

6.1 Module 1: Introduction to the Irish Legal System

Module title			
Introduction to the Irish Legal System			
Module NFQ level (only if an NFQ level can be demonstrated)	Module number / reference	ECTS Value	Duration
Level 7	DLSP-IILS	5 ECTS	8 weeks
Parent programme(s). Principal programme title, and embedded(s) if relevant		Stage of parent programme	Semester No.
Diploma in Legal Studies and Practice		Award Stage	Block 1
Certificate in Legal Studies		Award Stage	Block 1
Teaching and Learning modes	Proportion (% of Total Directed Learning)		
Classroom / Face to Face	20%		
Workplace	-		
Online	-		
Other (Identify)	80%		
Entry requirements (statement of knowledge, skill and competence)			
Learners must comply with and meet programme entry requirements.			
Maximum number of learners per instance of the module	80 learners		
Average (over the duration of the module) of the contact hours¹ per week	4 hours		
Pre-requisite module title(s) (if any)	n/a		
Co-requisite module title(s) (if any)	n/a		
Is this a capstone module? (Yes or No)	No		
Module-specific physical resources and support required per centre (or instance of the module)			
Lecture room with Wi-Fi access, digital recording facilities, Zoom access and digital projector.			
Specification of the qualifications (academic, pedagogical and professional/occupational) and experience required of staff working in this module. (Staff includes workplace personnel who are responsible for learners such as apprentices, trainees and learners in clinical placements)			
Role e.g. Tutor, Mentor etc	Qualifications & experience required:		# of Staff with this profile (WTEs²)
Lecturer	Lecturers expected to hold at minimum a Level 8 legal qualification, preferably with a professional legal qualification. It is an advantage to have completed the Certificate in Education, Learning and Development provided by Griffith College. Industry experience is beneficial but not a requirement.		0.25 WTE

¹ Effort while in contact with staff

² WTE is the whole-time equivalent number. The number 1 indicates a fulltime person fully dedicated to the programme. 0.5 indicates a part-time person available to this programme half of the time.

Analysis of required learning effort		
*Effort while in contact with staff	Minimum ratio teacher / learner	Hours
Classroom and demonstrations	1:80	21
Mentoring and small-group teaching	-	-
Other (specify)	-	-
Independent Learning		
Directed e-learning (hours)		-
Independent Learning (hours)		104
Other hours (specify)		-
Work-based learning hours of learning effort		-
Total Effort (hours)		125

Allocation of Marks					
	Continuous Assessment	Supervised Project	Proctored Practical Exam.	Proctored Written Exam	Total
Percentage Contribution	50%	-	-	50%	100%

6.1.1 Module aims and objectives

The purpose of the Introduction to the Irish Legal System module is to provide learners with an appreciation of key legal principles and an understanding of the Irish legal system and how it operates. The module covers foundational concepts which learners require to progress through the programme, including: an appreciation for the different sources of law; how to interpret said sources; legal research; academic writing; the concept of precedent and its effects; the hierarchy and jurisdiction of the different Irish courts; court practice and the respective roles of barristers, solicitors and legal executives.

Learners are taught how to navigate research platforms such as JustisOne, Westlaw, Westlaw UK, LexisNexis etc.; how to record methods of research; how to engage with hard-copy resources (e.g. textbooks, law reports etc.); how to engage with e-resources (e.g. e-journals, the Irish Statute Book, reports etc.); how to employ their knowledge of precedent to locate relevant case law; how to analyse and solve legal issues through application of precedent and other primary/secondary sources; and how to cite effectively using OSCOLA (Oxford University).

Said learning outcomes also reflect the essential requirements of legal practice and prepare learners for further study and engagement in the professional world.

6.1.2 Minimum intended module learning outcomes

On successful completion of this module, learners are able to:

- (i) Identify and distinguish between the sources of Irish law, including: EU law; the Constitution of Ireland; legislation; case law; and secondary sources.
- (ii) Define the doctrine of precedent and describe how it operates in this jurisdiction.
- (iii) Contrast the civil, criminal and appellate jurisdictions of the different courts.
- (iv) Evaluate the different roles of legal professionals, in particular: solicitors, barristers and legal executives.
- (v) Demonstrate strong legal research, problem-solving and writing skills.

6.1.3 Rationale for inclusion of the module in the programme and its contribution to the overall MIPLOs

The Introduction to the Irish Legal System provides learners with an overview of key legal principles and an understanding of the Irish legal system. It is a core module that provides a critical foundation, which learners may use to scaffold their understanding of the law as they progress through the Diploma in Legal Studies and Practice (DLSP) or Certificate in Legal Studies (CLS) programmes. In that context this module supports the achievement of MIPLO I.

It also covers the practical, research and legal writing skills that learners require if they embark on or continue their legal careers e.g. the navigation of academic databases, research platforms and use of academic methods (e.g. the use of the ILAC answering method) to tackle formal legal assessment and strengthen legal argument. In that context this module supports the achievement of MIPLOs II and III. It provides learners with the tools required to analyse sources of law. In that context this module supports the achievement of MIPLO IV.

The module also introduces learners to the hierarchy of Irish courts and the civil and criminal litigation process at both trial-at-first instance and appeal level. In that context this module supports the achievement of MIPLO V. The module employs formative group work in all lectures, encouraging learners to work effectively in group environments. The assessment component of a research record requires learners to critically analyse their research skills to date and record suggested improvements or amendments based on what they did successfully. This develops, from a learner's very first module, a spirit of continuous improvement, of incremental scaffolding and self-analysis.

By receiving feedback on all summative and formative assessments, learners are enabled to evaluate and reflect on their work, thereby facilitating improvement. In that context this module supports the achievement of MIPLOs VI and VII.

Finally, the module provides learners with the foundational knowledge required to analyse and critique sources of law, including: the methods by which the courts interpret Constitutional rights (e.g. using the literal, historical or harmonious approach) case law and legislation; the hierarchy of sources of law (e.g. the supranational nature of the EU); and the way in which legislation, case law and Constitutional provisions are reformed. In that context this module supports the achievement of the MIPLO VIII.

6.1.4 Information provided to learners about the module

Learners enrolled on this module initially receive a copy of the module descriptor, module learning outcomes, lecture plan, assessment briefs, assessment strategy and recommended reading list. These materials are given directly by the lecturer and also by the Programme Director as part of the Learner Handbook for award stage modules of the programme. All content is provided on Moodle as well as access to additional content through the library and online resources.

Online (via Moodle) learners are provided with video recording of each lecture, copy of PowerPoint slides, a module specific manual, extensive reading list, incorporating professional and academic and non-academic sources. Guest lectures will be introduced to ensure practical knowledge and real-life examples will keep the content relevant.

6.1.5 Module content, organisation and structure

The Introduction to the Irish Legal System is a 5 ECTS credit module taught over an 8 week Block. This Block includes 5 lectures (of 4 hour duration); one revision class; two reading weeks; and an exam week. Specifically, the topics covered are as follows:

TOPIC	DESCRIPTION
Introduction and Sources of Law (4 hours, 19%)	This lecture examines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The concept and purpose of 'law'; • The nature and classification of law; • The differences between common law and civil law systems; • The historical development of the Irish legal system; • The different sources of law (to include EU law, the Constitution, legislation, case law and secondary sources).
The Doctrine of Precedent (4 hours, 19%)	This lecture examines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic concepts of precedent; • Aims of precedent; • Distinction between binding and persuasive precedent; • Distinguishing cases; • Vertical vs. Horizontal precedent; • Persuasive authority; • Analysing judgments; • Ratio Decidendi; • Obiter Dictum; • Advantages/Disadvantages of the doctrine.
Legal Research and Academic Writing (4 hours, 19%)	This lecture examines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to read and interpret the different sources of law; • Legal Research; • Academic Writing.
The Irish Courts (4 hours, 19%)	This lecture examines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The hierarchy of the Irish courts; • The civil jurisdiction of the courts; • The criminal jurisdiction of the courts; • The appellate jurisdiction of the courts.
Legal Personnel (4 hours, 19%)	This lecture examines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role and education of barristers, solicitors and legal executives; • The appointment, retirement and removal of Judges. • Other significant legal personnel including the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Attorney General, County Registrars and County Sheriffs.
Revision & Preparation (1 hour, 5%)	This session will provide a revision class for learners with exam preparation guidance and assistance.

6.1.6 Module teaching and learning (including formative assessment) strategy

This module is delivered through a series of lectures and guest lectures. Learners engage with the module either in class; online via the online streaming option or via recorded lectures. On Moodle, the VLE, the lecturer can interact with learners via the class discussion fora and upload relevant additional learning material e.g. legal articles, case law, study aids and relevant multimedia. The module comprises of 21 contact hours, being 20 lecture hours and one revision/exam preparation class. Formative assessment is provided in the form of interactive exercises such as tutorial-style discussions, quizzes, directed class discussion topics and collaborative group work.

6.1.7 Work-based learning and practice-placement

There is no work-based learning or practical placement in the module.

6.1.8 E-learning

Griffith College uses Moodle, a virtual learning environment, to support its delivery of e-learning activities in the form of peer-to-peer support based around activities where learners give and receive feedback, forums where learners must contribute, formative quizzes and video links.

6.1.9 Module physical resource requirements

Requirements are for a fully equipped classroom. The classroom has Wi-Fi access and is equipped with a PC with Zoom and Microsoft Office. In addition the classroom has digital recording facilities and digital projector. No other software is required for this module. The College library has a dedicated law section and online legal research tools including Justice One, Westlaw, Hein Online.

6.1.10 Reading lists and other information resources

Primary reading

Byrne & McCutcheon, *The Irish Legal System* (2020, Dublin; Bloomsbury Professional)

Doolin, *Principles of Irish Law* (2011, Dublin; Gill and MacMillan)

Dernbach, Singleton, Wharton, Ruhtenberg, and Wasson, *A Practical Guide to Legal Writing & Legal Method* (2010, New York: Aspen Publishers).

Faculty of Law, University of Oxford, *OSCOLA 2006: The Oxford Standard for Citation of Legal Authorities*. Online at http://denning.law.ox.ac.uk/published/Oscola_2006.pdf

Secondary reading

Kenneally, & Tully, *The Irish Legal System* (2013, Dublin; Clarus Press)

O'Malley, *Sources of Law: An introduction to Legal Research and Writing* (2001, Dublin; Round Hall Sweet & Maxwell)

Schweppe, Kennedy, & Fahy, *How to Think, Write and Cite: Key Skills for Irish Law Learners* (2012, Dublin; Roundhall)

6.1.11 Specifications for module staffing requirements

Lecturers expected to hold at minimum a Level 8 legal qualification, preferably with a professional legal qualification. It is an advantage to have completed the Certificate in Education, Learning and Development provided by Griffith College. Industry experience is beneficial but not a requirement.

6.1.12 Module summative assessment strategy

Theoretical knowledge is assessed at the end of the module by examination (worth 50% of overall grade), the purpose of which is to enable learners to become accustomed to undertaking extended examinations which are a traditional method of assessment commonly used in law-based degrees on the NFQ and in the sphere of professional legal training.

The examination consists of a mixture of essay-style questions and problem-style questions. The former emphasises the demonstration of effective academic writing and an analysis of key concepts or topics on the programme. Problem-style questions are aimed at assessing the learner's ability to apply the law to practical, factual scenarios.

The examination is supplemented by a Case Brief (20% of overall grade) and Research Record (30% of overall grade). Both assessment components are aimed at enabling learners to use the legal research and academic writing skills taught in class and to apply same in a practical way. The following table indicates the module learning outcomes' alignment with the assessment used for the module:

No.	Description	MIMLOs	Weighting
1	Exam	(i) to (v)	50
2	Case Brief	(i), (ii), (v)	20
3	Research Record	(i), (ii), (v)	30

Reassessment/Repeat assessment strategy: Griffith College regulations state that learners must pass all component elements of the module to be deemed to have passed the module.

- In the event of a learner failing components of / this module, they will be required to submit a new individual repeat assignment which will be made available on Moodle to learners, and which must be submitted as per faculty instructions.
- In the event of a learner failing the group assessment element of this module, a new individual repeat assignment will be made available on Moodle to learners which must be submitted as per faculty instructions.
- In the event of the learner failing the exam, learners will take the re-sit exam at the next available sitting, details of which will be made available to learners via Moodle.

6.1.13 Sample assessment materials

Please see sample assessment supplementary document.