Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice
Information for Prospective Students for 2006

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GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN LEGAL PRACTICE

Practical Legal Training Course

The Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice (GDLP) is the award of the University of Wollongong for students who successfully complete the Practical Legal Training Course. The Course is accredited by the Legal Practitioners’ Admission Board (LPAB) as a qualification for law graduates who wish to apply for admission as a legal practitioner in New South Wales. It is also accepted as practical legal training for first admission in the Australian Capital Territory.

The Course was the first in Australia to offer recognition of prior skills training and professional experience, and flexible delivery combining on and off-campus training. We devised an alternative course which offered more flexibility for students with employment, family and financial responsibilities, and which enabled those living in country areas to remain there if they preferred to do so: other courses have since followed our lead.

Features of the Course

- Emphasises developing legal skills and strategic frameworks for application in a wide range of legal practice
- Integrates coursework and professional experience
- Allows students to maintain current employment or undertake a voluntary placement during the course
- Offers students flexibility in the program through a combination of on and off-campus activities

Course Options Available

- The course is available full-time (20 week program) or part-time (conducted over 2 academic sessions)

- Law students in their final year of studies (subject to conditions) may also apply for the course. This will enable them to qualify for admission to practice up to 6 months earlier than previously.

If you are interested in completing your PLT with us in your final LLB year, you should carefully plan your overall study and workplace workloads. Read this booklet carefully, and discuss with the PLT Director how you can achieve the best results in both your LLB and PLT studies. Then decide if you wish to take up one of these options.
Course Structure

The GDLP is an integrated program of coursework and professional experience that includes a combination of off-campus and on-campus activities.

The coursework part of the GDLP may be completed either on a full-time basis over a 20 week period or on a part-time basis over two academic sessions. The course also includes a period of 80 days of professional experience, up to 40 days of which may be credited for prior legal placements or legal workplace experience that meets the guidelines. (For University of Wollongong students, the placements undertaken in LLB311 and LLB396 will be credited towards the GDLP professional experience.) Any remaining days must be completed either during the coursework part or within 6 months of completing the coursework.

"The Course is well structured. The staff [are] very helpful. I liked the fact that you can work and study at the same time."

"I learned a lot from the Course and I feel more confident at work".

Course Content

The Course content meets the requirements of the National Competency Standards for newly-admitted practitioners. Course activities cover a breadth of practice areas and skills, but are also designed to relate to work undertaken in the employment or placement site.

The GDLP (PLT) Course consists of the following subjects:

- LLB 843 Professional Practice (includes the professional experience component of the course)
- LLB 844 Practice Management;
- LLB 845 Conduction Litigation; and
- LLB 846 Commercial & Property Practice.

A full description of the Course subjects may be found on the PLT website at http://www.uow.edu.au/law/plt/subjects.html

The Coursework component commences with a period of off-campus preparation followed by a week-long on-campus program to introduce you to the Course, and to its teaching and learning methods, and to provide skills development and legal practice management tools in preparation for the work in the remainder of the Course.

Over the following 17 weeks, you will be required to:

- complete a range of self-directed assignments and tasks. Much of this work requires interaction with instructors and other students, through on-line learning, email, telephone or facsimile; and
• attend 2 weekend assessment programs on campus.

The GDLP also provides a number of on-campus discussion sessions to allow students to further explore learning activities in a group situation. These sessions are optional and are designed to support students who favour a face-to-face teaching environment.

The **Professional Experience** component of the GDLP consists of 80 days of legal work experience. Up to 40 of these days may be completed before students commence the course and credit will be given for this prior experience.\(^1\) Remaining days will generally be undertaken concurrently with the coursework. While engaged in coursework, students are permitted to credit a placement of up to 2 days (14 hours) of law-related professional experience each week. Additional days actually worked during the coursework period of the Course are not usually included as part of the Course. However, part-time students may negotiate alternatives. All professional experience must be completed within 6 months of completing the coursework.


Students already in law-related practice based locations as defined can retain their employment, subject to their capacity to complete all coursework. Students without such employment may arrange voluntary placements to meet the requirements: please note that the Faculty is unable to make those arrangements for you, but will discuss options with you.

**Final Year Options**

Final year LLB and LPAB students may complete the PLT program subject to the following conditions imposed by the LPAB:

- Students must have completed all ‘Priestley 11’ core subjects: in terms of the Wollongong LLB degree, these are:
  - *Criminal Law and Justice*
  - *Torts*
  - *Contracts*
  - *Property Law A* (Real Property)
  - *Property Law B* (Equity)
  - *Public Law B* (Australian Constitutional Law)
  - *Remedies and Civil Procedure*
  - *Evidence*
  - *Law of Business Organisations*
  - *Lawyers and Australian Society* (coursework only) (Professional Conduct)

- must negotiate a study plan for both the final year LLB/LPAB and the PLT course, including the professional experience component of the course, with the PLT Director, prior to enrolment

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\(^1\) In special circumstances, further days may be credited with the permission of the Director.
Students who meet the LPAB requirements will still need to be approved for entry into the Course, by the PLT Director in consultation with the Sub-Dean, having regard to the following criteria:

- student performance and expectations in the LLB degree or LPAB Diploma
- external employment workload, and
- their overall LLB/LPAB and GDLP workload.

**OPTION A – Full-time in the final session of the degree or diploma:**

- In addition to meeting the above requirements, you may study only one subject concurrently with the PLT Course. You will not be able to graduate with the GDLP (or obtain the Certificate of Satisfactory Completion required for admission to practice) until you are also qualified to graduate with your degree or diploma.

- You can expect the PLT study workload to be about 25 hours of sustained assignment work each week throughout the course.

**OPTION B – Part-time over the final 2 sessions of your degree or diploma:**

The course content will be identical to the 20-week course, but will be offered over 2 academic sessions. You may be able to commence the course even if some Priestley or skills subjects have still to be completed, depending on the pre-requisites for the PLT subjects. You also need to consider your overall study workload and expectations for your degree and what you wish to achieve in the PLT course. You can expect the PLT part-time workload to be between 10 –15 hours of sustained assignment work each week throughout the course.

You will enrol in LLB 843 *Professional Practice* and LLB 844 *Practice Management* in the first session, and undertake much of the coursework for these subjects in the academic recess preceding that enrolment. Results in these subjects are then withheld until the whole of the PLT program is completed, as the skills and concepts of those subjects are to be applied in the practice subjects which follow. You will also enrol in one of the practice subjects - LLB 845 *Conducting Litigation* and LLB 846 *Commercial and Property Practice* - in the first session and in the other subject in the second session.

You will complete your professional experience component of the course in accordance with the agreed study plan.

You will not be able to graduate with the GDLP (or obtain the Certificate of Satisfactory Completion required for admission to practice) until you are also qualified to graduate with your degree or diploma.
What to Expect – Assignments, Attendance and Assessment

The PLT Course subjects are unlike traditional academic subjects. The principal learning strategies of the course are the application of problem-based learning, and reflection on experience. Each subject contains a series of modules, which may be delivered as a seminar, a workshop, a series of sequenced assignments, or the conduct over a period of time of a practice file. Skills, knowledge and ethical conduct are integrated, as they are in practice. Theoretical knowledge of the law, acquired in the LLB, is assumed.

The program blends face-to-face and online teaching and learning strategies to provide you with the information that you need to complete course activities. You will need access to the internet to enable you to download and read materials, submit assignments and communicate with instructors and with other students. As in practice, you will also be expected to make use of the online resources that are available to you as a University of Wollongong student to research issues.

The Course is delivered in a mix of on- and off-campus activities. The compulsory on-campus activities consist of the “Introductory Week” (Week 3) and the assessment weekends (Weeks 17-18). Further optional face-to-face discussion sessions will be held to meet student requirements as appropriate. In between these on-campus activities, students engage in sustained and paced practical activities (reading and research, completion of assignments, conducting interactive transactional files, and interaction with staff, other students and external legal practitioners, as required) with deadlines to meet each week. You will be expected to make a high commitment to the demands of the Course, and to interact co-operatively and professionally with staff and other students in the Course, especially where required to do so in the interactive transactional files so as not to adversely affect other students’ learning in the Course.

During the Course, you will need to attend the introductory week, and at such times on the assessment weekends as is necessary for the subject/s in which you are enrolled. For part-time students, this attendance will take place over 2 semesters. You should not enrol in the GDLP if you are unable to attend the compulsory sessions.

Assessment is based on satisfactory completion of assignments, participation in scheduled activities, and the achievement of the National Competency Standards required of a newly-admitted practitioner. These are described in the Course handbook. Most of this assessment is made by external legal practitioners.

If you intend to continue working full time in your law-related employment, you should ensure that your employer is aware of and understands the extent of your course workload and will be prepared to make allowance for this. In some instances, it may be better to negotiate for part-time employment or to take study leave for some part of each week during the Course.
Course Dates for 2006

Course 2006/1: Commences 23 January and concludes 9 June 2006

On-campus workshop dates:
Introductory Week: 6-10 February
Assessment Weekends: 20-21 May, 27-28 May

Course 2006/2: Commences 19 June and concludes 3 November

On-campus workshop dates:
Introductory Week: 3-7 July
Assessment Weekends: 14-15 October and 21-22 October.

Preparing a Study Plan

Your Study Plan should be based on allocation of no more than 40 hours per week (ie the equivalent of a full-time working week) between all of your LLB or LPAB, GDLP, and professional experience or employment commitments. In making these calculations:

- Allocate 8 hours per week for each LLB subject (ie 1 x 2hr seminar plus 6 hours research and preparation) plus time for preparation for assignments and examinations
- Allocate 10 – 15 hours per week for each PLT practice subject
- Prioritise and plan ahead for all assignments – don’t leave any assignment to the deadline
- If undertaking the course full-time, reduce your employment workload if necessary; if undertaking the course part-time, consider more flexible arrangements for your professional experience in consultation with the PLT Director.

“I was overall impressed by the Course because the lecturers are genuinely concerned about student learning.”

“Very appropriate and practical content.”
Course Fees for 2006

There are 2 payments to be made in relation to the course:

- An initial payment of $300 at the time of your application to enrol in the Course. This is payable to the Faculty of Law, for the course materials which will be provided by the Faculty to each student in the Course. This fee is not refundable if an applicant subsequently decides not to enrol in the Course.

- The tuition fee for the whole course, payable to the University, is $6,300 for domestic students, plus student body fees. (If a final year student, student body fees are payable as part of your degree program). The Commonwealth FEE-HELP scheme, which replaces the Post-graduate Loan Scheme (PELS), is available to domestic students to meet tuition fees for non-research postgraduate studies: refer to the DEST website (www.dest.gov.au) for details.

Once your application to enrol is approved, you will receive an offer from the University (UniAdvice) to enrol in the Course. Acceptance of the offer must be made before the course commences. Tuition fees are payable (or FEE-HELP application lodged) at the time of accepting the offer to enrol. The fee is allocated to each subject as follows:

- LLB 843 Professional Practice – (8cp) - $1050
- LLB 844 Practice Management – (8cp) - $1050
- LLB 845 Conducting Litigation – (16cp) - $2100
- LLB 846 Commercial and Property Practice – (16 cp) - $2100

International Students

Overseas law graduates should first contact the Legal Practitioners Admission Board (LPAB) for directions as to what requirements they must meet in order to qualify for admission in New South Wales. They may be required to complete some additional law studies, and it is necessary to complete them before commencing or concurrently with the practical legal training requirements. Overseas students must also hold a student visa or other temporary visa for residence in Australia.

For information, contact the LPAB website at http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lpab.nsf/pages or phone (02) 9392 0300

The University’s tuition Course fee for international students is A$8750, plus student body fees.

“I was a non-Wollongong student and everyone was very welcoming and friendly and truly made you feel at home.”

“A good friendly educational environment.”
Enrolling in the Course

There are 40 places only available in each Course, inclusive of all applicants and part-time students already in the course.

Applications for the Course commencing in January 2006 should be lodged by 17 December 2005, and for the course commencing in July 2006 by 20 May 2006. Applications will be accepted in order of receipt.

To make an application, obtain an enrolment kit from the Faculty Office (or download the kit from our website at http://www.uow.edu.au/law/plt/howtoenrol.html and follow the instructions.

Your application to enrol must be lodged initially with the Faculty, where it will be checked by the Director of the Legal Practice Unit.

If a final year student, you may be asked to make an appointment with the Director to discuss your proposed study plan. If part-time, you may be asked to enrol in a particular practice subject in each session.

Applicants who are eligible for entry into the Course will be made an offer by UniAdvice (the University student administrative centre). This offer must be accepted and the Course fee paid for your enrolment to be completed.

If, at any time after lodging the application and before formal enrolment, you wish to withdraw your application, please notify the Legal Practice Unit so that any student on a waiting list can be considered for the Course.

Once enrolled, any intention to withdraw from or deferral of a subject must be discussed with the Director, so that an alternative study plan can be devised.

“Very good basis I believe for admission to the legal profession.”

“My experience doing PLT was quite valuable... I look forward to being admitted and having my own clients.”

Further Information

Further information about our Course may be found on our website at http://www.uow.edu.au/law/plt/plthomepage.html

If you would like to know more about the program, please contact:

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