

## Welcome to the School of Law!

Congratulations on gaining a place to study with us. As Director of Undergraduate Studies, I believe this information will be useful to you before you join us.

### Teaching and learning methods

The School of Law at Manchester really is an inspiring place to study; you'll be taught by over 70 acknowledged experts in law, criminology and ethics and will be working alongside some of the brightest and best law students in the country.

But, university is not the same as school. For a start, you will only have about 14 hours of scheduled, face-to-face contact time each week, probably much less than you have been used to at school. These scheduled hours are lectures and seminars (about which a bit more later).

For the rest of the week we will expect you to be reading widely on your own; books, articles; (and for the lawyers, cases); this will help you to understand your subject and to write essays and answer problem questions. Obviously, we will guide you on which material to read but we can't read it for you – working alone requires a degree of self-motivation and self-direction, but you are unlikely to do well unless you are prepared to take this on. If you do it, you will then be well equipped to analyse situations; question points of view; and openly discuss your own ideas, which is what professionals have to do every day.

It helps that The University of Manchester is committed to continuous investment in state-of-the-art facilities. With one of the largest academic libraries in the UK and more than 10,000 PCs across campus, a common room for all bachelors' students and a dedicated moot court, our study facilities are excellent.

### Scheduled teaching and learning activities

#### Lectures

Once Welcome Week is over, the next two weeks will be really busy. That's because here at Manchester we have an intensive two weeks of lectures, workshops and library visits which will introduce you to legal systems and some of the specialist skills you will need to do well throughout your studies. After that, you will have about 14 hours of scheduled, face-to-face contact time each week, probably much less than you have been used to at school. These scheduled hours are lectures and seminars (about which a bit more later). If you studying only law, you will take four courses over the year. If you are registered on one of our joint degree programmes you will study two year-long courses and three courses which run over only one semester.

Lectures are the most traditional form of teaching in universities. Your lecturers will provide information, place material in context and focus on difficult areas in quite a lot of detail. They will also criticise the subject matter, (from their own position of expertise), rather than simply describing

that subject matter. Lectures may have a lot of you in them, especially during the first year of your degree, but there are always opportunities to ask questions as you go along.

### **Seminars**

Seminars are much smaller classes, (12 on average), and they provide an opportunity for you to get to know other students and members of staff in a more intimate environment.

Unlike lectures, effective seminars are a two way thing – they really do rely on your input and you must be prepared to both prepare for them and then actively take part in them.

The main purpose of seminars is to explain novel or difficult ideas, but they also allow you to develop your communication skills, (as long as you take part); they help you relate different parts of the course to others; and they can identify and correct any misconceptions about the subject you may have inadvertently picked up!

### **e-Learning**

We have a virtual learning environment (VLE) called Blackboard (BB). Material you need for each course is posted there by each Course Director so that you can study online in your own time. You can also download papers, take part, or even set up, on-line discussions and take online tests, and get access to audio and video material. You can also access BB on the go on your mobile phone or tablet.

### **Feedback and advice sessions**

One hour drop-in sessions are held every week for every course – take advantage of them! They are held by members of staff teaching on the course and times will be posted on Blackboard. They will help you to get any extra support you feel you may need – particularly if you have not understood something in a lecture or a seminar.

### **Legal study skills and criminology careers sessions**

At Manchester you'll have access to our annual programme of employability workshops, which are facilitated by City and local law firms, barristers' chambers and criminal justice organisations. Go to them and they really will help you to develop skills that you will need when the time comes to start applying for a job (much earlier than you think!).

The current programme includes:

- **Advocacy skills** – delivered by a leading QC and Head of Chambers in Manchester.
- **Law in the City** - for first year law students, organised by five leading City law firms. This involves a day in London with: talks; interactive sessions; and the opportunity to meet and quiz graduate recruiters, trainee solicitors and lawyers from each firm.
- **Interview skills** – delivered by a former partner of a large City law firm, an alumnus of Manchester.
- **Criminology careers in focus** – delivered by professionals from a range of criminology-related professions, open to all students.

- **Criminology skills sessions** – organised in association with the careers service, providing the opportunity to audit skills, learn how to enhance employability skills, get involved with volunteering and other sessions.

## **Unscheduled teaching and learning activities**

A wide range of non-course specific teaching and learning activities are available to our students at various levels of their studies including:

- A full First year Induction programme which includes a meeting with your academic advisor. This is member of the academic staff who is allocated to you at the beginning of your studies and stays with you throughout your degree – she or he is always on hand to write references and deal with any academic or personal problems you may have during your time with us. They will contact you but you need to be proactive - get to know them.
- Coursework and written examination feedback sessions – engage with these – they are vital if you are to improve.
- Mooting, debating and mediation competitions and voluntary legal advice work in the School of Law Legal Advice Centre – all these activities look great on your c.v. so do take advantage of them.

Below is some reading which you could start before you arrive so do try and do some of it – the skills books are particularly useful. I will see you all briefly on your first day and then we will get to know each other during the course of your degree. I'll look forward to it!

With very best wishes,

Norma Hird LL.B, LL.M  
Director of Undergraduate Studies

## Suggested reading for all our students

1. Read a good newspaper regularly.
2. TV programmes/news bulletins are very helpful. BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme is entertaining as well as informative; *Channel 4 news* generally has good coverage of international issues and *BBC Newsnight* reviews leading national and international events.
3. Try, if you can, to visit your local Magistrates' Court and/or Crown Court to get a sense of 'law in action'.
4. You will receive a text book when you arrive for Welcome as part of your Welcome pack. For Law students including Law with Politics and Law with Criminology this is Finch & Fafinski, *Legal Skills*. This is a fantastic resource and you should refer to it throughout your studies.

We do not require that you buy any books before you arrive at University and you will be advised what books to buy for your specific modules during the first lectures, but for each degree course we have identified texts and websites that you may find interesting and useful as you begin your University degree. Try to read at least one of the following introductory books, as they'll be really useful: You may find these books in your local library or available second-hand.

### Reading for LLB Law students

#### Books

- McBride, N. *Letters to a Law Student* Pearson
- Rivlin, G. *Understanding the Law* OUP
- Barnard, C. *What About Law?* Hart Publishing

#### Websites

- <http://blog.law.manchester.ac.uk/>
- <http://www.legalcheek.com/>
- <http://www.theguardian.com/law>
- <https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/>
- <http://www.justice.gov.uk/>