

Module Title:	INDEPENDENT STUDIES
Date of Approval	November 2011
Module Code	7LA999
Pre-requisite	Legal Scholarship
Module Level	7
Credit value	60
Total Number of Learning Hours	600
Key Words	Independent Research, Autonomous Learning under Supervision
Module Delivery Mode	Face to Face / Online/Blended

Module Description

Independent Studies form an essential and major component of the Masters Programme. It is the vehicle by which a student conducts a major piece of independently researched work which, in the case of this programme, will be a dissertation or employment based report. Independent study will provide the student with an opportunity to utilise and enhance the knowledge and intellectual skills gained during the programme by means of an extensive investigation of a significant topic within the context of law or legal practice.

Module Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of the module, students will be able to:

- Propose a realistic research issue and plan for its execution.
- Demonstrate a critical awareness of relevant literature and theories.
- Develop an appropriate research methodology to investigate the problem or issue, and give justification for the choice of methods.
- Gather data in a manner consistent with the research methodology, and subject the data to appropriate analysis.
- Evaluate the success or otherwise of the methodology employed and reflect upon the results obtained from analysis of the data gathered.
- Place the results in context in relation to theories and concepts referred to in the literature search.
- Report work carried out for independent study by the presentation of a written dissertation which is logically structured, stylistically sound and well presented, utilising the established conventions of scholarly academic studies.
- Show throughout the report how the theories and practices identified during the PgCert and PgDip stages of the programme can be applied to a dissertation at master's level.

Module Content

Each dissertation will be supervised by an appropriate Independent Studies Supervisor. Each dissertation will be individually negotiated and agreed, and will be approved and monitored under the following general headings:

- Selection of a suitable topic, identification of potential scope and appropriateness.
- Relevant literature search, evidence of thorough approach to reading.
- Variety of materials selected as appropriate.
- Research methodology, sources of information, time-scale for research.
- Gathering relevant and appropriate evidence and critical analysis of data.
- Evaluation of evidence against concepts.
- Feasible conclusions and recommendations.
- Sound findings.

Module Learning and Teaching Methods

The module is introduced by way of two two-hours introductory sessions.

Additionally, each independent studies supervisee is expected to hold a total of six hours of meetings with their designated supervisor post allocation of supervisors.

As such, students will be expected to make early and regular contact with their allocated supervisor.

Relevant guided reading will be recommended with students being encouraged to take full and early responsibility for the achievement of the learning outcomes from the exercise.

Students will be expected to review and reflect on the process as well as the end result of the research activity as part of their professional development.

Notional Learning Effort - 600 hours as recommended in the University of Derby Post Graduate Credit Accumulations Modular Scheme, Definitive Document (2002).

Scheduled learning and teaching activities:	2%
Guided independent study:	98%
Placement/study abroad:	0%

Module Assessment

Mode: Coursework 100%

Coursework:1 100%

The module is assessed by a piece of summative coursework in the form of a research dissertation (10,000 words). Formative feedback will be provided on the research proposal and on the methodology.

Reading list

Due to the independent nature of the module the following reading list is *for indicative purposes only*. N.B. students would have been introduced to relevant material in the area of research methods by way of the module of Legal Scholarship which acts as a prerequisite to this module.

M Salter and J Mason, *Writing Law Dissertations* (Pearson Longman, Harlow 2007)

J Knowles, *Effective Legal Research* (Sweet & Maxwell, London 2009)

C Hart, *Doing your Masters Dissertation* (Sage, London 2005)

C Hart, *Doing a Literature Search* (Sage, London 2001)

L Webley, *Legal Writing* (2nd edn Routledge-Cavendish, Abingdon 2010)

S Foster, *How to Write Better Law Essays* (2nd edn Pearson Education, Harlow 2009)

LA Machi and BT McEvoy, *The Literature Review* (Sage, London 2009)

