open to the public. Once the committee has reviewed the exam, they should submit the Comprehensive Exam Oral Examination form and include any comments; this form is submitted to the Graduate Studies in Law Office or by PDF attachment to etudgrad@uottawa.ca. This form is available on the Graduate Studies in Law website under the "Student Hub" section.

If the supervisor and a majority of the committee members consider the oral examination to be “**not satisfactory**”, the Vice-Dean of Graduate Studies will be informed, and they may contact each committee member. The committee members and the Vice-Dean of Graduate Studies will then decide whether or not it is appropriate to allow the student to continue in the program and to take a supplemental examination. If a supplemental examination is offered, the supervisor and committee members will decide on what modifications the student must make.

DCL 9997: Thesis Proposal Examinations

After completing all other degree requirements, the student must present, in writing and orally, his/her thesis proposal.

The thesis proposal consists of the following:

- a) the title;
- b) the research topic;
- c) the summary framework (or outline);
- d) the research question or questions;
- e) an overview of the theoretical context surrounding the research questions;
- f) an overview of the main argument to be developed;
- g) the importance and originality of the research;
- h) the methodology used (if the student’s research project “involves human subjects” and therefore requires the approval of the Office of Research Ethics (<http://www.research.uottawa.ca/ethics/index.html>), the student should mention whether this approval was sought or when it will be);
- i) A timeline for the accomplishment of the different stages of the thesis including ethics approval where applicable;
- j) and a relevant bibliography.

The thesis proposal consists of 20 to 25 pages double spaced (excluding the bibliography).

The student must submit an electronic version of the thesis proposal to their supervisor and each committee member as well as copying the Graduate Studies in Law office (etudgrad@uottawa.ca).

The thesis supervisor and committee members read and approve the thesis proposal. The committee members may make any comments they deem appropriate and may suggest any revisions to the thesis proposal. No evaluations need to be handed in at this point. All communication are between the student, supervisor and committee members.

When all are satisfied with the proposal and deem the student ready, the student will be asked to proceed with an oral defence of their thesis proposal.

If the supervisor and one or more of the committee members express serious concerns about the proposal, the Vice-Dean of Graduate Studies will be informed. They will bring all members together to discuss the modifications that need to be made by the student before proceeding to the oral defence of the thesis proposal.

The oral defence of the thesis proposal is a public event dedicated to the promotion of the student’s research. It provides an opportunity for the student to present their project and to receive important comments and suggestions from their peers, Faculty members and, where applicable or desired, some external advisors may be invited to the defence.

The thesis proposal defence is organized by the supervisor and committee members. Once the date and time are confirmed the supervisor communicates with the Graduate Studies Law Office (etudgrad@uottawa.ca). The Graduate Studies Law office will then search for a location and confirm the oral defence.

The thesis supervisor chairs the oral defence presentation and the committee members must be present.

At the oral defence the student begins by describing their proposal for about **30 minutes**. This is followed by a period of questions and discussion with the committee members and people in attendance.

Once the oral defence is completed, the supervisor and committee members should submit the Thesis Proposal Evaluation form and include any comments; this form is submitted to the Graduate Studies in Law Office or by PDF attachment to etudgrad@uottawa.ca. This form is available on the Graduate Studies in Law website under the “Current Students” section.

If a majority of the committee members consider the oral defence to be “*not satisfactory*”, the Vice-Dean of Graduate Studies will then be informed. They will then meet with all of the committee members. The committee members and the Vice-Dean of Graduate Studies will then decide whether or not it is appropriate to allow the student to continue in the program and to take a supplemental examination. If a supplemental examination is offered, the supervisor and the committee members will decide on what modifications the student must make.

THD 9999: PhD Thesis

After the successful completion of the *Thesis Proposal Examination*, students must register for the *PhD Thesis* (THD 9999) and must remain registered for this activity until the thesis has been submitted for evaluation. Students and supervisors should be familiar with Academic Regulations II-7 Thesis available on the following webpage:

<https://www.uottawa.ca/administration-and-governance/academic-regulation-II-7-theses>

In addition, there is an extensive “Guide for Doctoral Thesis” also available on the following website: <http://www.uottawa.ca/graduate-studies/students/theses>

Steps

a) **Registration of thesis topic**

By the end of the third term of registration in the program, students must confirm their supervisor and the proposed title of their thesis.

The general research topic, including major themes and research topic, must be determined in consultation with the thesis supervisor.

These must be submitted through the student’s uoZone portal, click applications and choose service request to submit.

Writing

A thesis is a significant original body of work produced by a student during his/her studies at the university. A good thesis is thoroughly researched, demonstrates rigorous critical thinking and analysis, presents a detailed methodology and accurate results, and includes tenacious verification of knowledge claims

b) Progress Report

All students registered in a thesis program must submit an annual progress report.

Students who receive scholarships from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) or from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) must also submit progress reports.

The student must submit the progress report to his/her supervisor by creating a Service request through their uoZone.

If the student fails to submit a progress report, the access to registration will be blocked until the student remedies the situation. Not registering could have major financial impact and may eventually lead to the student's academic file being closed without further notice.

Any scholarship may be suspended or cancelled.

<https://www.uottawa.ca/graduate-studies/students/theses/submission-evaluation>

Examiners nomination

Note that for a PhD thesis there must be a minimum of four (4) examiners (three internal and one external, and this excludes the supervisor as they cannot be an examiner). The student in consultation with their supervisor proposes the list of examiners. It is the responsibility of the supervisor(s) to initiate the first contact with the examiners to ask if they would be available to evaluate the thesis.

The student must ensure that the nomination form of the examiners has been completed and forwarded using a Service Request through their uoZone. The list must be submitted at least **one month** prior to the thesis evaluation submission. Any delay in the submission of this form will delay the entire evaluation and defence process and may have financial consequences since the submission of the thesis cannot be accepted if the list of examiners has not been submitted

Submission and Evaluation:

When submitting a thesis for evaluation, **the student must be enrolled** in the term in which the thesis is officially submitted for evaluation (refer to Academic Regulation 11-7-Thesis (7.9.5)). It is important that the student submits the final draft to their thesis supervisor sufficiently early in the term. By doing so the thesis supervisor can read it, provide feedback and deliver it to the student in a timely manner and consequently, the student can then make the latest revisions or corrections and then submit their thesis for evaluation through their uoZone as a service request.

It is important to verify [important dates and deadlines](#), including the fixed time limit for one's program; the date at which the thesis must be submitted without having to register to the following semester; and, if the student registers for the following semester, the date which the thesis must be submitted in order to benefit from a refund of 100% **if eligible**.

Thesis submission method

The student has to submit an electronic copy (PDF) of the thesis by sending a Service Request through [uoZone](#).

Attention, Examiners may require a paper copy. The student will be notified if one or more examiners have requested paper copies and must provide them on request. The student must submit these paper copies (if necessary) to the Faculty of Law, Graduate Studies office.

Statement of the thesis supervisor

The supervisor acknowledges having examined the thesis and propose to submit it to the jury. The thesis supervisor will approve or refute the thesis submission throughout the uoCampus portal.

The thesis supervisor will approve the submission of the thesis if he or she is convinced that the thesis meets the standards of the program of studies. In some cases, the thesis supervisor may ask the student to further develop his or her work.

Students who wish to know their status at this stage must log in to the Candidate Center (uoZone).

Steps to evaluation

Evaluation by the board of examiners

The thesis will be evaluated and subsequently defended in front of a jury. The examination committee is composed of professors other than the thesis supervisor.

The examination committee members read and evaluate the thesis. They must express their opinion on the thesis and indicate if they consider that the thesis is ready for the defence. When the thesis has been submitted for evaluation, the student and the thesis supervisor(s) must not communicate with the examiners prior to the thesis defence (regarding the thesis evaluation).

Evaluation report

In the evaluation report, each examiner indicates whether the thesis is ready for defence or not.

Decision to defend the thesis or to revise the thesis prior to the defence

After receiving the evaluation reports, the student reads them and consults with their supervisor(s) before making the decision whether to defend their thesis or to make revisions before the defence.

The student has a period of 5 days to choose between these two options.

The decision to revise the thesis before the defence or to withdraw from the program will be a failure that will appear as an NS (not satisfactory) grade on the student's transcript.

The student who decides to revise their thesis must file it for defence with the same jury within a maximum period of three (3) consecutive terms. The student must be registered for each term to make the revisions.

Final Thesis version submission

Regulation

After the successful defence and correction of the thesis, the student must submit the corrected thesis through their uoZone as a Service Request in order to get the approval from the thesis supervisor.

The student will also need to register to receive the degree either by using the Apply for Graduation tab in uoZone (if online registration is open) or by submitting a Registration for Degree and Request for Diploma form (PDF) with the thesis as part of the same service request. [Obtain your degree](#)

If the student requests an embargo, they must also complete and submit an Embargo Request Form (PDF) as part of the same service request.

When the service request is approved, the student must submit the final version electronically in [uO Research](#), the institutional repository of the University of Ottawa. The University of Ottawa participates in the Thesis Canada program, whereby the electronic version of the thesis is harvested by Library and Archives Canada and added to their online collection. This is the final step to qualify to graduate.

Faculty of Law Doctoral Thesis by Articles: Guidelines

The FGPS Guidelines state that “A doctoral thesis must constitute a significant contribution to knowledge, embody the results of original investigation and analysis of the part of the student and be of such quality as to merit publication”. The thesis must make a significant contribution to the field of law.

A doctoral thesis in law will normally be in the monograph format. With prior written permission **of all members of** the thesis committee and the Vice Dean of Graduate Studies in Law, in **exceptional** cases the thesis may be in the form of a portfolio thesis. This is a thesis composed of articles accepted for publication in scholarly journals, which meets the requirements of the FGPS Guidelines (see s. 6.2 of Preparing a Thesis or a Research Paper at the University of Ottawa (Sept 2012) and for thesis by articles and the Faculty of Law’s more specific Guidelines for doctorates in law. The student must comply with and complete all other requirements of the PhD in law program. These guidelines apply only to the thesis requirement of the PhD in law program.

Eligibility and Permission

Any student in the doctoral program in law may seek permission to complete their degree by portfolio thesis instead of a traditional monograph. Regardless of the format of the thesis, all students are encouraged to publish their scholarship as they progress through their degree.

The student must apply for permission to complete their thesis in the form of a portfolio thesis. Written permission must be received from all members of the thesis committee and the Vice Dean of Graduate Studies in Law no later than the Thesis Proposal Examination.

Requirements

Publication

1. The articles must be accepted for publication in peer-reviewed scholarly law journals or as peer-reviewed chapters in books. (Articles in non peer-reviewed by well-regarded student run law journals, such as top tiered journals in the US, may also be found to be acceptable by the thesis committee). Where the work is multi-disciplinary, journals in related disciplines may also be found acceptable. The thesis committee will decide which journals are acceptable and appropriate for the doctoral thesis in question.
2. Peer-review of the published articles does not replace the judgment of the thesis evaluation committee. The thesis evaluation committee makes the ultimate determination of whether the portfolio thesis meets the standard and requirements of a doctoral degree in law in terms of originality, depth and coherence. The thesis committee may require revisions to any portion(s) of the portfolio thesis (even if one or more of the articles themselves are accepted for publication or published and cannot themselves be changed).

Length and Contents

3. There is no prescribed length for a single article or book chapter, however the overall Portfolio of work must represent a body of work equivalent to the standard and requirements of a monograph in law.
4. A Portfolio Thesis must include:
 - a. an introductory chapter which includes a thesis statement, a literature review, the theoretical foundation of the work and a statement of research methodology, and may contain other elements appropriate to the project;
 - b. a minimum of three research articles; and
 - c. a synthesis and conclusion which links and integrates the material addressed in the articles and provides a global summary and analysis.

Originality, Co-authorship

5. Originality: As required by the FGPS Guidelines, “all articles must have been prepared while the student was enrolled in the program of study for which the thesis is being written. Articles completed in a previous course or program may not be included among the articles in the thesis.”
6. Contributions of collaborators: The norm is for the student to be the sole author of all work in the portfolio thesis. In exceptional cases, for example in multidisciplinary work, the committee has the discretion to accept co-authored work, however the student must be the first or principal author and must have contributed a minimum of 2/3 of the content and writing of each article.

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