



# Graduate Diploma in Law /Common Professional Examination (GDL/CPE)

## Programme Specification

**Faculty of Education, Law and Social Sciences  
School of Education  
January 2012**

**Programme Specification**  
**Graduate Diploma in Law/Common Professional Examination**

**Date of Publication to Students: September 2012**

**NOTE:** This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the course and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detail on the specific learning outcomes, indicative content and the teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found (1) at [www.bcu.ac.uk](http://www.bcu.ac.uk) (2) in the Module Specifications and (3) in the Course Guide.

The accuracy of the information contained in this document is reviewed by the University and may be checked within independent review processes undertaken by the Quality Assurance Agency.

<b>Awarding Institution / Body:</b>	<b>Birmingham City University City North Campus Perry Barr B42 1SU</b>
<b>Teaching Institution:</b>	<b>Birmingham City University Law School</b>
<b>Acting Head of Law School:</b>	<b>Graham Romp</b>
<b>Current Course Director:</b>	<b>Jonathan Cooper</b>
<b>Interim Awards and Final Award:</b>	<b>Graduate Diploma in Law/Common Professional Examination</b>
<b>Programme Title:</b>	<b>Graduate Diploma in Law</b>
<b>Main fields of Study:</b>	<b>Contract, Tort, Crime ,Equity and the Law of Trusts, Land Law, Constitutional Law, EU Law, Legal Method, A Research Project, American Legal Placement</b>
<b>Modes of Study:</b>	<b>Full time attendance - one year Part time attendance - two years The course is not franchised</b>
<b>Validated Places:</b>	<b>50 Full time 35 Part time</b>
<b>Language of Study:</b>	<b>English</b>
<b>UCAS Code:</b>	<b>N/A</b>

**Relevant subject benchmark statements and other external reference points used to inform programme outcomes:**

JASB Handbook 2010  
NFQ H Level descriptors  
Law 2007 QAA 199 12/07

**JACS Code:** N/A

**Professional Status of the programme (if applicable):**

The programme is subject to compliance with the regulations of the professional bodies, the Solicitors Regulation Authority for intending solicitors and the Bar Standards Board for intending barristers. Successful completion of the Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL) functions as completion of the Common Professional Examination (CPE). The programme is designed for non-law graduates or mature students who wish to enter the legal profession. It must therefore also satisfy the requirements of the Joint Academic Stage Board (JASB) which represents the interests of the professional bodies. The GDL represents the academic stage of training; on completion of this academic stage, students who intend to become barristers will progress to a Bar Vocational Course (BPTC), whilst those wishing to qualify as solicitors will progress to a Legal Practice Course (LPC). For this reason, much of the core (compulsory) content of the programme is dictated by the requirements of the professional bodies.

**Programme philosophy and aims**

The overarching philosophy of the programme is to provide students with a sound foundation of legal knowledge in relation to fundamental areas of law, whilst developing skills necessary for the study of law and application of legal principles in practice, and by so doing, meet the requirements of JASB in terms of learning outcomes, skills development and regulations on admission and assessment. However, the programme also encourages and facilitates additional employability skills acquisition and independent learning which is of general benefit to students, whether or not they decide to enter the legal profession, and by so doing, meet the requirements for the award of graduate diploma.

To this end, the programme aims to provide students with:

1. A qualification accredited by the relevant professional bodies, which qualifies and prepares them for entry on to the next stage of legal vocational training.
2. A rigorous and coherent education in law; a sound foundation on which students can develop legal knowledge and competencies necessary for a career in legal practice.
3. A curriculum which integrates the study of legal theory and legal practice through application of law to fact and which places the law in the context of other disciplines in order to provide an integrated understanding of law and its functions in society.
4. A knowledge and understanding of the areas of law which are generally considered to be fundamental to the study of law (i.e. the English Legal System and the seven 'foundations of legal knowledge' subjects) as well as an additional area of law.
5. An appreciation of the relationship between English law and the Law of the EU.
6. The skills to carry out effective legal research.
7. The ability to effectively apply a range of skills (such as critical analysis, problem solving, planning and communication) in several different legal contexts, appreciating underlying principles, techniques of analysis & skills which are applicable across different legal contexts.
8. Support the development of IT skills and knowledge, particularly with regard to skills useful in the context of the practice and study of law.
9. The opportunity to enhance some of the skills required for independent lifelong learning.

10. The opportunity to enhance employability skills that will be useful in all careers, but especially in legal practice.
11. Opportunities to gain valuable experience through extracurricular activities, including the American Internship scheme and Mooting.

The philosophy and aims of the course are reflected in the learning outcomes which students must achieve to pass the course.

**Intended learning outcomes and the means by which they are achieved and demonstrated:**

**Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the course students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the legal system in England & Wales, its relationship with the law of the EU and the substantive legal principles concerning the areas of law studied, including an appreciation of the philosophical, sociological, historical, political, economic and ethical contexts in which the legal system and the substantive legal principles operate and how those substantive areas of law relate to each other.
2. Effectively and independently use a range of primary and secondary research resources to provide up to date information about subjects and topics studied and to interpret , analyse and evaluate the results of their research to produce a synthesis of well-established and innovative legal principles.
3. Use acquired knowledge to analyse complex abstract situations and particular legal principles, framing appropriate questions , identifying relevant legal principles and applying them to reach solutions and, where there is ambiguity or uncertainty, recognising potential alternative solutions and providing supported and rational arguments to justify conclusions.
4. Demonstrate the ability to learn independently, including devising their own research questions, assessing their own progress, skills and abilities and identifying issues on which assistance is needed and acting on feedback provided by peers and staff.
5. Communicate information, ideas, principles, solutions and arguments involving complex problems clearly, logically and using English with great care and accuracy.
6. Demonstrate transferable skills and abilities which are valuable to all career paths, but are particularly relevant to a career in legal practice, including:
  - Problem solving in complex, uncertain and ambiguous contexts
  - Working co-operatively and constructively in teams as well as competitively
  - Working autonomously and accepting accountability
  - Effective use of IT
  - The exercise of initiative

The learning outcomes for the course have been designed to reflect the course aims and to ensure coverage of the requirements of JASB (to enable the award of a CPE) and the University's generic level 6 descriptors for the award of a Graduate Diploma.

Maps showing where the requirements of JASB and the Generic Level 6 descriptors have been met by the programme learning outcomes are attached at included in the Course Guide.

These learning outcomes will be achieved by students through successful completion of all of the 'Foundation Modules' (see below under 'Programme Outline') as well as Legal Method and the 'Alternative Area of Legal Study'.

**Learning teaching, and assessment methods used**

The learning, teaching and assessment methods used on the GDL programme are primarily designed to ensure students can achieve the module and programme learning outcomes but have also been designed to implement the GDL's Teaching & Learning Strategy and Assessment Strategy, which have in turn been drafted to ensure the requirements of ELSS Faculty's strategies on learning, teaching and assessment have been met.

The different learning teaching and assessment methods that are used on the course are identified in the course guide and the module specifications. However, as an overview the following pedagogical approaches are adopted throughout the programme:

**Learning and Teaching overview**

The course encourages a blended approach to learning and teaching to try and ensure appropriate support for all students.

However, the primary focus of learning and teaching methods are face to face lectures and seminars. These will be supported by directed learning activities, including directed reading, preparation of specific presentation tasks, consideration of problem based learning scenarios, on-line presentations, on-line quizzes, flexible 'clinic' sessions, legal research workshops and the completion of (and feedback on) formative assessment tasks.

In order to ensure skills development on the course, individual modules will be responsible for focussing on the development of particular skills within seminar and lecture sessions and in the undertaking of directed learning tasks.

Specific modules will use different techniques to a greater or lesser degree and explanations of teaching methods used to achieve module learning outcomes are set out in the module specifications.

To achieve the module and programme learning outcomes, it is envisaged that students will have to complete a minimum of 1620 notional study hours over the course.

Teaching takes place from September to the May, with assessments in late May/early June over 39 weeks. There are two stages to the course, the induction period (the first 3/4 weeks of the course) and the 'normal teaching programme', which starts after the induction period. Full time students are required to attend on 2 full days a week. Part time year 1 students are required to attend for 2 days a week during the induction period and then 1 day a week thereafter.

Students who choose to do the American Legal Placement Module may be required to attend on a different day to study that module. Some monthly 'clinic' sessions may also be timetabled on a different day than the usual teaching days.

**Assessment methods in all modules:**

- Informal formative assessment continues throughout the year, including peer and tutor feedback through participation in seminars, submitting answers to problem and essay questions for tutor feedback, on-line quizzes, and an open door policy for students to seek additional feedback as and when they require it. Each of the foundation modules also provide students with 2 'formal' opportunities to attempt previous summative assessment questions, for which individual feedback is provided.
- Summative assessments are through coursework, (e-portfolio) patchwork assessment, oral presentation and examinations. Details of the summative assessment method relevant to each module can be found in the module specifications and an overview is included in the Course Guide.

These summative assessment methods have been chosen in accordance with the GDL's Assessment Strategy, to ensure assessment for learning, innovation in assessment as well as coverage of the programme learning outcomes and to ensure compliance with JASB regulations on assessment on a CPE.

In line with the GDL Assessment Strategy, assessments have also been designed across the course to strike a balance between assessment methods and the number of assessment points.

General assessment criteria will be published in the Course Guide and more specific subject related assessment indicators will be included in module guides. Assessment maps demonstrating when formative assessment and summative assessment take place in relation to modules are also included in the Course Guide.

Other than oral assessments and the American legal placement scheme host report, anonymous marking systems are in place.

Assessment weightings and calculation of student awards are referred to below.

### **Assessment Regulations**

As the assessment regulations are heavily prescribed by JASB, the GDL has its own set of assessment regulations. If those regulations are silent on a particular issues that arises then the University's SUAR4 regulations will be applicable.

### **Programme Outline Syllabus**

Successful completion of the course requires students to pass 9 modules, which are:

1. Legal Method
2. The Law of Contract
3. The Law of Tort
4. Constitutional and Administrative Law
5. Law of the EU
6. Criminal Law
7. Land Law
8. The Law of Equity & Trusts
9. An Independent Research Project or participation in the American Legal Placement module

All Modules are studied at 'Level 6' and modules 1-8 are all compulsory. Module 1 (Legal Method) is introductory in nature and that is reflected in when it is taught, how it is assessed and the fact it does not count towards the final grade. Module 2-8 are referred to as 'Foundations of Legal Knowledge' modules (Foundation Modules) and are compulsory. Module 9 is referred to as the 'Alternative Area of Legal Study' and students have a choice of whether to do an independent research project or the American Legal Placement module.

Full time students study all 9 modules in the year. Part Time students study only the first 5 modules in the first year and then modules 6-9 in year 2. Part time students must pass 3 of the 4 first year Foundation modules to progress to year 2.

The Legal Method module is taught at the beginning of the course (through pre reading and directed learning tasks and through teaching sessions in the induction period). It is then assessed in early October. Students must pass Legal Method in the first term to proceed with the rest of the course.

All other modules taken in 1 year begin after the induction period has finished and run for the rest of the academic year. The placement at the end of the ALP module takes place over the summer at the end of the academic year, with submission for assessment taking place for the resit examination board in September.

### **Materials**

Prior to commencement of teaching students are sent pre-course information on the course and pre-course reading and learning tasks.

During induction students are provided with module guides for each of the modules studied that year, which provide the module specification, an outline of the syllabus for each subject, an outline of important cases and statutes for syllabus topics, reading lists, a schedule of teaching sessions, seminar preparation tasks and an overview of teaching methods and assessment. Each module is also supported through materials on Moodle (see above for a summary). As a minimum students can expect to receive is lecture notes/slides, the module guide, links to useful websites, updates, and some additional formative assessment (for example MCQs).

### **Award**

On successful completion of the programme, students are awarded the Graduate Diploma in Law with a pass, commendation or distinction as well as recognition of successful completion of the academic stage of legal training by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (for intending solicitors) or the Bar Standards Board (for intending barristers). The course is exempted from the university's credit structure and there is no provision for an intermediate award on leaving the course early.

### **Classification of Award**

The Legal Method module **does not count** towards the final mark for the GDL/CPE and is simply assessed on a pass/fail basis. However, all students must pass the module to progress to complete the course. All other modules (the 7 foundations subjects and the 'Alternative Area of Legal Study' - the Independent Project/ALP) are counted equally towards a student's final award.

The structure of the course, the modules, levels and how the contribution towards the final award are shown in the table below, and progression on the course is shown on the following diagram.

NOTE – The GDL/CPE modules are excepted from the University's requirement for credit weightings.

### **Full Time (One Year) Level 6**

<b>Full time one year level 6</b>	<b>Final Assessment Weighting</b>
Legal Method ( Approx 4 weeks)	Pass /fail
Constitutional and Administrative Law	12.5%
Tort Law	12.5%
Contract law	12.5%
Law and the institutions of the European Union	12.5%
Independent Project or ALP	12.5%
Equity and the Law of Trusts	12.5%
Land Law	12.5%
Criminal Law	12.5%

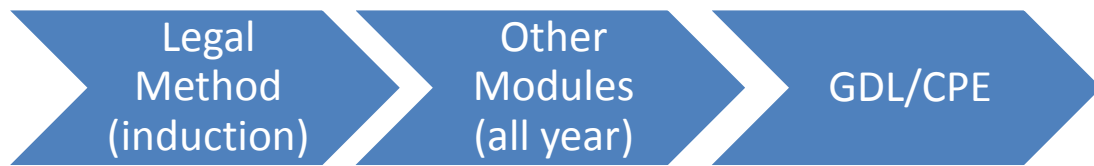
**Part Time (Two Years)**

<b>First year part time modules</b>	<b>Final Assessment Weighting</b>
Legal Method ( Approx 4 weeks)	Pass /fail
Constitutional and Administrative Law	12.5%
Tort Law	12.5%
Contract law	12.5%
Law and the institutions of the European Union	12.5%

<b>Second year part time modules</b>	<b>Final Assessment Weighting</b>
Independent Project or ALP	12.5%
Equity and the Law of Trusts	12.5%
Land Law	12.5%
Criminal Law	12.5%

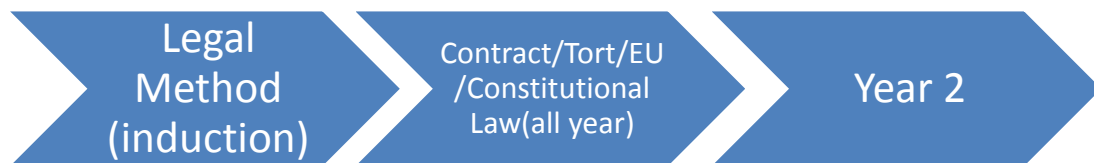


### **Progression on Course - Full Time**



### **Progression on Course - Part Time**

#### **Part Time Year 1**



NB students must pass Legal Method and three of the other Year 1 modules to progress to year 2.

#### **Part Time Year 2**



### **Support for Learning including Personal Development Planning (PDP)**

Students are encouraged to identify and, with guidance, to reflect on their own learning needs and are offered the following support in addition to those materials referred to above.

- An induction programme dealing with orientation, dissemination of essential introductory information and various 'study skill' input (including legal essay-writing and referencing; legal problem solving; and research (paper and IT based))
- At appropriate points, sessions on revision and examination technique
- Support from research staff specialising in particular areas set out in the research project titles
- Voluntary workshops specialising in improving personal effectiveness and employability run by the University.
- A Student Course Guide containing essential reference information relating to the University, Faculty, School of Law and the programme
- Access to administrative and academic staff, including the Head of School and Programme Director at reasonable times
- A personal tutor to advise on pastoral, academic and career issues
- Access to Faculty resources, including the Faculty Resource Centre, a range of supported IT equipment, including student email, an e-portfolio
- Access to the services of the library
- Access to careers advice from central University advisors, the Law School Careers Tutor, and individual personal tutors
- Access to the Law School's and the university's mentoring programme
- Assistance and support for learning skills from the University's Centre for academic success
- Access to the University's Student Services including financial advice, medical advice, disability service, crèche, counselling and chaplaincy services.
- Access to advice from the Student's Union

### **Admissions**

#### **Criteria for admission**

Candidates must satisfy the general admission requirements of the programme.

The current admission requirements can be found under the 'Entry Requirements' tab of the web page for this course.

### **Methods for evaluation and enhancement of quality and standards including listening and responding to views of students**

The programme team welcomes feedback on the content and processes of the course. The programme team and the Programme Director are involved in a number of mechanisms whereby the quality of the programme is periodically evaluated and improved. These include:

#### **Committees/Meetings:**

- Board of Studies
- Examination Board
- Faculty Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee
- Student Representative Meetings
- Student Experience Committee
- Faculty Board
- Senate Meetings

#### **Mechanisms for review and evaluation:**

- Individual module evaluation by students, staff and, where appropriate, stakeholders

- Annual review of modules by module leaders
- Annual course evaluation reports and action plans
- Annual monitoring process
- Peer Appraisal of teaching
- Individual performance reviews
- External examiners' comments and formal reports
- Student representatives' feedback to Boards of Studies and at student representative meetings
- Consideration of the minutes of Boards of Studies by Student Experience Committee
- Approval and review and re-approval events
- Student Questionnaires on the course as a whole and individual modules
- Student Experience Survey
- Programme Development Day
- Living Log, allowing students to provide feedback and comments on a continual basis