

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

Paper No ASQEC/21/2h)

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

11 March 2021

Agenda Item 5.4.5

COVER SHEET

EXTENSION OF APPROVAL

Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Unit 18B: Law (PG)

Presenter: Professor R Fee

To consider a proposal for a one-year extension to the period of approval for the programmes within Unit 18B.

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

REQUEST TO EXTEND APPROVAL AND POSTPONE REVALIDATION

Form CA6b)

SECTION A: FACULTY REQUEST

FACULTY: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

SCHOOL: School of Law

REVALIDATION UNIT NUMBER AND NAME: 18B – LAW (UG/PG) [Note: The programmes in this revalidation unit are all postgraduate despite the name given]

MONTH/YEAR CURRENTLY SCHEDULED: April 2022

PERIOD OF EXTENSION REQUESTED: One year (this can be negotiated/reviewed in light of any backlog faced by Academic Office)

(eg one year to include the September 2018 intake)

COURSE(S): The whole unit.
(Identify specific courses unless the whole unit)

REASON FOR REQUEST:

The Covid-19 pandemic has placed nearly unbearable strain upon academic staff, administrative staff and beyond within the School of Law. The strain does not only come with increased administration within work as can be seen with mitigating measures that have been brought into place as well as providing the best possible teaching remotely. One must also be cognisant of the effect that the Government restrictions place upon individuals in their day-to-day life. This is clear with many staff having to adapt to home schooling and other aspects that were unforeseen as a result of the pandemic.

The purpose of the revalidation exercise should be to review the course and receive comments which will allow for improvement of the course for staff and students alike. At the present time it is unlikely that the revalidation process could be fully facilitated considering the strain that has been placed upon senior staff within the School of Law.

With the roll out of the vaccine programme, it is hoped and envisaged that there will be a return to normality over the course of the next year. This will, in turn, provide staff with the opportunity to focus on certain aspects of work which will include revalidation. Within the School of Law, we strive for excellence by continuing to develop our programmes to make them as current as possible and ensuring high quality teaching. Trying to deliver high quality teaching for our students has come at a price during the pandemic with increased workloads and administrative burden. This has limited the scope that staff have for other activities, one of which is revalidation. To ensure that the aims of revalidation are fully achieved, it is submitted that extending approval and postponing revalidation would be beneficial.

CURRENCY AND VALIDITY:

(Please confirm that the curriculum remains current and valid and provide evidence of this (eg extract from most recent external examiner reports and those of relevant professional, statutory and regulatory body)

The unit for revalidation comprises a range of separate postgraduate courses run by the School of Law. For this reason, the courses will be taken separately to outline how they have currency and validity.

LLM Access to Justice

Professor Morag McDermont in her most recent external examiner report (also taking into account the input from the other external examiner, Alan Russell) stated:

...both external examiners have been very impressed with the value to students of the conjuncture of practical and theoretical knowledge and reflection that the dissertation enables. Arguably it is this element of the course that makes the LLM Access to Justice stand out as such an important Masters level programme.

This is only a snapshot of the course but it is clear that by virtue of the LLM being regarded as outstanding and unique within the wider Masters landscape in the United Kingdom it shows it is current and valid.

Alan Russell, the second external examiner stated:

The LLM Access to Justice is an excellent, ground-breaking Masters course. Its strength is the live client work at its heart and the associated pedagogy and scholarship that underpins its approach to teaching and learning

Career development is built into A2J's design. We are proud to say that graduate records show a 100% employment rate with graduates taking up positions in legal practice, research, academia and government departments. Other graduates have moved into specialist legal advice and representation in the voluntary sector, mirroring the work they completed as part of their LLM. It is also a feature that, each year, the majority of not all student cohort have obtained employment before completion on the programme, largely through networking, interactive modular collaborations or client representation with practitioners, law firms, advice sector organisations. This is also supported by the programmes unique relationship with legal firms across the jurisdiction, many of which exclusively recruit A2J programme graduates due to their academic and experiential learning and vocational skills.

The reputation of the course was clearly evidenced when the former NI Justice Minister David Ford stated:

"Under the direction of highly experienced academics and legal practitioners at (the) University, the students gain invaluable skills, which benefit their career prospects and help those in need of expert legal advice ...it is clear that the work of the Law Clinic is of significant benefit to students and to the wider public, and I commend the students, staff and the University for the excellent service they are providing."

LLM International Commercial Law and ADR (with PgCert/PgDip Exit Awards)

This course only started running in September 2018. Therefore, it is in its third cycle of full-time students. It started from a position where it was current and valid at the time it was approved. The course has continued to develop to ensure that it is current and relates to the needs in industry.

In her most recent report (October 2020), Dr Deirdre Ahern commented:

This is a relatively new Masters programme at UU in its second year of operation. As indicated last year, it is innovative and well-structured. The programme content is appropriate to the learning level and the modules making up the programme cohere well. There is also evidence of well-thought out non-traditional forms of teaching and learning being included, including

delivery by Mediation Northern Ireland (some difficulties were understandably encountered with this element this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic).

The comments from Dr Ahern coupled with the recent approval of the course demonstrate how the programme has validity and currency.

PgCert and LLM Employment Law and Practice

Professor Morag McDermont in her general comments within the external examiner report stated:

This is an excellent unit which provides students with an important mix of academic knowledge and practitioner experience, backed up by an experienced teaching team and professionals as guest lecturers. The unit complements well the LLM in Access to Justice by providing important knowledge for conducting work in the Law Clinic and elsewhere.

This praise demonstrates the validity of the programme going forward as well as how it is current by virtue of the practical experience that is given to the students. It is also notable that the PGCert in Employment Law and Practice was recently nominated for best new postgraduate programme at the GradIreland awards demonstrating its quality as a course which links into the validity. The validity of the course is also underpinned by virtue of the range of applicants it receives not only from law but also human resources.

LLM Gender, Conflict and Human Rights & LLM Human Rights Law and Transitional Justice

Both of these programmes have been grouped together considering the coalescence between them by sharing modules and having the same external examiner. These two programmes are run out of the Transitional Justice Institute.

The external examiner, Mairead Enright, commented:

...these courses are very much part of UU's unique offer, as reflected in the international background of the student body. Students are well prepared to undertake demanding work towards future careers in NGOs, research and public policy.

This comment outlines the validity of the programme considering that it does provide a unique offering and that it is able to attract applications both domestically and internationally. The programme is clearly current by virtue of the expertise within the Transitional Justice Institute and how the graduates are able to seek employment in a range of industries.

LLM/MSc in Corporate Law and Computing

[Note: This course is now called LLM/MSc in Corporate Law, Computing and Innovation]

This course went through the CA1 process during the 19/20 academic year with the 20/21 intake being the first. As a result, there are no external examiner reports available for this course. By virtue of going through the CA1 process in the previous academic year it is submitted that it demonstrates sufficient evidence that the course is current and valid.

The development of a Masters bringing together Law and Computer Science is a natural development of the Legal Innovation Centre. The backing that has been received from those in industry demonstrates the validity of the programme. The course has grown out of an industry need for individuals with skills in relation to both law and computer science. This is evidenced by the fact that Citi have supported the programme through scholarships and placement opportunities.

STANDARDS AND QUALITY:

(Please confirm that quality is high and there are no concerns. Provide evidence of this through external examiner reports and annual monitoring datasets and reports)

As this unit relates to a range of separate and disparate courses, each will be taken in turn to demonstrate a high quality and that there are no concerns.

LLM Access to Justice

Professor McDermont, in her most recent report, outlined that the LLM in Access to Justice is 'fairly unique' but outlined that it is comparable with other masters' level courses throughout the United Kingdom. The glowing praise in the report relating to LLM in Access to Justice was clear with Professor McDermont stating:

This is a fairly unique course that provides students with the opportunity to develop both theoretical and practical skills that will support them in the practice law and/or enable them to deploy practical legal knowledge in a range of professional environments. The course is particularly enhanced by the students' engagement with the practicalities of legal services through their engagement with 'real life' cases as practitioners in the Law Clinic. The dissertation element of the course, which enables students to develop knowledge and critically reflect on 'law in action' through using a case they have been working on throughout the year as the basis for the dissertation, is particularly important to the students' learning outcomes.

Alan Russell, the second external examiner, was glowing in his praise for the course stating:

I have been responsible for two leading clinical legal education LLM courses at two other universities, London Southbank University and University College London. Ulster University's LLM in Clinical Legal Education compares favourably with those two courses.

The comments from the external examiners about the LLM Access to Justice demonstrate the high standard and there are no issues. The LLM has also been recognised by being nominated and winning some prestigious prizes.

The LLM Access to Justice (A2J) has won high-level national and international awards and recognition in every category of its work including pro bono activities, teaching, research, justice innovation and course delivery:

- The LawWorks and Attorney General Award 2014 winner for best new student pro bono activity in the UK.
- - The Hague Institute for the Internationalisation of Law (HiIL) "Justice Innovation" nomination 2014. The Law School was the only one in the UK and Ireland to be nominated.
- - The LawWorks and Attorney General Award 2016 – shortlisted for best contribution by a Law School in the UK
- - GradIreland's award for Postgraduate Course of the Year in Law 2017 as part of the Higher Education Awards
- - The LawWorks and Attorney General Award 2018 – runner up for best contribution by a Law School in the UK
- Irish Education Awards 2019 – shortlisted for best educational outreach activity in Ireland.

The quality of the casework, the innovative nature of the outreach work has been consistently recognised through scholarship provision of three Allen & Overy and one Department of Justice (DoJ) scholarship each year since 2014. The programme has also received Funding from the Garfield Weston Trust to create the University's Social Justice Hub in Derry/Londonderry and awarded University's Provost Outreach Award. The programme's work has been noted in various high level reviews; Civil & Family Justice Review (2018); Ministry of Justice (MOJ) 'Legal Support: The Way Ahead' (2019); and Department of Justice (DoJ) *Access to Justice Review Report*.

In the Irish GradIreland Awards for Higher Education, sponsored by the Irish Higher Education Authority, the LLM Access to Justice was shortlisted for best PG Law Course of the Year 2019.

LLM International Commercial Law and ADR (with PgCert/PgDip exit awards)

External Examiner, Dr. Deirdre Ahern commented in the most recent report that:

Assessment methods are strong learning outcomes are borne out by evidence of strong actual performance by students across the modules as a whole. This confirms the appropriateness of the programme design in terms of curriculum, assessment and learning outcomes.

Additionally, Dr Ahern concluded:

The standards and performance of students on the LLM in International Commercial Law & ADR stand well when compared with other similar offerings in the commercial law sphere in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

No concerns were raised by Dr Ahern in her report. The external examiner reports for this relatively new course demonstrate that it is of a high standard.

LLM/PgCert in Employment Law and Practice

Professor Morag McDermont commented in her most recent report that the LLM/PgCert in Employment Law and Practice:

... enable(s) students to demonstrate substantive knowledge as well as reflecting on the practical qualities required for the provision of legal advice and other aspects of a lawyer's professional requirements such as mediation, arbitration and adjudication.

The course is very well informed by practice and research. Students are given access to practitioners through workshops and guest lectures

Professor McDermont concluded that the course is comparable with other Masters level courses in other UK institutions. There were no concerns noted.

In the Irish GradIreland Awards for Higher Education, sponsored by the Irish Higher Education Authority the PG Certificate in Employment Law and Practice was shortlisted for the Best New Postgraduate Law Course.

LLM Gender, Conflict and Human Rights (with PgCert and PgDip exit awards) & LLM Human Rights Law and Transitional Justice

On the point of student learning, the external examiner Mairead Enright outlined:

The programme is appropriately demanding. While work generally takes a 'long essay' format, students are well prepared to choose independent research topics and shape their own arguments. The two-stage preparation for the dissertation module is appropriate and students benefit from detailed feedback.

Mairead Enright noted no concerns in relation to the delivery, assessment or otherwise of the programmes.

LLM/MSc Corporate Law and Computing (with Advanced Practice)

[Note: the name of this course has changed as a result of APAG approval in January 2021. It is now known as LLM/MSc Corporate Law, Computing and Innovation]

This course received approval in the 19/20 academic year and is running for the first time in 20/21 academic year. By virtue of the recent approval, it is clear that it has the requisite standard and quality. In postponing the revalidation process, it will allow for external examiner comments to be made on the running of this somewhat unique course where Law and Computer Science are brought together. This will give a greater grounding for the revalidation exercise vis-à-vis this course.

There is a robust system in place of student evaluation/staff-student consultative committees which seeks to gather any issues and deal with them after only being approved.

PSRB (if applicable):

(Please confirm that any deferral will be accommodated by the PSRB and that accreditation will be ongoing for the full duration of the deferral)

N/A

DEMAND:

The postgraduate community within the School of Law continues to develop as evidenced from the increase in courses over the last five years. There are many of the courses that will be run through revalidation for the first time such as the LLM International Commercial Law and LLM/MSc in Corporate Law, Computing and Innovation. The level of applicants and students taking up places has, on the whole, increased across the provision. This will be broken down programme by programme. Please also see Appendix A which outlines the year on year numbers for all programmes within the School of Law.

LLM International Commercial Law

This course is now in its third cycle of full-time students. The number of applicants and eventual students has continued on a steady rise demonstrating a demand for the course. The current intake including September starts, January starts, full-time and part-time is 26. The demand for the course is also seen within wider industry. External bodies such as Donaldson Legal, Fieldfisher, Mediation NI and Cleaver Fulton Rankin have become involved in the delivery of the course on the basis that its practical effect is giving students the skills to succeed in the wider legal job market.

LLM/MSc Corporate Law and Computing

The first intake for this programme had 9 students but this was on foot of only a short period of marketing. The name of the course has been changed with marketing in mind. Whilst it is very early in the process, the applicant numbers for 21/22 entry is currently sitting at 11. This demonstrates that there is a demand in terms of applicants. The demand is not only from applicants but also from industry with Citi being involved in the course and providing work placements and scholarships for high performing students on the course.

LLM Access to Justice

The LLM in Access to Justice (formerly LLM in Clinical Legal Education) has grown from its inception only a number of years ago. The student numbers remain healthy with 15 currently enrolled on a full-time basis. It must be noted that many of the modules run on the LLM Access to Justice also run within the LLM/PGCert for Employment Law and Practice. There have been 20 applications made so far for start in September 2021. This demonstrates that there is a demand from applicants for this course.

The demand is also seen in industry. As noted above, there is a 100% employment rate with graduates taking up positions in legal practice, research, academia and government departments. Other graduates have moved into specialist legal advice and representation in the voluntary sector, mirroring the work they completed as part of their LLM.

LLM/PGCert Employment Law and Practice

As noted above, there is a link between the LLM/PGCert in Employment Law and Practice and the LLM Access to Justice. The numbers on this programme have been incredibly healthy, especially in relation to the PGCert which has continued to attract many working within the human resources sector. There are 26 students (both full-time and part-time) currently enrolled on the PGCert. There is continued support from industry for the PGCert as evidenced with Legal Island's continued involvement in the running of the course.

As for the LLM, there are currently 7 students who are enrolled (both part-time and full-time) for the current running of the course. This largely works on the basis that those who enrol onto the PGCert are then able to take the additional credits in year two for the purposes of making that an LLM.

LLM Gender, Conflict and Human Rights & LLM Human Rights and Transitional Justice

These two programmes continue to have broad appeal with a high number of international students being attracted to the courses. There are currently 32 students enrolled across both programmes. The demand for students in these areas continues with many graduates going on to work for NGOs, International organisations as well as going into academia. The interest continues with 33 applications already being made for these courses for September 2021 start.

FACULTY PARTNERSHIP MANAGER'S ASSESSMENT (for partner institutions only):

FACULTY CONFIRMATION:

SIGNED:  _____
Associate Dean (Education)

DATE: 29 Jan 2021

The completed form should be returned to the Academic Office, Room J410, Tower Building, Coleraine.

SECTION B: ACADEMIC OFFICE COMMENTS:

The revalidation unit comprises Law postgraduate provision comprising six programmes at the Jordanstown/Belfast and Magee campuses. The revalidation event was scheduled for 2021/22 and the request is for an extension to approval until 2022/23 (one year) on the basis of the impact of the pandemic on revalidation preparation and staff wellbeing. The reports from external examiners confirmed that the quality and standards of the provision was satisfactory (note: the LLM/MSc Corporate Law, Computing and Innovation was approved without evaluation for a 2020 start so no external examiner reports were available). Overall the external examiners' reports reflect a strong and distinctive provision underpinned by research and supported effectively by the operation of the Law clinic.

SIGNED:  _____
Academic Policy and Standards Manager

DATE: 1.3.21

SECTION C: QUALITY ENHANCEMENT ASSESSMENT (reflecting annual monitoring data)

Jane M H Meyer

4 March 2021

SIGNED: _____
Head of Quality Enhancement

DATE: _____

**SECTION D: ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE
(delegated authority from Senate)**

DATE OF COMMITTEE MEETING:

DECISION: Approve (Yes/No)

Late requests (in-year and no imminent Committee meeting) (actioned by Chair on behalf of ASQEC)

DECISION: Approve (Yes/No)

SIGNED: _____
Chair ASQEC

DATE: _____

DATE REPORTED TO ASQEC:

Academic Office
July 2019

COURSE	2015/16		2016/17		2017/18		2018/19		2019/20	
	FT	PT					FT	PT	FT	PT
JORDANSTOWN										
LLB (Hons) Law FT and PT	95	39	99	41	116	54	141	50	177	50
LLB (Hons) Law with Crim FT and PT	63	8	66	13	65	13	69	14	78	13
LLB (Hons) Law with Pol FT and PT	23	8	24	13	19	13	24	14	20	13
BSc Acct & Law (FT and PT)	21	0	21	0	25	0	43	0	43	0
LLM HR & TJ (FT and PT)	11	7	6	3	12	9	7	11	15	8
LLM GC & HR (FT and PT)	5	6	6	8	9	9	3	7	11	7
BELFAST										
LLM CLE (now LLM A2J) FT & PT	9	1	6	2	9	2	7	4	10	3
PG Cert in Emp Law FT & PT					16	3	17	7	15	7
LLM in Emp Law FT & PT									3	4
LLM Int Commercial Law FT & PT							11	4	16	4
MAGEE										
LLB (Hons) Law FT and PT	83	20	85	21	89	25	114	17	133	17
LLB (Hons) Law with Accountancy FT & PT	7	3	5	3	7	3	12	3	14	3
LLB (Hons) Law with Irish FT & PT	2	0	0	0	1	0	4	0	6	0
LLB (Hons) Law with Marketing FT & PT	4	0	3	1	5	2	11	2	11	1
LLB (Hons) Law with HRM FT & PT	12	3	11	3	9	3	3	2	3	2
LLB (Hons) Law with Sociology FT	6									
LLM Commercial Law FT & PT	6	7	8	9	7	4	1	0		
SUB-TOTALS	347	102	340	117	389	140	467	135	555	132
TOTALS	449		457		529		602		687	