



University of the  
West of England

## MODULE SPECIFICATION

**Code:** UJGT7A-60-M      **Title:** Research and Practice Portfolio      **Version:** 1

**Level:** M      **UWE credit rating:** 60      **ECTS credit rating:** 30

**Module Type:** Project

**Owning Faculty:** FBL      **Field:** Law Postgraduate

**Faculty Committee approval:** QSC      **Date:**

**Valid From:** September 2008      **Discontinued from:**

**Contributes towards:** LLM in Advanced Legal Practice (by attendance)  
PG Diploma in Advanced Legal Practice

**Pre-requisites:**

1. Legal Practice Course or Bar Vocational Course; and
2. Completion of the PG Diploma in ALP stage - ie:
  - four Elective Modules; or
  - two Elective Modules and the CPD Module; or
  - the Bespoke CPD Module.

**Co-requisites:** Relevant practice experience

### Learning Outcomes:

#### 1. Research Methods

By the conclusion of the module, students will have undertaken a programme of study designed to enable students to undertake detailed legal research, including being conversant with the use of the latest research techniques in information retrieval so that students are confident obtaining, applying and presenting data.

The programme of study will provide an opportunity for students to:

- refresh and discuss techniques for conducting detailed legal research using the extensive text based and electronic resources available to UWE students; and
- conduct, assess, apply and record legal research in a practitioner context

On completion of the Research Methods programme of study students will be able to:

1. Adopt an appropriate methodology for research and analysis.
2. Locate all primary and secondary texts based resources available in or through the UWE library system and, where appropriate, at their work premises.
3. Update all data through 'Noter Up' publications.
4. Access information through online research database.
5. Pursue research activities by undertaking a range of 'electronic' searches.
6. Analyse the relevance of information acquired through research activities and apply the information to a client's circumstances (if appropriate for the purposes of the Research and Practice Portfolio).
7. Condense the information into an accurate and comprehensive record or memorandum with appropriate citations and references to sources.
8. Apply knowledge, critical thinking and problem solving skills to their research.

9. Apply a creative and reflective approach to enquiry and research processes.
10. Where appropriate in relation to the Research and Practice Portfolio, manage research over a prolonged period of time involving both theoretical and practical issues, demonstrating project management and organisational skills.

The Research Methods programme of study will provide the basis for completion of the Research & Practice Portfolio.

## 2. The Research and Practice Portfolio (the Portfolio)

By completion of the Portfolio, students will have produced the Portfolio from an approved Proposal that demonstrates an ability to:

1. Apply the chosen research methodology or methodologies.
2. Develop the chosen topic of research into a properly conceived, constructed and concluded Portfolio.
3. Deal with complex and specialised legal norms and be able, independently, to explore the current limits of legal knowledge.
4. Critically evaluate current research and advanced scholarship in the relevant practice area.

### **Syllabus Outline:**

#### 1. Research Methods

The Research Methods programme is designed to build upon and enhance the student's existing research skills (acquired on his/her undergraduate degree, on the Postgraduate Diploma in Law – the CPE undertaken by non-law graduates, on the Legal Practice Course or Bar Vocational Course and, where appropriate, in practice as a trainee and as a qualified solicitors or barrister). It is recognised that a student starting on the LLM award will have already developed significant and sophisticated research techniques and skills at an earlier stage of his/her legal education and, where appropriate, in practice.

The indicative content of the Research Methods programme is:

- Information retrieval using paper-based and electronic sources and the analysis of information gathered.  
(1 x two-hour workshop)
- Legal research techniques (including an introduction to research methodologies and theories, and to qualitative and quantitative research).  
(1 x four-hour workshop)
- The application, composition and presentation of legal research (including presentation of summaries of relevant current law), particularly in the context of the presentation of the Portfolio.  
(1 x three-hour workshop)
- Introduction to reflective learning (with particular reference to legal practice and the role of reflective learning in the preparation and completion of the Portfolio).  
(1 x three-hour workshop)

#### 2. Portfolio

The Portfolio is the culmination of the LLM award. It consists of the practical implementation of the theory and practices of research learned prior to embarking on the LLM award and enhanced on the award (including the Research Methods element of the Research and Practice Portfolio module). The Portfolio will consist of a self-generated portfolio of work that will demonstrate evidence of relevant research and engagement with existing knowledge and practice in the chosen practice area (as specified in the approved Proposal).

### **Teaching and Learning Methods:**

#### 1. Research Methods

The Research Methods programme will be taught through a series of interactive workshops. The staff/student ratio will normally be 1:8 and each student will normally have a computer terminal available to him/her with access to all of the electronic sources available to UWE students. One or more workshop(s) may take place in the university's Bolland Library and/or the LPC/BVC Resource Room (which replicates the resource of paper-based materials that would be expected to be provided in-house in a substantial firm of solicitors or chambers of barristers). This will enable the students to undertake exercises designed to enhance and develop their paper-based research techniques.

## 2. Portfolio

The Portfolio will comprise between 12,000 and 15,000 words in total. It will consist of a portfolio of know-how within an area of practice.

### Process

The student will be required to produce a Proposal in standard form (see below).

On the basis of the Proposal, the student will be assigned a Supervisor. The Supervisor may recommend alterations to the Proposal. The Supervisor and an External Examiner must formally approve the Proposal before the student embarks upon the Portfolio.

This is largely a project of self-study. The Supervisor will provide assistance and guidance for the student. The role of the Supervisor is to comment on the student's proposals and ideas (including research methodologies; sources found and to be used; the content of the developing work, and the final presentation of the Portfolio). This guidance is in addition to a written guide stating the general requirements of the Portfolio. The guide will include reference to issues such as the minimum and maximum number of hours the student should spend with his/her Supervisor; how to make the best use of his/her time with the Supervisor; how the work is to be presented, and how the assessment and grading criteria are to be applied.

### Parameters

The work will be divided into one or more assignments which may or may not be related. Students will be encouraged to draw on their own practical and professional experience (where appropriate) in selecting assignments, some or all of which may be initiated and generated in connection with work for the student's clients. The work presented in the Portfolio should comprise or reflect valuable know-how in a practitioner context providing evidence of the student's expertise in or knowledge of the relevant practice area.

### Possible Content

One or more of the following:

- an internal memorandum or practice note designed to give detailed guidance to legal practitioners on a specific subject within the relevant practice area;
- a detailed letter of advice, memorandum or report to a client on a specific legal transaction;
- a draft document (together with any appropriate ancillary documentation) in contemplation of or in response to a transaction in the relevant practice area, accompanied (where appropriate) by explanatory notes or other form of analysis and commentary;
- a draft document prepared in contemplation of a transaction, together with a critical analysis of the legal and commercial issues arising during the course of the transaction; or
- a set of materials encapsulating the relevant expertise designed for use in a training seminar for experienced solicitors or barristers.

### Format of Proposal

Title:

Practice Area:

Format: - type of content / document(s)

Rationale: - a brief outline of the reason for the choice of topic and the practice benefits to be derived from the product of the Portfolio

Parameters: - detailed outline and parameters of the topics covered by (and the extent of coverage of such topics) in the Portfolio  
- detailed description of the document(s) to be produced

Key sources to be used

(legislation, case law and journals, articles, practitioner works and academic sources)

Assessment criteria to be satisfied

### **Indicative Sources:**

1. Research Methods

All the paper-based and electronic sources available to UWE students at or via the university's Bolland Library and/or the LPC/BVC Resource Room.

2. Portfolio

Those primary sources (statutory and case law), practitioner works, professional journals and academic works referred to in the Proposal, together with other appropriate and relevant materials referred to by the student in the Portfolio.

### **Assessment:**

The Portfolio will provide the student with the opportunity to demonstrate the ability to undertake a substantial piece of independent work using a range of sources and authorities.

A student will achieve a '**merit**' in the Portfolio by achieving a mark of between 65% and 74% (inclusive) on the agreed criteria.

A student will achieve a '**distinction**' in the Portfolio by achieving a mark of 75% (or above) and by additionally satisfying the following criteria:

- creativity in developing new approaches and interpretation of existing or new areas of knowledge and / or innovations in practice; and
- creativity in exploring the limits of current knowledge and contributing to the development of practice.

**Note:** The work submitted will be certified as the student's own work and, though not necessarily an original contribution to knowledge, should represent a valuable addition to the student's firms' know-how (where appropriate). It is also recognised that a student may consult with senior colleagues in the course of his / her research for guidance purposes only (subject to the acknowledgement of all sources).

**Weighting between components A and B** n/a

#### **ATTEMPT 1**

#### **First Assessment Opportunity**

##### **Component A**

##### **Description of each element**

1 Portfolio

##### **Element weighting**

100%

#### **Second Assessment Opportunity (further attendance at taught classes is not required)**

##### **Component A**

##### **Description of each element**

1 Portfolio

##### **Element weighting**

100%

Specification confirmed by ..... Date  
(Associate Dean, Faculty of Law)

2005