

School of Law Policy on Teaching

The goal of the Reykjavík University School of Law is to occupy a front-rank position in the teaching of law and to be known for its professional approach to instruction. Highly qualified teachers should show ambition and dedication in working toward the objective of studies and teaching in the School of Law, which is to provide students with a solid academic foundation and training and encourage students to use analytical and critical thinking and scientific methods in accordance with Icelandic and foreign standards on teaching and the study of law.

Teaching objectives

- To ensure a solid academic foundation
- To teach working methods and methodology
- To train students in research and the completion of practical assignments
- To train students to work in the field of law
- To encourage students to take responsibility for their own studies, e.g. through sound preparation and active participation in all classwork
- To ensure contact with the industries, e.g. through visits from representatives of the business sector and public sector, visits to undertakings and organisations, practical assignments and projects with links to the economy

In line with this policy, the School of Law stresses the following:

- Organisation of courses and course materials in line with the learning outcomes associated with degrees and courses
- Teachers' awareness of the variety of teaching methods available and their optimal use of such methods as appropriate at any time
- Precise and varied evaluation of studies based on learning outcomes
- Pedagogical guidelines and other support to teachers

Reference points for teaching methods

Instructors bear full professional responsibility for the courses that they supervise. They are responsible for choosing the approaches they feel most appropriate to achieve the intended learning outcomes of a course. In order to support teachers in the work of implementing the School of Law's policy on teaching, the School has established the following reference points for professional teaching methods.

1. Course Organisation

1.1. Course content

A teaching plan for the course should be available two weeks before the beginning of the course on the Intra-net. The plan should include the following information, at a minimum:

- The learning outcomes of the course
- General description of the subject matter of the course
- Times and subject of classes
- Course materials
- Secondary reading
- Description of types of assignments, times and submission dates

- Description of the arrangements for evaluation and weight of individual evaluation components
- Information on the arrangement of examinations and permitted examination aids(see Rules on Examination Materials at the School of Law)
- Before the start of each term instructors should hold consultations on scheduling mid-term examinations and assignments to the extent possible.

1.2. Number of classroom hours/student contribution

According to the requirements of the ECTS credits system, each ECTS credit corresponds to 25-30 hours of student work per semester. According to the School of Law's standards, there should be approximately 7.5 classroom hours, including discussion sessions, behind each ECTS credit in undergraduate studies, and approximately five in masters studies. However, it should be kept in mind differences in subject matter and intended learning outcomes will require some flexibility.

1.3. Different points of focus at the undergraduate and graduate levels

In masters studies instructors are encouraged to place strong emphasis on the following: discussion periods, student participation, research-related work, student training in writing legal opinions and papers that meet strict requirements of academic working methods.

2. Course materials

2.1. Quality of course material

Course material should be detailed and accessible to students. Information on basic course material should be made available prior to two weeks before the beginning of the term.

2.2. Reading material

Instructors need to take care to maintain a normal balance between work contribution and reading material with respect to ECTS credits. All course material may be used in examinations except as otherwise specified.

2.3 Production of teaching materials

There is a particular emphasis on teachers having the time and opportunity to produce accessible textbooks and other material for use in courses.

3. Teaching methods: The instructor in charge of each course decides which teaching methods are most suitable for instruction in view of the subject, number of students and course level. The guidelines on teaching methods below are intended as provisional checklist for instructors.

3.1. Methods

Instructors should endeavour to use varied methods (see further on the Teaching Methods Website:

<http://starfsfolk.khi.is/ingvar/kennsluadferdir/kennsluadferdirnar.htm> and Teaching Info on Esja). Examples of teaching methods include the following:

- Lectures
- Discussions
- Practical assignments

- Independent research projects
- Group work
- Tutoring classes
- Field trips and studies in the field
- Papers and reports
- Inquiries (e.g. searching for information on the Internet)
- Log books/study journals (portfolio)
- Role play (moot court)

3.2. Equipment/technology

- Instructors should use the course website (Teaching network – intranet), i.e. the course timetable, notices, the discussion forum, lectures and other material (see Teaching Quality Handbook for further details).
- Teachers should encourage students to use information technology in seeking information and co-operate with the library staff in searching for sources.

3.3. Relations with students

- It is important for students to have good access to instructors, e.g. during fixed office hours or by other clear arrangements.

3.4. Support for teachers

- New teachers should have a liaison (permanent member of the teaching staff) to consult regarding preparation and arrangements of instruction
- The School of Law, in co-operation with the Teaching Development Council, should hold regular courses on pedagogical subjects, e.g. on producing teaching materials, teaching and evaluation methods, presentation and public speaking, performance assessment and creating examinations, learning outcome criteria in courses and studies.
- Instructors should be encouraged to attend the courses offered.
- Teachers are encouraged to make use of the services of the Teaching Division/teaching coach.

3.5. Standards for evaluating teaching quality

Teaching assessment

New teachers shall be instructed in the arrangements and subjects of teaching assessment.

Peer evaluation

Teachers are encouraged to consult their colleagues for assistance in assessing their courses, e.g. the course description or course website, or by asking colleagues to sit in on lectures and provide feedback.

Specialist evaluation

Teachers should have access to the assistance of a teacher coach in their evaluation.

Teachers' self-evaluation

Teachers are encouraged to evaluate their own teaching at the end of a semester. This should reveal, e.g., how successful the course was, what needs to be improved, how the evaluation compares with the teaching assessment and peer assessment or a specialist evaluation.

Teachers should take note of the peer evaluation checklist and self-evaluation checklist on the Teaching Development Council's site on the Law School website. The faculty dean and teacher are encouraged to discuss the conclusion of the evaluation.

4. Assessment of student performance

No general rules are set for assessing student performance. However, such assessment shall always reflect the intended learning outcomes of a course. A mixed assessment is recommended, i.e. the use of more than one method for assessment. The choice of teaching methods is subject to the judgment of the teacher of the course in question. In making this choice, it is recommended that the teacher consider the items in the following checklist.

4.1. Methods of assessing student performance

- Written examinations and quizzes
- Essay questions
- Practical assignments
- Multiple choice examinations
- Oral examinations
 - Examples of arrangements:
 - Questions drawn without preparation time
 - Questions drawn and time given for preparation
 - Questions handed out in advance
 - Oral examinations in connection with a written assignment
- *Assignments and active participation*
 - Essays
 - Practical assignments
 - Group assignments
 - Group examinations
 - Discussion periods
 - Discussion forums
 - Participation grade
 - Self-assessment and peer assessment
 - Study journals

4.2. Items that should be considered in selecting the assessment methods and their arrangements

- Which form of assessment is most suitable for each course in the undergraduate/graduate program?
- Does the assessment reflect the intended learning outcomes?
- The weight of each part of the assessment should be specified
- Is there consistency between the weight/scope of an assignment and the time granted to complete the assignment?

- Consultations among the teachers of each year regarding the scheduling of mid-term examinations and assignments at the undergraduate level
- Length or number of words of assignments

4.3. Assessment of student performance

- Strict but fair requirements
- As a rule, both examinations and assignments should have examination numbers
- Assessment should ensure consistency between answers (for example, by means of examination keys) and an overall assessment of each individual examination or assignment
- A curve should be used as a guideline, but should not unconditionally determine results

4.4. External examiners

- External examiners shall be present during oral exams
- External examiners shall have a sound knowledge of the subject involved
- If there is more than one instructor responsible for the course, one of the instructors may serve as external examiner
- Instructors should inform the external examiner in advance about course materials and questions
- All final papers in graduate studies should have external examiners.

4.5. Student access to examination papers

- Students shall be informed that they are allowed to view their marked examination papers
- The teacher decides how and when examinations will be made available for viewing and post a notice on the course site; here are some examples:
 - Viewing session for the entire group at the same time and place
 - The teacher specifies a certain time frame and each student signs up for a slot
 - Students take the initiative and contact the teacher.
- Students should be entitled to a reasoned opinion from the teacher regarding the results of an oral examination.

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