WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

School of Law

Honours Award Level Guidelines

Bachelor of Laws (Honours)

School Honours Coordinator: Rehan Abeyratne

Email: r.abeyratne@westernsydney.edu.au

Table of Contents

Honours Award Level Guidelines 3

1 Application process 3

Students applying for Honours must follow the instructions provided on the Western Sydney University Honours in Law website: 3

Applications for admission should be submitted by: 3

2 Admission 3

2.1 Admission Criteria 4

2.1.2 Honours Topics 5

2.1.3 Appointment of a Principal Supervisor 6

3 Ethics and/or Other Required Approvals 6

4 Procedures for Dealing with Supervision Issues 7

5 Honours Progression 7

6 Submission of the Honours Dissertation 7

6.1 Due date and time for submission 8

6.2 Procedure for applying for an extension of submission date 8

7 Examination Procedures 8

7.1 Appointment of Examiners 8

7.2 Materials Sent to Examiners 9

7.3 The Use and Appointment of Third Examiner (Arbiters) 10

7.4 Arbitration Process and Outcomes 10

8 Determination of Honours Award Level 11

8.1 Calculation of Honours Weighted Average Mark 11

8.2 Honours Award Level Thresholds 13

8.3 Processing of Honours Awards 13

9 Review of Grade 13

10 Appeal Against Level of Honours 13

11 Key Dates – Summary 13

Honours Award Level Guidelines

The Curriculum Design and Approval Procedures -Honours describes the framework for all Honours courses, both end-on and embedded, at Western Sydney University: https://policies.westernsydney.edu.au/document/view.current.php?id=156
These School Honours Award Level Guidelines contain procedural information specific to the Honours degree in the School of Law.

Note: in general, Honours Award Level Guidelines are published annually and may change from year to year. The Guidelines that apply to any student's candidature are the published Guidelines for the year the student was first enrolled in the Law Honours Program.

1 Application process

Students are encouraged to consult the School Honours Coordinator before making an application as the School may not have staff who are able to supervise all possible dissertation topics.

1.1 On-Line Application Form

Students applying for Honours must complete the on-line application form found on the Western Sydney University Honours in Law website:

https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/schools/sol/honours

1.1.1 Application Deadline

Applications for admission should be submitted by:

- 11:59pm on 15 January of every year.

2 Admission

Upon receiving an application, the School Honours Coordinator, after confirming eligibility, will forward each application to the Dean and School Academic Committee to approve or decline admission.

2.1 Admission Criteria

In clarification of and in addition to the criteria set out in the Curriculum Design and Approval Procedures -Honours , Section 3, clauses (6)-(17), the criteria for admission to the Law Honours Program are:

a. Acheivement of a threshold admission average mark (AAM) of at least 70; and

b. Submission of Research Proposal; and

c. Availability and appointment of a principal supervisor by the Dean of the School

Students must have successfully passed 160 Law subject credit points at the time of applying for the honours program. Students are encouraged to consult with the School Honours Coordinator to assess their eligibility for admission and seek advice if they do not meet the pre-requisites.

2.1.1 Calculation of Honours Weighted Average Mark (HWAM) and Admission Average Mark (AAM)

In the calculation of a student's Honours Weighted Average Mark (HWAM) and Admission Average Mark (AAM):

- Only Bachelor of Law subjects are included;
- Compulsory Fail (CF) grades are assigned a numeric mark of 42%;
- Subjects obtained by 'Advanced Standing' are not included, unless the 'original' or 'underlying' subject was delivered by Western Sydney University Law School as part of a Bachelor of Law course in which case the subject is included;
- Subjects obtained on a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory basis are not included; and
- In the case of subjects a student has failed, the Fail result and the results in any reattempts are included, subject to the exclusion rules below.

In the calculation of the Honours Weighted Average Mark:

- The results in the student's non-Honours subjects are allocated a 0.66 (66%) weighting and the result in the Honours subject, LAWS4011 Law Honours Dissertation,
  is allocated a 0.34 (34%) weighting; and

- The student's subjects, other than LAWS4011 Law Honours Dissertation, with the two lowest results are excluded.

In the calculation of the Admission Average Mark:

The student's subjects with the two lowest results are excluded.

2.1.1.1 Implementation of the 'GPA Neutral Scheme' (June 2020)

Following the University's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with the 'GPA Neutral Scheme' established by the University in June 2020, students who successfully completed a subject were permitted to apply for their final mark and grade to be converted to a Satisfactory (S) grade. Any non-Honours law subject in which the student has a S grade is not included in the calculation of the student's HWAM or AAM for the purpose of admission to Honours.

2.1.2 Honours Topics and Research Proposal

Students interested in applying to the law honours program are invited to submit a research proposal providing a brief overview of the area of research that the applicant is planning to undertake. Applicants should select a research topic from the list prepared by the School and published by the Honours Coordinator ('the Honours Topic List'). Where an applicant wishes to research a topic that is not on Honours Topic List, the applicant should elaborate in their Research Proposal, why they wish to conduct research on that topic. Applicants who wish to select their own topic should be aware that approval of a topic that is not on the Honours Topic List will be subject to the availability of a Principal Supervisor that is qualified to supervise the student. A template for the Research Proposal can be found on the Honours in Law website.

As a guide, the Research Proposal should be around 500-1,000 words (excluding headings and footnotes) and should address the following aspects:

Area of research or research topic

Significance of proposed research (why is this research important to do now?);

Brief literature review (discuss and explain at least five relevant legal sources); and

If the topic is not on the Honours Topic list, why the applicant seeks to explore that topic.

2.1.3 Appointment of a Principal Supervisor

Admission to the Law Honours Program is subject to the availability of a suitable supervisor and other resources.

3 Ethics and/or Other Required Approvals

Ethics approval will be required where the Research Proposal indicates that the proposed dissertation includes empirical research involving humans or their data. Approval is via an application in the first instance to the appropriate Peer Review Committee followed by further review and approval. Further information, including the Western Sydney University Guidelines for human ethics and the procedures for ethics review, is at: https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/research/research_ethics_and_integrity

Upon acceptance into the Laws Honours Program, the student must ensure that approval has been granted by the Western Sydney University Human Research Ethics Committee before data collection or other fieldwork commences. Applications for ethics approval will normally be initiated by the student's principal supervisor.

See Appendix 1 for more information.

4 Procedures for Dealing with Supervision Issues

Where a student is experiencing supervision difficulties, the student will first consult their supervisor. If the difficulty is not resolved, or the issue involves a supervisor, the student should approach the School Honours Coordinator who will facilitate resolution of the issues. If the issues involve the School Honours Coordinator, the student may approach the Dean of the School of Law or the Pro Vice Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) for advice.

5 Honours Progression

The embedded School of Law honours program consists of the subjects LAWS4016 Legal Research and Methodology (10 credit points) taught in Autumn and LAWS4011 Law Honours Dissertation (20 credit points) taught in Spring. Students self-enrol into LAWS4016 Legal Research and Methodology. Once students have completed LAWS4016 satisfactorily by achieving a result of at least 65 (Credit), the School of Law will manage their enrolment LAWS4011 Law Honours Dissertation.

Note: progression to Spring semester requires satisfactory completion of the assessments due in Autumn semester. Students who have been admitted to the embedded Honours program and who do not achieve a result in LAWS4016 Legal Research and Methodology of at least 65 (Credit) will not be enrolled into LAWS4011 Law Honours Dissertation. This will mean that they are ineligible to receive Honours.

6 Submission of the Honours Dissertation

The dissertation must be submitted electronically via the Turnitin link on the vUWS site for LAWS4011 Law Honours Dissertation on or before the prescribed ‘Electronic Version’ due date and time. Please read the Turnitin Instruction Manual prior to submission.

Further information in regard to the submission of the assignment may be posted on the vUWS site for this subject.

Students are required to keep an electronic copy of all written work which is submitted and to follow HRED Guidelines in respect of data collected.

6.1 Due date and time for submission

The due date for submission of the Law Honours Dissertation will be as specified in the Subject Outline for LAWS4011 Law Honours Dissertation.

6.2 Procedure for applying for an extension of submission date

Extensions can only be granted in exceptional and compelling circumstances consistent with the provisions of the Disruption to Studies Policy, which can be found at: https://policies.westernsydney.edu.au/document/view.current.php?id=205

The Request for Extension application can be found at:

https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/currentstudents/current_students/services_and_facilities/special_consideration

An application for an extension should be sent to the School Honours Coordinator. After consultation with the student's supervisor, the School Honours Coordinator will make a recommendation to the Dean or Deputy Dean as to whether the extension should be granted and the Dean or Deputy Dean will determine the application. The Dean or Deputy Dean will advise the student and the School Academic Committee in writing of the decision.

Students should note that late submission may make a student ineligible for consideration for postgraduate scholarships.

7 Examination Procedures

7.1 Appointment of Examiners

Examiners will be appointed in accordance with the Curriculum Design and Approval Procedures -Honours , Section 6, clauses (26)-(32), which specifies that the significant research component or dissertation will be examined by two suitably qualified examiners. Examiners may be external to the University or internal.

In clarification of and in addition to clauses (26)-(32) of the Curriculum Design and Approval Procedures -Honours – Honours Section 6, the School of Law adopts the following processes for the appointment of examiners:

1. Recommendations for examiners will be made by the School Honours Coordinator (in consultation with the principal supervisor) to the School Academic Committee, which will consider nominations and approve appointments. The School of Law shall be free to decide the composition of the examination panel.
2. Examiners will not be principal supervisors or co-supervisors of the Honours candidate whose dissertation is being examined, nor will the examiners have worked with the Honours candidate on any aspect of their dissertation research.
3. The identity of examiners remains confidential before and during the examination process. The principal supervisor may discuss the examiners' reports with the student after the examination is completed. At that stage, the identity of the examiners may be revealed provided that the examiners have given consent to such a disclosure.
4. The School Honours Coordinator will ensure that each examiner is sent all relevant information and instructions pertaining to the marking of the dissertation. It will be the responsibility of the School Honours Coordinator to ensure that examiner's reports are received in a timely manner – see 'Materials Sent to Examiners' below.
5. Examiners' reports will be sent to the School Honours Coordinator who will ascertain if a third examiner (arbiter) is required under the conditions specified in the Curriculum Design and Approval Procedures -Honours, Section 6 , clause (31) – see "The Use of Third Examiner (Arbiters)" below.
6. The School Honours Coordinator will provide copies of the relevant examiners' reports to the principal supervisor. Copies of all examiner reports will be included in the School Academic Committee consideration of results.

7.2 Materials Sent to Examiners

Materials sent by the School of Law to examiners should include, but are not limited to:

1. a letter inviting the examiner to formally examine the dissertation;
2. a 150-200 word abstract of the dissertation to be examined that contains the title and author of the work;

3. an explanation as to which components of the degree contribute to the determination of the Honours award and specifically the weight given to the dissertation;
4. specific information concerning the School's expectations of the nature, structure, length and presentation requirements of the dissertation of the Honours degree;
5. the criteria by which the examiner is expected to evaluate the dissertation;
6. information concerning the School's expectations of the examiner (e.g. time frame by which examination needs to be completed, what materials need to be forwarded back to the School to complete the examination process);
7. a cover sheet that summarises the examiners' score out of 100 and includes specified criteria for each potential score; and
8. any other School-devised scoring materials.

7.3 The Use and Appointment of Third Examiner (Arbiters)

As set out the Curriculum Design and Approval Procedures -Honours, Section 6,, clause (31), where there is a mark discrepancy of 10 or more marks between dissertation examiners or a difference in the examiner-recommended "grade", the School Honours Coordinator may take one or more of the following actions:

1. Invite the examiners to confer with each other and/or with the School Research and Higher Degrees Committee with a view to presenting a consolidated recommendation;
2. Appoint an experienced marker of Bachelor Honours dissertations as a third examiner who will act as an arbiter; following review of the dissertation and the other examiners' reports the arbiter determines the mark and grade on the basis of the published criteria and standards for the dissertation; this is the final examination result for recommendation to the School Academic Committee.

7.4 Arbitration Process and Outcomes

As well as the standard materials sent to dissertation examiners, supplementary materials forwarded by the School Honours Coordinator to the arbiter should include the following:

- a written letter outlining the circumstances under which the present arbitration is required; and
- examination reports and marking sheets from the two examiners, with the identity of the examiners withheld.

The arbiter shall read the dissertation to reach an independent assessment of the work contained within. After reading the dissertation, the arbiter considers the two examiner reports and assesses the conclusions that the examiners have reached and the arguments that they have used to justify these conclusions. The arbiter then prepares two reports. The first is a standard assessment report on the quality of the dissertation. The arbiter will also produce a second report to the School Academic Committee explaining the decision in relation to the two examiners' reports.

The arbiter's reports, both the standard assessment report and the report outlining the reasons for their decision, should be sent to the Chair of the School Academic Committee for consideration of results and will be forwarded by the School Academic Committee to the Dean for endorsement.

The recommended mark for the dissertation is decided by the arbiter and will be forwarded by the School Academic Committee to the Dean for endorsement.

8 Determination of Honours Award Level

8.1 Calculation of Honours Weighted Average Mark

In the case of the Bachelor of Laws (Hons), the calculation of the Honours Award level (Class of Honours) is based on the student's Honours Weighted Average Mark (HWAM).

The HWAM is calculated according to the following principles:

- The HWAM is calculated using all Bachelor of Laws subjects completed by the student;
- The student's two subjects, other than LAWS4011 Law Honours Dissertation, with the lowest result are excluded from the calculation;
- The average mark of all non-Honours subjects are given a weighting of 0.66 (66%) when calculating the HWAM;
- The mark for LAWS4011 Law Honours Dissertation is given a weighting of 0.34 (34%) when calculating the HWAM;
- Once calculated, the HWAM is rounded to two decimal places.

The HWAM is calculated in accordance with the following formula:

HWAM = (((Sum of marks in all non-Honours law subjects)-(sum of marks in two lowest non-Honours law subjects))/((Number of non-Honours law subjects)-2)*0.66) + ((Mark in LAWS4011)*0.34)

HWAM =

(((Sum of marks in all non-Honours law subjects)

-

(sum of marks in two lowest non-Honours law subjects))

/

((Number of non-Honours law subjects)-2)

*0.66)

+

((Mark in LAWS4011)

*0.34)

Note: ‘non-Honours law subject’ does not include any subjects obtained by Credit for Prior Learning (unless the ‘original’ or ‘underlying’ subject was delivered by the Law School as part of a Bachelor of Law or Juris Doctor course in which case the subject is included) or on a
Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory basis; it does include Fails and Compulsory Fails (which are included at the nominal value of 42).

8.2 Honours Award Level Thresholds

In the case of the Bachelor of Laws (Hons), the awarding of the Honours Award level (Class of Honours) is based on the following thresholds:

Honours Award Level	Threshold
First Class Honours:	HWAM of 80 or higher.
Second Class Honours, Division 1:	HWAM of 75 or higher.
Second Class Honours, Division 2:	HWAM of 70 or higher.

If a student's HWAM is below 70, then an Honours level is not awarded.

8.3 Processing of Honours Awards

Honours marks and level of award will be approved by the School Academic Committee and Dean of School. Once determined, Honours marks and levels will be sent to candidates by Data Integrity, Quality and Operations.

9 Review of Grade

Reviews of Grade are dealt with by the Curriculum Design and Approval Procedures – Honours Section 8:

https://policies.westernsydney.edu.au/document/view.current.php?id=156

10 Appeal Against Level of Honours

Appeal against Level of Honours is dealt with by the Curriculum Design and Approval Procedures – Honours Section 9:

https://policies.westernsydney.edu.au/document/view.current.php?id=156

11 Key Dates – Summary

Final Date for Applying for Admission: 15 January 2027.

Confirmation of Enrolment: 26 February 2027.

Submission: As specified in the LAWS4011 Subject Outline.

Appendix 1

School Honours Award Level Guidelines: Requirements for Ethics Approval

Human and Animal Ethics and Biosafety for Honours students at Western Sydney University

Research by University researchers and students must be carried out in accordance with the Research Code of Practice (opens in new window) and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007) (opens in new window). Academic Senate has endorsed the Singapore Statement on Research Integrity (opens in new window) and the Montreal Statement on Research Integrity in Cross-Boundary Research Collaborations (opens in new window)

All honours research involving human participants **must** meet the National Statement criteria for Low 1 or Negligible risk research. In Australia, the honours student's Supervisor is the applicant for both human and animal ethics approval.

Given the short time frame available for Honours study, it is recommended that where ethics approval does not already exist, that ethics approval is sought as a matter of **priority** at the earliest possible time during the Honours program.

Before conducting any data collection, experimentation or field work, supervisors of Honours projects must determine whether ethical review is required and obtain approvals from the relevant ethics committee. All projects are considered the responsibility of the supervisor who will be the applicant for ethics protocol approval.

More information available at:

https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/research/research_ethics_and_integrity/human_ethics

Contact: For information on the application requirements and process, contact Human Ethics: humanethics@westernsydney.edu.au

1 http://gradresearch.unimelb.edu.au/programs/GReP/GREIM.html