

Assessing Student Performance in an Overseas Law Course at Boston University

This course (CAS PO 22) is part of the Boston University London Internship Programme, in which students complete both credit classes and internship/work placement in London for 15 weeks (one semester) in their chosen fields of interest. This course is mandatory for Pre-Law track student in the Internship Programme. With a combination of lectures, seminars, field trips and self-reading, students are able to gain an overview of the history and the development of the British legal system, and thoroughly examine its contemporary operation and iteration. Students are also expected to learn about the legal profession, the judiciary and the legislature

of Britain, and the massive influence of the English common law/legal system on the American common law/legal system.

Distinctive Features:

- ✔ Featuring a wide variety of learning activities including lectures, discussions and field trips;
- ✔ Relating the British legal system to the American legal system to provide foundation for in-depth study into legal world;
- ✔ Offering an thorough overview of the British legal system on both theoretical and practical aspects

Designed Learning Outcomes (LO):

- I. To gain a basic understanding of the origins and developments of the common law, the English legal system of courts and the criminal and civil litigation processes.
- II. To examine the development of as well as the current British legal profession, including routes to qualification, operating vocabulary, current legal trends and local legal peculiarities, and how access to justice is funded in the British legal system.
- III. To understand, examine and critique the contemporary form of the judiciary and the legislature.

Source: Boston University (2016) Course Syllabus

Coursework Teaching & Learning Activities:

- ✍ Lectures (8 sessions): Introduction to different aspects of the English legal system
- ✍ Class Discussion: Students are expected to read newspaper on a daily basis and select articles relevant to the course. They might be required to summarize the article to the class and lead a class discussion on the subject matter.
- ✍ Field Trip 1 (Week 1): Orientation field trip
- ✍ Field Trip 2 (Week 2): "Legal London Walk" including a visit to Royal Courts of Justice
- ✍ Field Trip 3 (Week 4): Field trip to Houses of Parliament
- ✍ Field Trip 4 (Week 6): Field trip to Crown Court, Old Bailey
- ✍ Field Trip 5 (Week 7): Field trip to Magistrates Court

Assessment Approaches

Name	Learning Activities	Weight	Aligned LO	Type	Generic Skills
A1 Attendance	Attendance is compulsory in this course for all class sessions, seminars and field trips. Students absent for more than two class sessions (whether authorized or unauthorized) will be required to meet with the Directors of the programme. An unauthorized absence will lead to a 4% grade penalty to the students' final grade. Class attendance will also be used in the moderation of final grades.	0% (penalty applies)	I. II. III.	Formative	Self-management; Responsibility
A2 Final Examination	Students are required to take a 2-hour closed book examination at the end of the course. They will need to answer two questions from	40%	I. II. III.	Summative	Critical Thinking; Study Skills; Communication; Time

A3	Essay	a list of four. Students are expected to answer each question completely with 3.5 to 4.5 pages in length. All students are given the same topic for the essay and are required to produce a 2500-word response to the essay prompt. They are encouraged to use illustrative materials including texts, periodicals, press or other media.	60%	I. II. III.	Summative	Management; Problem Solving Critical Thinking; Study Skill; Communication
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Assessment Type

Both summative and formative assessment methods are adopted in this course to enhance student engagement and learning from the course.

Assessment Focal Areas

Holistic competencies: With a comprehensive combination of learning activities ranging from lectures to field trips, this course focuses on developing students' critical thinking and study skills. The final examination (A2) and the essay (A3) are both effective assessment methods of holistic competencies including critical thinking, study skill and communication skill because students are required to critically and eloquently answer questions given to them with knowledge learnt in the course. At the same time, class attendance (A1) is able to train

students to manage themselves well and have a sense of responsibility.

Knowledge application: The practical application of knowledge learned in this course is another assessment focal area. In the final examination (A2) and the essay (A3), students are required to, based on knowledge learnt in the course, critically respond to questions related to areas discussed. This assessment focus is in line with the course LOs, which focus mainly on the understanding and grasp of new knowledge.

Assessment Standards/ Sample Rubrics

A general grading criteria is set out for the whole course, while some of the assessment approaches have other specific criteria.

	Description	Grade
General Grading Criteria	This exceptional grade is assigned only to work that has persistently outstanding quality in both substance and presentation. The student must demonstrate a sustained capacity for independent thought and extensive study, producing rigorous and convincing analyses in well-ordered prose.	A
	Awarded to work that is clearly focused and analytical, and based on wide reading. The student must cover all the principal points of a question and systemically develop a persuasive overall thesis, allowing for one or two venial omissions or inapt expressions.	A-
	This range of grades indicates that the student has shown some evidence of original thought and intellectual initiative. The student has cited sources beyond the class materials, and shown a degree of originality in perception and/or approach to the subject. The work will show thoughtful management of material, and a good grasp of the issues. The differences between a B+, a straight B and a B- may reflect poor presentation of the material, or mistakes in punctuation, spelling and grammar.	B+, B, B-
	Work in this grade range is satisfactory, but uninspiring. If the work is simply a recitation of the class materials or discussions, and shows no sign of genuine intellectual engagement with the issues, it cannot deserve a higher grade. Should an essay fail to provide a clear answer to the question as set, or argue a position coherently, the grade will fall within this range.	C+, C, C-
	A marginal pass can be given where some but not all the elements of the course have been completed satisfactorily.	D

The failing grade indicates the work is seriously flawed in one or more ways:

F

- Obvious lack of familiarity with the material
- So poorly written as to defy understanding
- So brief and insubstantial that it fails to properly address the subject
- Material presented is not relevant to the assignment
- Demonstrates evidence of plagiarism

Source: Boston University (2016) Course Syllabus

A2 & A3

Criteria

The grade students receive will be based upon:

- The relevance of your answer to the question/topic set/to be discussed
- Clarity of expression and continuity
- Evidence of reading and thought relate to the question/topic
- Quality of the arguments presented
- The above Grading Criteria

Source: Boston University (2016) Course Syllabus

Teacher's Stories

Denis Carey, Lecturer, Boston University London Programme

Professional Engagements

Dennis Carey holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the National University of Ireland, a Post Graduate Diploma in Law from Dublin Institute of Technology, a Master of Laws from Georgetown University Law Center and a Post Graduate Diploma (Roman Law, Private International Law and Notarial Practice) from Cambridge University. He has been admitted as a lawyer in: Ireland, California and England & Wales. He has vast experiences in legal education and overseas programmes in various institutions, including

Staffordshire University Law School, University of Idaho College of Law Summer School and University of Tulsa College of Law's London Programme. He has taught various law courses for the Boston University British Programmes and in 1995, he served temporarily as the Joint Director of the Academic Programme.

Motivation

Carey is admitted as a lawyer in both England and California. With his knowledge and experiences in both the British and American legal systems and the organization of overseas programme, he is able to deliver the LOs with a balance of lecture, discussions and field trips.

Students' Side of Stories

- ☑ In terms of rigor, the courses were much easier than at my home institution. However, the classes themselves for the most part were extremely fun. We went on a lot class

trips to museums, the Supreme Court walking tours, I even had a free trip to Belgium. The professors prioritize exposing their students to England's culture and history. Very enjoyable! (anonymous student rating, 2017)

Featured Video/ Photos

Videos and photos are not available.

References

Boston University. (2016). *The British legal system* [Syllabus]. Boston: Study Abroad, Boston University. Retrieved from <https://www.bu.edu/abroad/files/2016/02/CAS-PO-222-THE-BRITISH-LEGAL-SYSTEM.pdf> (accessed 4 April 2018).