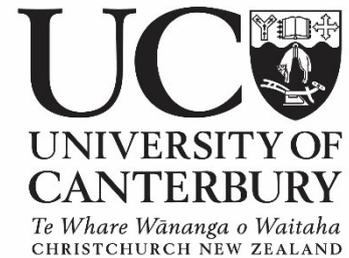


HONOURS HANDBOOK 2026



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While every effort has been taken to ensure the information contained in this Honours Handbook is accurate and up-to-date, the contents are subject to change and review. The University of Canterbury makes no guarantees as to the accuracy of the information contained in this publication. For formal course regulations and prescriptions, please see the University of Canterbury Calendar.

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1. Admission to Honours

Entry to Honours is at the invitation of the Executive Dean of Law (on the recommendation of the Honours Co-Directors) and is limited to approximately the top 30 eligible students each year.

All students are eligible for admission in the year following their successful completion of LAWS203, LAWS205, and LAWS206 (the courses that full-time students are usually required to undertake in their second year of study in accordance with the LLB degree cohorting rules).

The admission process will be changing in 2026 for all future Honours cohorts. From this time, students who wish to be considered for Honours will need to complete a simple online application form expressing their interest in being considered for the Honours Programme. This process will take place in December each year (beginning in December 2026) and will be widely publicised to make sure all interested students have the opportunity to apply. Students will then be selected from this list for entry into the Honours Programme based entirely on their academic performance. Under the new system, there will be two possible pathways for entry:

- *Pathway 1:* This will involve the selection of the top approximately 25 students (who have completed the online application form) who obtain the best academic performance in LAWS203, LAWS205, and LAWS206. The selection of these students will usually occur at the end of their second year of study.
- *Pathway 2:* This will involve the selection of the top approximately 5 students who demonstrate the best academic performance in their top three 200-level law courses. This will allow a small number of students, who have significantly improved their academic performance in third year, and who have enough time in the remainder of their degree to complete Honours, to join the Honours cohort at a later date. These students will be considered automatically and will not need to complete the online application form.

Please contact the Honours Co-Directors if you have any questions about admission to Honours.

2. Honours Requirements

2.1. Course requirements

In addition to meeting the usual requirements of the Bachelor of Laws (LLB) degree, students seeking to graduate with Honours must complete three additional courses:

- LAWS410 Advanced Research Skills;
- LAWS420 Honours Research Paper; and
- LAWS430 Honours Dissertation

Students must complete LAWS410 and LAWS420 in the same calendar year and LAWS430 in the following year. Single degree students must complete these courses in their third and fourth years of full-time enrolment in the LLB degree. Double degree students must complete these courses in their fourth and fifth years of full-time enrolment in the LLB and other degrees.

2.2. Time limits for Honours

A Bachelor of Law with Honours student must complete the degree within:

- (a) Two academic years after receiving an invitation to join the Honours programme; or
- (b) Three academic years after receiving an invitation to join the Honours programme if:
 - i. The student is concurrently enrolled in the LLB and another degree, and
 - ii. The invitation to enter the LLB(Hons) is received at the end of the student's second year of enrolment in the LLB; or
- (c) Two academic years after receiving an invitation to join the Honours programme if:
 - i. The student is concurrently enrolled in the LLB and another degree, and
 - ii. The invitation to enter the LLB(Hons) is received at the end of the student's third year of enrolment in the LLB; or
- (d) Five academic years after receiving an invitation to join the Honours programme if the student is studying part-time.

2.3. Grade maintenance

After accepting the invitation into the Honours programme, students must maintain an Honours standard of grades in their law courses. This standard dictates that students must receive a B- or higher final grade in all of their LAWS and LLAW courses. A student who receives a C+ or lower final grade in a LAWS or LLAW course will be required to withdraw from the Honours programme. As soon as a student accepts the invitation into the Honours programme they are obligated to maintain the Honours standard of grades, even if they are not yet enrolled in LAWS410.

The grade maintenance requirement also applies to LAWS410, LAWS420, and LAWS430. Because LAWS410 and LAWS420 are graded on a pass/fail basis, a student who receives a failing grade in these courses will be required to withdraw from Honours.

Please contact the Honours Co-Directors if you have any questions or concerns about grade maintenance.

3. Honours Enrolment

3.1. Degree planning

All Honours students are **strongly encouraged** to make an appointment with one of our Student Advisors (using the online booking link or by emailing lawandjusticedegreeadvice@canterbury.ac.nz) for Honours specific degree planning assistance.

3.2. Double degrees, cross credits, and substitutions

Double degree students may be eligible to apply for either a cross credit or a substitution. It is the student's responsibility to organise this. Courses that are cross credited or substituted into the LLB degree will **not** be taken into account when determining a student's class of Honours.

If a student substitutes an elective LAWS or LLAW course into another degree, the grade of that substituted course will still be included in the calculation of classes of Honours. This means that students cannot avoid the impact of an elective LAWS or LLAW course in which they receive a low grade by substituting the course into another degree.

3.3. Too many law courses

Students may complete more elective LAWS or LLAW courses than are required for the degree. If this occurs, the marks that the student receives in all elective LAWS or LLAW courses will be ranked from highest to lowest, and a median mark will be calculated. The course whose mark most closely approximates this median score will be excluded from the calculation of classes of Honours.

3.4. Repeating law courses

For the purposes of entry into the Honours programme or calculating classes of Honours, it is not possible to repeat a course that the student has already passed to achieve a higher grade. The mark or grade achieved in the first attempt is the one that will be considered.

3.5. Overseas exchanges

The University of Canterbury offers students a number of opportunities to study overseas as part of an exchange programme. Because of the nature of the assessments for LAWS410, LAWS420, and LAWS430, it is unlikely that students will be able to undertake an overseas exchange while enrolled in these courses.

It is customary for Honours students to complete their Honours requirements **before** going on exchange. In other words, students should aim to complete LAWS 410 and 420 in their penultimate year and LAWS 430 in Semester 1 of their final year. This timeline allows students to undertake an overseas exchange in Semester 2 of their final year.

Students wishing to participate in an exchange should contact Vicky Yee at <vicky.yee@canterbury.ac.nz>.

4. Classes of Honours

In accordance with the LLB (Hons) Degree Regulations, the Bachelor of Laws with Honours degree may be awarded with First Class Honours or Second Class Honours (Division I or Division II). The class of Honours awarded is determined based on the standard of a student's performance in their LLB courses and in LAWS430.

As described in section 3.2 above, any substituted or cross credited courses from other departments will not be taken into account when calculating a student's class of Honours. Any law courses that a student completes whilst on an overseas exchange will be taken into account.

The University Guidelines for determining classes of Honours are as follows:

First Class Honours	A+, A, or A- average
Second Class Honours (Division I)	B+ average
Second Class Honours (Division II)	B average

The class of Honours for the LLB (Hons) degree is awarded based on two criteria:

1. The mark achieved in LAWS430 Honours Dissertation; **and**
2. The average mark achieved in all LLB courses excluding first year courses. In other words, the average mark achieved in all LAWS200, LAWS300, and LLAW300 courses.

To be awarded **First Class Honours**, students must achieve an **A range standard in both criteria** (ie at least 80%).

To be awarded **Second Class Honours (Division I)**, students must achieve a **B+ standard in both criteria** (ie at least 75%).

To be awarded **Second Class Honours (Division II)**, students must achieve a **B standard in both criteria** (ie at least 70%).

The class of Honours that each student is awarded is determined solely based on the above criteria. This determination is undertaken by the Faculty's Board of Examiners at a formal Examiners' Meeting. These meetings are held twice a year and are chaired by the Honours Co-Directors. This means that the class of Honours that students receive cannot be finalised until the Examiners' Meeting has occurred.

Please contact the Honours Co-Directors if you have any additional questions about how the classes of Honours are determined.

5. Prizes and Clerkships

5.1. Relevant prizes

Gold Medal

A gold medal, presented by the New Zealand Law Society, is awarded annually to the top student graduating with an LLB degree. The award is made on the basis of the student's work and examination marks during the entirety of their degree.

Canterbury Law Review Prize

The prize recognises excellence in research by LLB(Hons) students in the Faculty of Law. One prize is available annually. The prize consists of a monetary award of \$500, as well as publication of the winning LAWS430 dissertation in the *Canterbury Law Review*. The prize is awarded by the recommendation of the Dean of Law (or nominee) and the Editorial Board of the *Canterbury Law Review*. The recommendation is based on achievement in LAWS430 in the year of the award. No prize is offered if there is no candidate of sufficient merit.

Centre for Commercial and Corporate Law Inc Prize

This \$1,000 prize is awarded annually by the Centre for Commercial and Corporate Law Inc to the best dissertation in either commercial or corporate law produced by a student at the University of Canterbury. The dissertation must not exceed 15,000 words in length.

5.2. Judges' clerkships

Honours graduates can apply to be considered for positions as Judges' Clerks. The appointments are generally for two years and they involve undertaking legal research at the direction of Judges. Applications are generally invited each March.

6. Academic Misconduct

All students are subject to UC's [Behavioural Misconduct Regulations](#), the [Academic Misconduct Regulations](#), and the [Appeal Regulations](#). Please make sure you are familiar with these regulations. A helpful (easier to understand) guide for students about Misconduct Procedures can be found [here](#).

Advice on the misconduct procedures is available from the [University's Grievance and Academic Process Advisor](#). Support in engaging with the misconduct processes is available from the [UCSA Advocacy and Welfare Team](#).

It is recognised that students will discuss coursework and assignments with others, and that such discussion is an important part of the learning process. However, any work presented by a student for credit in a course must be that student's own original work. If students are directed to complete group work for course credit, the work submitted must be the original work of the group. Work produced using generative artificial intelligence (AI) text generators, such as ChatGPT, is not original.

If you are permitted to use generative AI and choose to use it, you must use it responsibly. You must not put data into a generative AI tool without the permission of the person who owns the IP. Data for this purpose includes learning materials such as lecture handouts, slides, assessments, and readings.

Work submitted in breach of these requirements, or which fails to comply with other instructions, contravenes the University's [Academic Misconduct Regulations](#). Such work will either not be marked, and all credit for the work in question forfeited, or the matter will be referred to the University's Academic Integrity Officer for investigation and possible referral to a Pou Uruhi | Proctor and the University's Misconduct Committee.

Penalties that may be imposed in the event of a finding of academic misconduct include loss of credit for a course or an item of assessment and, in serious cases, suspension or expulsion from the University. A record is kept of all instances of academic misconduct in the University misconduct register for a period of ten years.

Students who are involved in any misconduct matter also risk creating a situation in which the Dean of Law is unable to give a Certificate of Standing for the purposes of admission as a Barrister and Solicitor.

Examples of academic misconduct in coursework and assessments include but are not limited to:

- Plagiarism. Plagiarism means the dishonest presentation of work that has been produced by someone else as if it is one's own.

Please note that the presentation of someone else's work as one's own, even without dishonest intent, may still constitute poor academic practice, and this may be reflected in the mark awarded. There are academic conventions governing appropriate ways to acknowledge the work or part of the work of another person. These are set out in the [New Zealand Law Style Guide \(3rd ed\)](#).

- The use of generative AI text generators, such as ChatGPT, to generate/create text, images, video, or code, or translate text except where such use is expressly permitted **and** is declared or referenced by students in the manner required. See also [Generative AI at UC](#).
- Submitting work for course credit which, although it is the student's own work, is substantially the same as work that has already been (or will be) submitted for credit in

another course, whether in the Faculty of Law or some other department or academic institution.

- Copying the work of another student. This includes copying work submitted by another student for credit for a course in the Faculty of Law or some other department or academic institution.
- Knowingly allowing another student to copy work which that other student then submits for credit for a course in the Faculty of Law.
- Completing work for another student which is then submitted by that other student for credit for a course in the Faculty of Law.
- Arranging for another person to complete work which is then submitted for credit for a course in the Faculty of Law. An example is work submitted for credit that has been obtained from a commercial assignment completion service. Care must be taken when using editing services. The only permissible editing services are assistance with grammar, punctuation, and expression.
- Including made up or fabricated material in work submitted for credit for a course in the Faculty of Law.
- Collaborating in the preparation of answers for take home tests, unless advised otherwise in the take-home test instructions.

NOTE: Where there are concerns regarding the authorship of written course work, a student can be required to provide a formal, oral explanation of the content of their work.

If you are in doubt about any of the above with respect to Honours, you should discuss the matter with your supervisor and/or the Honours Co-Directors.

See also the UC [Behavioural Misconduct Regulations](#), the [Academic Misconduct Regulations](#), the [Appeal Regulations](#), the [Misconduct Procedures – Guide for Students](#), and the *Bachelor of Laws 2026 Handbook* for more information about academic misconduct.

7. Assessment Information

7.1. Assessment deadlines

The assessment deadlines for each Honours paper in 2026 are as follows:

LAWS410 Assessment Deadlines for 2026		
Assessment Activity	Due Date	Semester One
Article review	Friday 13 March 2026	Week 4
Legislative history	Friday 27 March 2026	Week 6
Research plan	Friday 8 May 2026	Week 9
Topic choices	Friday 29 May 2026	Week 12

LAWS420 Assessment Deadlines for 2026		
Assessment Activity	Due Date	Semester Two
Final topic	Friday 24 July 2026	Week 2
Research proposal	Friday 21 August 2026	Week 6
Library report	Friday 25 September 2026	Week 9
Oral presentations	5-16 October 2026	Weeks 11 and 12

LAWS430 Assessment Deadlines for 2026		
Assessment Activity	Due Date	Semester One
Dissertation first draft	Friday 27 March 2026	Week 6
Feedback returned	Friday 10 April 2026	Mid-semester break
Dissertation second draft	Friday 15 May 2026	Week 10
Feedback returned	Friday 29 May 2026	Week 12
Final submission	Monday 13 July 2026	Week 1 of Semester 2

For students who will be completing their LAWS430 dissertations in Semester 1 of 2027 (ie the current 2026 cohort of LAWS410 and LAWS420 students) your dissertation submission dates are likely to follow a similar pattern. Note, however, that these provisional dates are subject to change so please do not rely upon them. Your first draft is likely to be due on the last day of lectures before mid-semester break, the second draft is likely to be due approximately five weeks after you have received feedback on your first draft from your supervisor, and the final submission date is likely to be due the first day of lectures for Semester 2 in 2027.

7.2. Research topics

You may not undertake a research project on a topic that you have previously written about as a subject of assessment in another University course.

7.3. Self-copying

Students must not submit any work that they have previously submitted in another university course. If you are unsure of what this requires, please contact your supervisor or the Co-Directors of Honours, or if it concerns a subsequent course, the Course Coordinator of that course.

7.4. Word limits

The word count for **all** assessments in the Honours programme **exclude** footnotes (provided they do not include large amounts of explanatory text) and bibliographies. Please note that this requirement supersedes the instructions provided on the undergraduate coversheet. The word count also **excludes** title or contents pages.

Normal penalties apply where an assignment exceeds the relevant word limit.

7.5. Extensions

As with all other University assessments, extensions will only be granted on good grounds (details of which can be found in the Bachelor of Laws Handbook) and must be sought prior to the assessment due date.

Extensions will **not** be granted because of the pressure of university work (eg several assignments being due at the same time, or because of the demands of extra-curricular activities such as employment or sporting commitments). Students should plan their work to enable them to meet their academic deadlines. Students are advised to save and back up their Honours work regularly. Computer failure alone is unlikely to suffice as a basis for an extension request, except in exceptional cases.

Supporting documentation is required (eg a medical certificate in the case of illness). In the case of other serious circumstances, appropriate independent supporting evidence must be provided. All supporting evidence must usually be provided prior to the assessment due date.

The extension process varies depending on the particular Honours paper in question. Please make sure you follow the correct process (as set out below).

If you have further questions or concerns (or if these processes are inappropriate/inadequate for your personal circumstances), please contact the Honours Co-Directors as soon as possible.

LAWS410 and LAWS420 Extensions

All applications for extensions for LAWS410 and LAWS420 assessments must be made online via the Faculty of Law extension portal. Please make your application [here](#) (and don't forget to include your supporting evidence).

LAWS430 Extensions

This process varies depending on whether you need an extension for a draft submission deadline or for the final submission deadline, so please read the below information carefully.

All extension applications for LAWS430 **draft** submission deadlines should be made via email to your supervisor in the first instance. Your supervisor may require evidence, such as a medical certificate or other appropriate independent supporting information, in some circumstances.

If your supervisor accepts your extension request, please provide evidence of this (and your new submission deadline) to the Honours Co-Directors. If your supervisor does not accept your extension

request, please contact the Honours Co-Directors as soon as possible so that an alternative plan can be made and additional support can be provided if required.

All extension applications for the **final** LAWS430 submission deadline must be made via email to the Honours Co-Directors. Individual supervisors are not able to provide extensions for this final deadline (although we will, of course, discuss your request with them).

We usually require a medical certificate or other appropriate independent supporting evidence to grant such an extension. We have to be *really* careful in granting extensions for the final dissertation deadline, given that it constitutes 100% of your Honours grade and forms the basis for the allocation of classes of Honours.

If you think you need an extension, but are not sure if you will qualify for one or not (in your particular circumstances), please get in touch with the Honours Co-Directors as soon as possible.

7.6. LAWS430 marking process

Your LAWS430 dissertation will be marked by your supervisor and co-marked by another academic member of staff. For more information about this process (and what to do if you are unhappy with your dissertation mark), please see section 10.3 below.

7.7. Turnitin

Your LAWS430 dissertation will be submitted to Turnitin.

7.8. Supervisor and student expectations

When a member of staff agrees to supervise an Honours student, a number of expectations arise for both the student and the supervisor:

- Your supervisor will be available to you for consultation at mutually agreed times.
- You will consult with your supervisor at least twice per semester (and hopefully more frequently during LAWS430).
- Your supervisor will assist you with, mark, and provide feedback on the final topic, research proposal, and oral presentation assessments for LAWS420.
- Your supervisor will also assist you with and provide feedback on two dissertation drafts for LAWS430. Your supervisor will normally provide feedback to you within two weeks following the due date of each draft.
- When you submit a draft of your dissertation for LAWS430, it is expected that the manuscript represents your best efforts and is a substantial piece of work. Handing in an incomplete or inadequate draft will seriously undermine the ability of your supervisor to provide useful feedback. A failure to hand in your draft on time (without an agreed extension) may mean that your supervisor is unable to provide feedback.
- Your supervisor will also mark your final dissertation for LAWS430, in partnership with a co-marker as described in sections 7.6 and 10.3 of this Handbook.

Students may find the process of establishing a supervisor-supervisee relationship for the first time to be a daunting task. If you feel this way, you are probably not alone! Lecturers will discuss how to navigate the supervisor-supervisee relationship in the LAWS410 course, and if you have questions or concerns you may always contact the Honours Co-Directors.

Once you have been paired with a supervisor, we recommend discussing how the supervision process works during your first meeting with them. All supervisors are different, so it is important to establish clear expectations (for both of you and the supervision process) right from the start. We also recommend that you let your supervisor know about any particular needs you may have. This is also a good opportunity to reiterate the supervisor and student expectations listed above.

If you have particular issues or concerns about your supervisor or the supervision process, please get in touch with the Co-Directors of Honours as soon as possible.

7.9. Pastoral care

If you are struggling with any aspect of LAWS410, LAWS420, LAWS430, or the Honours Programme as a whole, please get in touch with the Co-Directors of Honours and/or your supervisor as soon as possible. This will enable us to support you and/or help you access any additional support you may need.

8. LAWS410 Advanced Research Skills

8.1. Description

This is a preliminary Honours course that must be taken as a prerequisite to the LAWS420 Honours Research Paper. It involves a series of skills seminars delivered by academic and library staff. Assessment is linked to research tasks that will prepare the student for the LAWS420 course.

LAWS410 Course Coordinator: Ruth Ballantyne.

8.2. Objectives

At the completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Understand legal research and legal research methodologies;
- Evaluate legal research; and
- Apply legal research skills to construct research projects.

8.3. Lectures

The lectures for this course are scheduled for **Wednesdays from 4pm to 6pm in the Psychology - Sociology 252 Lecture Theatre** (except for Week 10, as set out below). It is intended that all lectures will be recorded. However, lecture content may be interactive and recordings may not be helpful for all parts of the course. The below timetable and lecture schedule are subject to change:

Timing	Lecture Date	Lecture Content	Teaching Staff
Week 1	18 February 2026	Introduction to Honours Programme: Mihimihi and Whakawhanaungatanga	Ruth Ballantyne, Cassandra Mudgway, and Theresa Buller
Week 2	25 February 2026	Legal Research 1	Olivia Erdelyi
Week 3	4 March 2026	Legal Research 2	Olivia Erdelyi
Week 4	11 March 2026	Library Research Skills	Theresa Buller
Week 5	18 March 2026	Doctrinal Research	David Jefferson
Week 6	25 March 2026	Empirical Research	Toni Collins
Saturday 28 March to Sunday 19 April 2026		Mid Semester Break	
Week 7	22 April 2026	Comparative Research	John Hopkins
Week 8	29 April 2026	Feminist Research	Annick Masselot
Week 9	6 May 2026	Māori and Indigenous Research	Liam Grant (online)
Week 10	Friday 15 May	Supervision Matching Event 4-6pm: Karl Popper 105	All available supervisors
Week 11	20 May 2026	Oral Presentations	Olivia Erdelyi
Week 12	27 May 2026	Effective Writing	Ursula Cheer

8.4. Assessment

There are four pieces of assessment: article review, legislative history, research plan, and proposed topic choices. All are graded on a pass/fail basis. You must pass all four in order to pass the course. If any assessment submitted is not to an Honours standard then you may be given the opportunity to re-submit or you may be awarded a fail grade for the assessment (and the course).

The assessments for LAWS410 are detailed below. Please read this material carefully.

8.4.1. LAWS410 Assessment 1: Article Review

This involves finding and selecting a journal article and then writing a review of it. Students should not select an article that they have previously written about for the purposes of University assessment. This assessment will be marked by Ruth Ballantyne.

Word limit

The word limit for the article review is 1,000 words (see also section 7.4 above).

Due date and submission requirements

You must upload an electronic copy of your article review via Learn by **12 noon on Friday 13 March 2026**.

Marking criteria

The article review should include the student's understanding of the research question, the approach to addressing the research question, the conclusion of the article, and a summary of the reasons for the conclusion. The student should also comment on their evaluation of the author's approach, whether they agree with the conclusion, and why.

In order to achieve a pass grade, the article review should:

- Demonstrate a very good standard of prose and organisation.
- Citation of references in accordance with the guidelines in the *New Zealand Law Style Guide* (3rd edition).
- Reference the subject article appropriately.

8.4.2. LAWS410 Assessment 2: Legislative History

This involves choosing one New Zealand statute that was enacted between 2010 and 2020 inclusive and researching its legislative history. This assessment will be marked by Theresa Buller.

Word limit

The word limit for the legislative history is 1,000 words (see also section 7.4 above).

Due date and submission requirements

You must upload an electronic copy of your legislative history via Learn by **12 noon on Friday 27 March 2026**.

Marking criteria

In order to achieve a pass grade, the legislative history report must meet the following criteria:

1. A narrative demonstrating that you have researched the legislative history of a New Zealand statute that was enacted between 2010 and 2020 inclusive including:
 - a. The reason the statute was enacted;
 - b. An overview of the documentation created as part of the Bill process;

- c. A summary of the Select Committee submissions and report on the Bill; and
 - d. A summary of the Hansard debates on the Bill.
2. Citation of references in accordance with the rules in the *New Zealand Law Style Guide* (3rd ed).

8.4.3. LAWS410 Assessment 3: Research Plan

This involves choosing a research topic and constructing a plan for that topic. Students should not select a topic that they have previously written about for the purposes of University assessment. This assessment will be marked by Ruth Ballantyne.

Word limit

The word limit for the research plan is 1,000 words (see also section 7.4 above).

Due date and submission requirements

You must upload an electronic copy of your research plan via Learn by **12 noon on Friday 8 May 2026**.

Marking criteria

The research plan should include a research question and proposed methodology/ies for research. For the methodology/ies selected, you should provide a description of the approach, reflect on its value generally as a legal research methodology (ie give your own evaluation of its significance as a research methodology) and express how you think it would contribute to your addressing of the research question.

In order to achieve a pass grade, the research plan should demonstrate a very good standard of prose and organisation.

8.4.4. LAWS410 Assessment 4: Topic Choices

This involves students choosing two different topics that they are interested in researching for LAWS420 and LAWS430, and identifying two potential supervisors (one for each topic) from the University academic staff who can oversee students' work on these topics. Students must have not conducted research on the topics previously (see also sections 7.2 and 7.3 above).

Topics and supervisors may only be chosen from the list provided by the LAWS410 Course Coordinator. Students **must not** approach prospective supervisors to discuss possible topics with them **until after** the Supervision Matching Event in Week 10.

Due date and submission requirements

Please submit your choices of two supervisors and two topics to Natalie Welsh via email by **12 noon on Friday 29 May 2026**.

9. LAWS420 Honours Research Paper

9.1. Description

This research-based course involves completing the preparatory work for a supervised legal research project.

LAWS420 Course Coordinator: Dr Cassandra Mudgway.

9.2. Objectives

At the completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Identify a topic for a legal dissertation that has both a degree of complexity and provides some scope for original research;
- Plan a programme of research using an appropriate legal research methodology;
- Write a legal research proposal; and
- Present a work in progress.

9.3. Lectures

There will be three two-hour lectures for this course. The first will be a social meet and greet morning tea with other LAWS420 students and their supervisors to reconnect after the mid-year break. The second lecture will focus on legal writing skills and provide additional practical guidance about writing a research proposal, what counts as in-depth analysis, and how to structure/write a dissertation. The third and final lecture will concentrate on referencing skills and provide practical guidance about using the *New Zealand Law Style Guide* and other important referencing issues.

Details about these lectures will be confirmed closer to the time.

9.4. Assessment

There are four pieces of assessment for LAWS420. All will be graded on a pass/fail basis. You must pass all four in order to pass the course.

If any of your four pieces of assessment (ie final topic, research proposal, library report, and oral presentation) do not meet the standard for Honours, you may be given the opportunity to re-submit your work, or you may be awarded a fail grade for the assessment (and the course).

The assessments for LAWS420 are detailed below. Please read this material carefully.

9.4.1. LAWS420 Assessment 1: Final Topic

You must have found a topic for your dissertation **and** obtained approval for this topic from your supervisor by **12 noon on Friday 24 July 2026**.

Please submit your final topic to the relevant Learn submission box on the LAWS420 Learn page. You must also email your agreed final topic to your supervisor.

9.4.2. LAWS420 Assessment 2: Research Proposal

This assessment involves developing a research proposal on your agreed final topic.

Word limit

The word limit for the research proposal is 1,500 words (see also section 7.4 above).

Due date and submission requirements

You must upload an electronic copy of your research proposal via Learn by **12 noon on Friday 21 August 2026**. You must also email your research proposal to your supervisor. This will be marked by your Honours supervisor.

Marking criteria

In order to achieve a pass grade, the research proposal must contain the following:

1. A working title;
2. An explanation of the research rationale which “sets the scene” by introducing and outlining the subject area within which you intend to conduct your research. The explanation of the research context must set out the justification for your research and form the basis for the statement of your research question;
3. A statement of your research question. This is a concise statement of the legal problem or issue you will research and the questions that you will aim to answer;
4. A statement of your research methodology that includes a description of the primary and secondary materials you intend to rely upon. The statement must also address how you will access those materials (such as through the Law Library or via the internet or interloan); and
5. A draft bibliography that is structured and cited correctly in accordance with the guidelines in the *New Zealand Law Style Guide* (3rd ed). Your bibliography should include the primary and secondary sources that are core to your topic.

Please note that you may require approval from the University Ethics Committee if you plan to conduct interviews or surveys as part of your research. Please contact your supervisor as soon as possible to discuss this requirement as Ethics approval may take some time to obtain.

In order to achieve a pass grade, the research proposal must also demonstrate:

1. A very good standard of prose and organisation;
2. A good understanding of the subject matter of the research proposal; and
3. Citation of references in accordance with the guidelines in the *New Zealand Law Style Guide* (3rd ed).

9.4.3. LAWS420 Assessment 3: Library Report

You are required to submit a library report that will be marked by Theresa Buller. The generation of the library report will be based on:

1. Conducting searches for resources to cite in your research proposal;
2. Creating a bibliography of appropriate resources using *New Zealand Law Style Guide* citations; and
3. Completing a self-evaluation of your research process, your search activities, and the resources you found.

Word limit

The word limit for the library report is 1,500 words (see also section 7.4 above).

Due date and submission requirements

You must upload an electronic copy of your library report via Learn by **12 noon on Friday 25 September 2026**. You must also email your library report to your supervisor.

Marking criteria

In order to achieve a pass grade, the research proposal must meet the following criteria:

1. You are expected to find both print and electronic resources, as appropriate for your topic.
2. You must document and complete a self-evaluation of your research process.
3. Your documentation and self-evaluation must address:
 - a. Details of the databases you chose to search (and why);
 - b. The specific search terms that you used within each database, whether these were successful, and any changes that you made to improve your results;
 - c. The specific type of search and any search refinements you used within each database;
 - d. The search terms you used when searching the internet and whether these were successful;
 - e. How useful each tool that you employed was for your searching purposes; and
 - f. What you learned through your research process.
4. Your library report must demonstrate:
 - a. A very good knowledge and understanding of how to locate legal information using the University of Canterbury Library's resources;
 - b. An ability to decide whether resources are suitable for academic use based on a set of evaluative criteria;
 - c. An ability to research a topic exhaustively and to recognise when that point has been reached;
 - d. A very good standard of prose and organisation; and
 - e. Citation of references in accordance with the guidelines of the *New Zealand Style Guide* (3rd ed).
5. Your library report must include a copy of your research proposal, including your draft bibliography.

You are encouraged to make an appointment with Theresa Buller from the Library for tailored assistance with searching for material on your research topic. Email Theresa at theresa.buller@canterbury.ac.nz.

9.4.4. LAWS420 Assessment 4: Oral Presentation

Your oral presentation will describe the progress of your research. Students will be allocated 15 minutes for their oral presentation. Approximately 10 minutes should be devoted to the presentation itself, with 5 minutes reserved for answering questions from other participants and supervisors. This assessment will be graded by your supervisors.

You will be placed into small groups and your presentation will be attended by the other students within the group and your respective supervisors. This is designed to make the assessment less intimidating, especially for students who find public speaking difficult. PowerPoint facilities will be available in most instances.

Please get in touch with your supervisor and/or the Co-Directors of Honours if you have any concerns about the oral presentations. This is especially important if this form of assessment may need to be modified to better accommodate your needs.

Dates and times for presentations will be allocated in Term Four. **They will be held at some point during 5-16 October 2026.**

Presenting your research

You should include content on:

1. Your topic and the reason for your interest in it;
2. Your research question;
3. The research you have done, including after the submission of your research proposal and library report;
4. Any preliminary conclusions you have drawn about your research question;
5. Any difficulties you have encountered or that you anticipate; and
6. Where you will go from here.

Your presentation will be assessed on the following criteria:

Content

- The presentation follows a logical structure that includes an introduction, body, and conclusion.
- The presentation provides a useful account of the research in progress.

Communication

- The main points are communicated clearly and accurately.
- Relevant legal terminology is used correctly throughout.

Verbal skills

- The student speaks at a volume and pace that enables the participants to understand the presentation.
- The student uses their voice to project a positive and confident attitude.

Nonverbal skills

- The student engages with seminar participants.
- The student uses non-verbal means to convey a positive and confident attitude.

Visual aids (if any)

- The student's visual aids are clearly readable and enhance the content of the presentation.

Management of questions

- The student clearly responds to questions from the audience.
- The student is able to defend and expand upon the points made in the presentation.

Participating in other students' presentations

- The student listens actively to other students' presentations in an appropriate way.

10. LAWS430 Honours Dissertation

10.1. Description

This research-based course involves writing a 15,000 word dissertation on the topic developed in LAWS420.

LAWS430 Course Coordinator: Ruth Ballantyne.

10.2. Objectives

At the completion of the course, students should be able to:

1. Produce a 15,000 word legal dissertation on a legal topic which demonstrates that the student possesses:
 - Advanced legal research skills;
 - Advanced writing skills;
 - Advanced technical and/or theoretical knowledge relevant to the subject of the dissertation, as illustrated by a critical understanding of key principles;
 - Analytical and critical skills, such that the student can analyse the legal issues arising out of a complex legal problem, generate possible solutions, and then evaluate the solutions they propose; and
2. Engage in self-directed learning to solve a complex legal problem.

10.3. Assessment

The assessment for LAWS430 consists of two compulsory formal dissertation drafts, followed by the final version of your dissertation. The final version of your dissertation is worth 100% of your final grade for LAWS430.

Due dates

The first draft of your LAWS430 dissertation is due to your supervisor (via email) at **12 noon on Friday 27 March 2026.**

The second draft of your LAWS430 dissertation is due to your supervisor (via email) at **12 noon on Friday 15 May 2026.**

You MUST submit the final version of your LAWS430 dissertation (via Learn) by 12 noon on Monday 13 July 2026.

You MUST also email the final version of your LAWS430 dissertation to your supervisor by the same due date and time.

Both submitted versions must be exactly the same.

Please note that the final submission date for your LAWS430 dissertation is technically after the semester has finished. This may impact your Studylink payments if you are finishing your degree/s at the end of Semester 1. It should not impact students who will be finishing at the end of the year.

For students completing LAWS430 in 2027:

Due dates for students completing their LAWS430 dissertations in Semester 1 of 2027 (ie the current 2026 cohort of LAWS410 and LAWS420 students) are likely to follow a similar pattern. However, these dates are subject to change and will be confirmed in early 2027.

Formatting requirements

When you submit the final version of your dissertation, please include the standard LLB undergraduate cover sheet at the start of the document. Your dissertation referencing style and bibliography must comply with the *New Zealand Law Style Guide* (3rd ed). Apart from this, there are no specific formatting requirements to follow, although individual supervisors may have their own formatting suggestions that you may wish to adopt.

You are not required to include a title page, table of contents, abstract, or acknowledgements with your dissertation. However, you may include these elements if you wish. The inclusion of a table of contents is particularly encouraged to clearly establish the structure of your dissertation. A title page and list of acknowledgements is also highly recommended (but not required). These optional elements are **excluded** from the 15,000 word limit.

Your bibliography should only include sources that you have referred to in the dissertation itself. There is no need to include sources used in the earlier stages of your research but that you did not ultimately cite.

Please use macrons on Māori words as required. Information about how to do this properly is provided for you on the LAWS430 Learn page.

Submission requirements

You must upload the final version of your dissertation via Learn by the above due date and time. Your LAWS430 dissertation will be checked via Turnitin.

Word limit

The word limit for the dissertation is 15,000 words. This **excludes** footnotes (provided they do not include large amounts of explanatory text) and bibliographies. The word count also **excludes** any title page, table of contents, abstract, or acknowledgements you may have chosen to include.

Please note that this requirement supersedes the instructions provided on the standard LLB undergraduate coversheet.

Normal penalties apply where the dissertation exceeds the prescribed word limit.

Marking

Your LAWS430 dissertation will be marked by your supervisor and co-marked by another academic member of staff (chosen by your supervisor).

Both markers read the paper and independently determine the mark it should be given. Your supervisor and the co-marker then discuss the paper and the proposed mark. The markers will then usually reach a consensus and finalise your dissertation mark and grade.¹

As part of the marking process, both your supervisor and the co-marker draft a brief written report on the strengths and weaknesses of your dissertation, which is provided to the Honours Co-Directors (alongside the agreed mark and grade). These reports (which may ultimately be merged into a single report) and the agreed mark will be released to you via email once the

¹ In the very rare instance that your supervisor and co-marker cannot agree upon the appropriate mark for your dissertation, your supervisor will contact a second co-marker to independently assess your dissertation. Once the second co-marker has assessed your dissertation, the supervisor and the first co-marker will meet again to reconcile the mark. Typically, the mark that most closely reflects the majority opinion is selected.

marks have been finalised for the entire LAWS430 cohort. This process can take some time, so please be patient.

While you will receive your dissertation mark as soon as these marks are available for the whole LAWS430 cohort, the class of Honours you will be awarded cannot be determined/confirmed until after the Honours Examiners' Meeting has taken place. Please see section 4 above for more information about this.

Grade Reconsideration

If you have concerns with your LAWS430 dissertation mark/grade and/or believe that it does not properly reflect the work you have produced, you may wish to apply for a reconsideration of your dissertation grade/mark. This involves undertaking the usual UC Reconsideration of Final Grade process (including the completion of a formal application form and payment of a \$84 application fee) as set out for you [here](#).

You **MUST** apply for reconsideration within four weeks of receiving your LAWS430 dissertation mark/grade. This is a strict University enforced time limit. The \$84 application fee is refunded if your grade is changed.

If you have particular issues or concerns about your supervisor or your supervision experience, please get in touch with the Honours Co-Directors as soon as possible during the supervision period. Please **DO NOT** wait until you receive your LAWS430 dissertation mark/grade to raise these issues.

Please contact the Honours Co-Directors if you have any questions about the grade reconsideration process.