

# **Undergraduate and Graduate Program Quality Assurance (QA) Review: 2023-24**

## **Excerpted Report**

### **Faculty of Law**

#### **Undergraduate Program Review**

Programs: Juris Doctor (JD); Joint program - Faculty of Business Combined Juris Doctor/Master of Business Administration

Date of Review: March 11 - 12, 2024

Reviewers: Erik Knutsen, Chair, Undergraduate, Queen's Law; Dr. Elizabeth Adjin-Tettey, External Review Member - Undergraduate, University of Victoria; Paul Messinger, Internal Review Member - Undergraduate, University of Alberta

#### **Program Strengths**

- We have an overall impression that this is a very tight-knit law faculty known as a regionally impactful Alberta law school with a very impressive sense of community and collegiality. The students rave about the program and the support and encouragement they receive. The staff appear to consistently go above and beyond expectations. The Law Dean is attentive to faculty, staff and student needs and "listens." Faculty imbue the impression that they are committed to student success and are approachable to students. This is obviously a place where people matter.
- Students praised the accessibility and supportive nature of the staff and Dean. Indeed, the level of praise was remarkable. The students commended the student support staff for their responsive, caring and humane approaches. Staff were consistently described as being helpful in a timely way that obviously exceeded expectations, and often above and beyond clear lines of employment expectations. This is a hallmark of collegiality.
- The Committee consistently heard about the impactful teaching that occurs at the Faculty of Law. Professors make themselves available to counsel students. Students roundly praised the faculty for their commitment to learning. Faculty report feeling well-supported in trying new pedagogical techniques in the classroom.

- The impressive job placement rate of graduates is over 90%.
- We note that the faculty appears to keep class sizes quite small (less than 60), even in traditionally high enrolment courses. The students especially appear to appreciate this attention to class size and we suspect it contributes to the collegial and interactive learning environment of which many spoke.
- The faculty boasts a very impressive set of talented individuals. There are some who enjoy international scholarly reputations and who would be highly competitive and sought after at other law faculties.
- Part of what appears to be an important ingredient of the “secret sauce” to this rather incredibly close-knit community seems to be the dedicated space of a student café in the student lounge. This area appears to be a key “mixing” point for students, staff, and faculty. It was repeatedly mentioned by each of the staff, faculty and student groups as an important component of the sense of “place” at the faculty. The Committee was impressed by the wisdom of supporting this area as an important congruence of community.

### **Challenges Faced Since 2017 Program Review**

The committee wish to note at the outset that the Faculty of Law has encountered some serious challenges since the prior 2017 program review:

1. the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced online remote learning for a period of time, among other serious disruptions felt by all law schools;
2. drastic and extreme budget cuts equivalent to about one-third, imposed from above, followed by a subsequent cash-positive position; and,
3. intense restructuring around the entire university, including the law faculty’s incorporation into a new college model of administration (and with the law faculty being a very small faculty amongst the others on campus).

Any one of the above is enough to test the mettle of a law faculty but all in conjunction is a challenge indeed. It is for this reason that the Committee acknowledges the extraordinary leadership skill of the Dean of Law and the administration in its ability to keep the institution as strong and vibrant as it appears to be.

Program Structure
<b>Recommendation:</b> Consider some purposeful thinking as to why the current mandatory J.D. courses are, in fact, mandatory.
<b>Response from the Faculty of Law:</b> The Faculty recognizes the importance of ensuring that mandatory J.D. courses fulfill a meaningful purpose. The current mandatory J.D. courses reflect the purposefully considered recommendations of a comprehensive curriculum review completed by the Faculty of Law Curriculum Committee in 2021. This multi-year review was based on input received from a wide range of stakeholders and took multiple considerations into account, including: the Faculty's long-standing reputation for ensuring that J.D. students have a well-rounded education in foundational areas of law; the expectations of employers of graduating J.D. students; the competency requirements set by the Federation of Law Societies of Canada (the professional regulator of the JD program); and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #28.
<b>Action Plan:</b> The Faculty will continue to regularly review the mandatory J.D. curriculum (the last review having taken place in 2021) to ensure that it reflects both purposeful pedagogical thinking and stakeholder interests, while complying with the requirements set by the professional regulator for graduating students entering the legal profession. Going forward, this work will necessarily take into account the recently revised National Requirements of the Federation of Law Societies of Canada and the Western Canada Competency Profile recently passed by the Law Societies of Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.
<b>Recommendation:</b> Consider what opportunities may exist to make the Indigenous law course a transformative learning experience.
<b>Response from the Faculty of Law:</b> The Faculty has been intentional in implementing a 3-credit Indigenous law requirement that offers upper year students a meaningful learning experience. Currently, students fulfill this requirement by enrolling in a course of their choice from a roster of approved courses. The roster of approved courses continues to evolve, but currently includes five choices, each of which offers a different entry point to the conversation: Law 486 – Jurisprudence (Indigenous Law Foundations & Methods); Law 590 – Indigenous Peoples and Canadian Law; Law 591 - The TRC, Law, Justice & Reconciliation; Law 599 - Seminars on Specialized Legal Topics - Methods of Indigenous Legal Engagement; and Law 599 - Seminars on Specialized Legal Topics – Métis Law & the Canadian State. Collectively, these courses offer a range of class sizes and pedagogical approaches. Accordingly, by choosing among these courses, students have the opportunity to take ownership of their own learning experience and its transformative impact. Additionally, course instructors and the committee responsible for approving courses to fulfill this degree requirement regularly seek out ways to

ensure that these classes offer meaningful and transformative learning experiences. In addition, all 1L students participate in a full day, immersive law-adapted KAIROS blanket exercise experience as part of their mandatory Foundations course.

**Action Plan:** In addition to continuing with ongoing review and approval of courses that offer students meaningful learning opportunities to fulfill the Indigenous law course requirement, the Faculty will explore opportunities to improve communications with students to ensure that they have a clear understanding of the purpose and intent of this mandatory course and the potentially transformative learning opportunity it presents.

**Recommendation:** Consider having a dedicated staff in each program for the joint JD/MBA program, so that the staff knows the program expectations and can act as a point person for students.

**Response from the Faculty of Law:** The Faculty understands the importance of ensuring that current and prospective students enrolled in the joint JD/MBA program are fully informed and aware of program requirements. Currently, the Vice-Dean, the Curriculum Coordinator and the Admissions Advisor jointly serve as the point person for existing students and the Admissions Advisor and the Student Recruiter jointly serve as the point person for prospective students. Information about the JD/MBA program is also available on the Faculty website.

**Action Plan:** The Faculty will continue to explore ways of improving student awareness of JD/MBA program requirements through enhanced communication methods, including whom students should contact if they have questions. Depending on resources, consideration may also be given to restructuring staff roles to provide a single point person for the JD/MBA program.

### Program Measures and Comparative Analysis

**Recommendation:** Concerning employment prospects, continue to build the very strong network. It may also be helpful to compare placement success of the closest competitors in the key target cities and regions.

**Response from the Faculty of Law:** Maximizing employment prospects for graduating J.D. students is an ongoing priority for the Faculty. Through a dedicated Career Services Office, the Faculty works continuously to nurture and expand its strong relationship with potential employers of J.D. students. The Faculty has a practice of regularly communicating success rates to stakeholders, though these efforts have not traditionally focused on comparing the Faculty's placement rates to those of competitor law schools. In 2024, the placement rate is currently sitting at 95%.

**Action Plan:** The Faculty will continue its ongoing efforts to build strong relationships with prospective employers of current and graduating J.D. students. Depending on available resources, the Faculty may explore possibilities for increasing communication of our placement success rates, particularly as compared to those of close competitors, where comparator information is available. The 2024 placement rate has been included in the 2024/25 JD prospectus.

**Recommendation:** Concerning academic reputation, build faculty and institutional strengths purposefully, with a supporting active research culture, around areas where the faculty can (continue to) be recognized thought leaders.

**Response from the Faculty of Law:** Currently and historically, the Faculty's strong academic reputation as a top quality law school intentionally rests on the provision of a broad-based, foundational legal education delivered by a core of tenured and tenure-track faculty members with research expertise in a diverse array of traditional and emerging areas of law. Recent and ongoing efforts to renew the faculty complement provide a fresh opportunity to consolidate existing areas of academic strength, such as health law, and to identify and develop new areas of expertise. In recent years, the Faculty has continued to expand efforts to actively encourage and support a robust research culture, driven by and in support of areas of faculty member interests and expertise. These efforts include supporting: regularly accessible faculty member research funding; regularly organized faculty seminars; visiting scholars; Justice(s) in Residence; and book launches, symposiums and workshops amplifying and promoting faculty member research. The robust research culture is further enhanced by the Faculty's support of research centres, affiliated institutes and special projects housed within the Law Centre. Presently, these are: the Alberta Law Reform Institute, the Environmental Law Centre, the Centre for Constitutional Studies; the Health Law Institute; and the Wahkohtowin Law and Governance Lodge.

**Action Plan:** As resources permit, the Faculty will continue to explore ways to strategically build its academic reputation in ways that promote faculty members' areas of expertise, while working to consolidate particular research strengths. In particular, the Faculty will focus on ways in which to incentivize research grant applications. In 2024/25, faculty who secure an external research grant beyond a base minimum will be provided with a teaching release at some point during the life of the project. The Faculty will also explore the introduction of an annual Faculty research award to recognize the research success of an early career and a tenured academic.

### Teaching and Learning Environment

**Recommendation:** Consider how the Faculty of Law could benefit from further partnerships and collaborations with other cognate units within the University of Alberta.

**Response from the Faculty of Law:** The Faculty has a long and ongoing tradition of collaborating with other academic units and disciplines at the University of Alberta and at other institutions in Canada and abroad. There are several current examples of such collaboration. Presently, three tenured faculty members are cross-appointed with the Faculty of Arts (in the departments of Economics; History, Classics and Religion; and Sociology respectively). Recently, the Faculty developed a Law 101 course for non-Law undergraduate students, and J.D. students are presently permitted to enroll in one 3-credit non-Law course as part of their program. Law Faculty members have also periodically taught courses to students enrolled in a range of other disciplines, including Medicine, Public Health, Pharmacy, and Engineering. Periodically, faculty members are seconded to administrative positions in the College of Social Sciences and Humanities and the university at large, and faculty members regularly engage in interdisciplinary research with colleagues from other faculties. Interdisciplinary collaboration is also demonstrated by law faculty members leading and regular engaging with the work being done by various research centres, institutes and projects on campus. These include, for example, the Alberta Law Reform Institute, the Environmental Law Centre, the Centre for Constitutional Studies; the Health Law Institute; and the Wahkohtowin Law and Governance Lodge (all currently housed within the Law Centre) and the Alberta Land Institute.

**Action Plan:** The Faculty will continue to explore opportunities to support faculty members engaging in partnerships and collaborations with other units within the University of Alberta in ways that enhance the teaching and research mission of the Faculty of Law and the university as a whole. Faculty will be encouraged to participate in College-led activities which promote interdisciplinarity and provide opportunities for faculty to share their research outside of the Law School.

**Recommendation:** Consider re-visiting admissions streams criteria and existing supports to attract and retain diverse students.

**Response from the Faculty of Law:** Currently, students can be admitted to the J.D. program through the General Admission category or through the Indigenous Admission category. Although the General Admission category relies primarily on a numeric prediction indicator to evaluate applications, it also allows for a holistic assessment which may support student diversity. In recent years, the Faculty has been examining and engaging in discussions about potentially modifying admission criteria to further attract and retain a diverse student body. We have also enhanced recruitment efforts to promote diversity of the applicant pool. For example, the Faculty has supported and attended admission information events organized by the University of Alberta Law Club (a student group for undergraduate students interested in applying to law school); the Black Law Students' Association (at both the Faculty level and nationwide); the University of Alberta Black Students' Association; and the ELITE program.

The Faculty also currently provides significant support for existing students from diverse backgrounds. For example, the Faculty employs a full-time Indigenous Support Officer who assists Indigenous students and a Student Wellness Officer who, among other things, helps facilitate engagement and activities of identity-based student groups such as the Black Law Students' Association; the Muslim Law Students' Association; OUTLaw; the Federation of Asian Canadian Lawyers student group; and the Women's Law Forum. The Faculty also has a standing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion committee, comprised of faculty members and students. The EDI Committee regularly considers diversity issues impacting law students and brings recommendations to Faculty administration. With the support of generous donors and alumni, the Faculty also offers \$1.4million in financial support to students, including a large number of scholarships, awards and bursaries directed toward students from historically marginalized and underrepresented groups.

The Faculty runs an annual 2 week intensive for Indigenous students (Launchpad into Law) to assist with their transition to Law School.

**Action Plan:** Supporting a diverse student body is an ongoing priority for the Faculty. The Faculty will continue efforts to engage with students from diverse backgrounds to better understand their needs and to consider ways of enhancing admissions policies and student supports to attract and retain a diverse student body. In 2024/25 and in consultation with the local Black community, the Faculty will revisit the possibility of a Black Admissions category.

**Recommendation:** Consider whether existing student supports, especially supports for mental health, are adequate for the student body.

**Response from the Faculty of Law:** The Faculty recognizes the importance of supporting student success by providing students with necessary academic and mental health resources and ensuring that students are aware of these resources. Academic support is readily accessible to students through the Vice-Dean and the Curriculum Officer. Free mental health counselling is available to all law students through the Law Society of Alberta's ASSIST program and university health services. Students are regularly made aware of these resources through emails and newsletters from the Faculty and the Law Students' Association. Students can also access these resources by contacting the Student Wellness Officer or the Indigenous Support Officer. Through the generosity of donors, the Faculty has also established endowment funds directed toward student mental health initiatives. This funding has been utilized, in part, to support activities and events focused on reducing student stress by building a sense of community among students and between the Faculty and students.

**Action Plan:** The Faculty will continue to regularly engage with students to understand their mental health concerns and to ensure that available resources are employed in ways that maximize support for student mental health.

**Recommendation:** Consider whether the faculty is adequately staffed to manage student accommodations.

**Response from the Faculty of Law:** In recent years, student accommodation requests have been increasing across most university programs, including Law. These requests are approved by the university's Accommodations and Accessibility Office, but the Faculty is responsible for managing relationships between students and the central accommodations office and for implementing approved accommodations. Presently, most of this work falls to the Faculty's Curriculum Coordinator, who is able to provide the support needed at current levels. However, if the number of accommodation requests and approvals continues to increase, further administrative support may be needed at the Faculty level.

**Action Plan:** The Faculty will continue to actively monitor accommodation request and approval trends with a view to ensure that adequate administrative support is available at the Faculty to fulfill its student accommodation responsibilities.

**Recommendation:** Consider whether the faculty has adequate support staff for facilitating use of technology.

**Response from the Faculty of Law:** The Faculty recognizes the importance of providing students, staff and faculty members with adequate support to facilitate the use of technology. Law currently employs a full-time Web Developer, Exam/Online Course System Administrator to support technology needs of students, staff and faculty members that are specific to Law. These law-specific needs include, for example, support for exam writing software and specialized on-line course management tool for law schools (TWEN). Pursuant to the university's service operating model, general (i.e. non-discipline-specific) technology support is provided by the university's Information Services and Technology department.

**Action Plan:** Working within the parameters permitted by the university's service operating model and subject to budgetary constraints, the Faculty will continue to provide the best support possible to facilitate faculty, staff and student use of technology, both generally and in relation to Law's discipline specific needs.

## Faculty Profile



**Recommendation:** Consider how best to support the faculty's research mission, including a strategic plan for research.

**Response from the Faculty of Law:** Providing the best support possible for the Faculty's research mission is a continuing priority for Faculty administration. Recent and ongoing efforts to renew the faculty complement provide a fresh opportunity to enhance existing areas of academic strength and to identify and develop new areas of expertise. Further, in recent years, the Faculty has continued to expand efforts to actively encourage and support a robust research culture, driven by and in support of areas of faculty member interests and expertise. These efforts include supporting: regularly accessible faculty member research funding; regularly organized faculty seminars; visiting scholars; Justice(s) in Residence; and book launches, symposiums and workshops amplifying and promoting faculty member research. The robust research culture is further enhanced by the Faculty's support of research centres, affiliated institutes and projects housed within the Law Centre. Currently, these are: the Alberta Law Reform Institute, the Environmental Law Centre, the Centre for Constitutional Studies; the Health Law Institute; and the Wahkohtowin Law and Governance Lodge.

**Action Plan:** The Faculty will continue to explore ways to best support and enhance its research mission in purposeful ways. This will include a research section in the 2025 Strategic Plan. In addition, the Faculty will also offer increased support for academics applying for research grants and will provide a single teaching release for academics who secure external research funding.

**Recommendation:** Consider a purposeful recruitment and retention plan to attract and support Indigenous, black and other diverse faculty members.

**Response from the Faculty of Law:** The Faculty recognizes the ongoing importance of attracting and retaining a diverse complement of faculty members. This understanding is reflected in the Faculty's recent hiring practices, which are consistent with recommendations made by the Faculty's 2020 Advisory Selection Committee Special Report. The Advisory Selection Committee is provided with materials and training designed to assure that this priority is respected in advertising, short-listing and interviewing candidates and making offers for faculty positions. Over the past four years (2020-2024), through regular hiring cycles and special diversity-focused university-wide hiring initiatives, the Faculty has hired 12 new tenure-track or tenured faculty members from a wide range of backgrounds and with a broad range of expertise. Retention initiatives have included cohort hiring, increased teaching release and research funding, as well as enhanced on-boarding and mentorship initiatives.

**Action Plan:** The Faculty will continue to pursue recruitment and retention efforts aimed at attracting and retaining faculty members from a wide range of backgrounds. This will include a faculty renewal plan that includes an EDI mission.

**Recommendation:** Consider how best to support faculty throughout career progression, including onboarding and mentorship.

**Response from the Faculty of Law:** Supporting faculty members throughout their career progression is an essential ongoing priority for the Faculty. Significant time, effort and resources are regularly devoted to formal and informal means of supporting faculty development, including onboarding and mentorship of new and junior faculty members. Examples include: an annual orientation session for new faculty members; an annual informal faculty retreat to support faculty member engagement and to discuss Faculty matters; the appointment of designated senior faculty members as mentors for incoming faculty members; periodic informal meetings and seminars to discuss teaching and/or research; regular faculty seminars to present and discuss research, annual awarding of the Tevie Miller Teaching Excellence Award; periodic meetings with the Dean to review career goals and progression; support for faculty members applying for research grants and/or organizing seminars/workshops/conferences; encouraging faculty to engage with college and university teaching and research support services; regular Law Faculty Council meetings; and supporting opportunities for faculty members to serve in administrative roles at the Faculty, college and university levels. The Faculty has also conducted periodic surveys of faculty members to identify what supports are most needed and useful.

**Action Plan:** Subject to available resources, and with ongoing input from faculty members as to what supports would be most useful, the Faculty will continue to provide a wide range of support for Faculty members throughout their career progressions.

#### **Additional Recommendations**

**Recommendation:** Consider a faculty-wide strategic plan and visioning exercise, to assist in charting the future path of the law school, including defining the faculty's mission with a view to today's vibrant law school community, and issues about curriculum and mandatory courses.

**Response from the Faculty of Law:** Over the past several years, strategic planning at the Faculty level has been inadvisable due to the need for Faculty administration and faculty members to prioritize management of unanticipated extreme occurrences, including most

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notably the COVID-19 Pandemic, government budget cuts to the university, and significant academic and administrative restructuring of the university. Now that the environment has settled, a strategic planning exercise can begin.

**Action Plan:** The Faculty will undertake a strategic planning process in 2024/25.

**Additional Notes from the Faculty**

## Graduate Program Review

Programs: Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) - Specialization: Law; Master of Laws (LLM)

Review Date: March 11 - 12, 2024

Reviewers: Barbara von Tigerstrom Chair, Graduate, University of Saskatchewan; Manisha Gupta, Internal Review  
GPS Member - Graduate, University of Alberta

### Program Strengths

- Our overall impression is that the graduate programs are well run, with high levels of student satisfaction. Students report receiving excellent support from their supervisors and Faculty of Law staff. The programs are similar in structure and requirements to programs at comparator institutions. Completion rates are high, and the graduates of the PhD program have enjoyed success in obtaining academic positions.
- The Faculty has taken significant steps to integrate Indigenous law and Indigenous knowledge, and to support Indigenous students, which we hope and expect will enrich graduate students' experiences.
- The Faculty is home to leading researchers in a range of areas and has recruited some strong emerging scholars. Most of the faculty have active research programs and a number have been successful in obtaining external research funding. The capacity for graduate supervision amply supports the current size of the graduate programs and will continue to grow as the newer faculty members gain experience and progress through the tenure and promotion processes.
- The strong sense of community that the Faculty has been able to maintain despite significant challenges in recent years is a credit to the Faculty's leadership, faculty and staff.

### Teaching and Learning Environment

**Recommendation:** Explore ways of enhancing training in research methods, particularly for PhD students.

**Response from the Faculty of Law:** Enhancing training for graduate students is an ongoing priority for the Faculty of Law. Presently, formal methods training is accomplished primarily through the mandatory Graduate Seminar. While this serves the needs of many students, the Faculty is aware that students pursuing empirical research, historical research, or other interdisciplinary methods would benefit from more robust training. Over the past academic year (2023/2024), the Faculty's Associate Dean (Graduate Studies) has been in conversations with graduate program leadership cross the College of Social Sciences and Humanities (CSSH), under the leadership of the CHSS Associate Dean of Education, to create a "methods hub" to better facilitate graduate student access to interdisciplinary methods training where appropriate to their program of study.

**Action Plan:** The Faculty will continue to participate in the development of the CSSH proposed methods hub and to explore internal improvements to the Graduate Seminar and other training opportunities.

**Response from the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS):** GPS supports the proposed action plan on benefiting from the available research methods courses and opportunities in the CSSH. For instance, there is a list of research methodologies courses in the Faculty of Education that contains information on qualitative and quantitative research methods courses. If appropriate for this purpose, the Faculty can provide the list to graduate supervisors and students.

**Recommendation:** Ensure that information on matters relating to the graduate program, such as expectations for the work and assessment of graduate students enrolled in JD-level courses, is communicated and readily accessible to students and instructors.

**Response from the Faculty of Law:** The Faculty recognizes the importance of thoroughly communicating Graduate Program expectations to students. This is presently done through the Faculty website, the graduate program guide, and direct communications between students and Law's Associate Dean (Graduate Studies), graduate program supervisors and instructors, or the Faculty's Admissions Advisor.

**Action Plan:** The Faculty will continue to engage in ongoing efforts to ensure that prospective and current graduate students are fully informed about program expectations and know where to look for answers to questions they have about the program. Depending on available resources, these efforts may include: (1) creating a more digestible program "handbook" (building upon a previous handbook

developed by former Associate Dean (Graduate Studies), Professor Linda Reif); and (2) creating a dedicated staff support position for the graduate program to respond to student program inquiries.

**Response from the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS):** GPS supports the development of a graduate handbook for law graduate students. The Faculty can also provide graduate advice and information using the [GPS Graduate Program Manual](#) for high level institutional regulations.

### Student Experience

**Recommendation:** Explore, within the Faculty and in collaboration with GPS and other units in the College of Social Sciences and Humanities, ways of fostering and supporting a strong sense of community among graduate students, which could include attention to the size of the annual cohort and total program enrollment, providing a dedicated space for graduate students, and facilitating opportunities for graduate students to meet and share their work.

**Response from the Faculty of Law:** In recent years, the Faculty has focused on developing and supporting a sense of community among graduate students by providing both formal and informal opportunities for students to gather as a scholarly community and to participate in Faculty research activities. These activities include, for example: graduate student receptions; Faculty seminars, and hosted writing sessions. Graduate students are invited to present their research at Faculty seminars, though this opportunity is not frequently taken up. A dedicated work space for graduate students currently exists on the first floor of the Law Centre. The past academic year (2023/2024) was an exceptional year with a one-student cohort, and the Faculty recognizes that, going forward, this should be avoided where possible because it is not conducive to creating a sense of community among graduate students.

**Action Plan:** The Faculty will continue with the above-noted supports for graduate students and will continue to look for ways to maintain or expand graduate enrollment as resources allow, especially taking into account the upcoming transition to Minimum Funding Guarantee for PhD students.

**Response from the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS):** GPS has held and is in the process of planning a number of graduate student engagement events for fall and winter to create opportunities for all the graduate students to connect and network.

Beginning in Fall 2025 and in line with the new GPS Minimum Guaranteed Funding for doctoral students, current and new doctoral students will receive minimum guaranteed funding of \$100K CAD over four years and not less than \$25K CAD in year one. This will provide a more systematic approach to graduate recruitment and enrolment.

GPS will work closely in partnership with the faculty to support the implementation of the minimum Guaranteed funding initiative beginning Fall 2025. This support includes bridge funding as well as a data dashboard to support the faculty in conducting predictive planning.

**Recommendation:** Consider reallocation of staff roles and responsibilities to provide a primary point of contact and support for graduate students and the graduate programs.

**Response from the Faculty of Law:** The Faculty's ability to dedicate a staff person to the Graduate Program is subject to budgetary constraints and to university operating model for staff positions. Within these confines, there may be scope for the Faculty to consider this option.

**Action Plan:** The Faculty will revisit this recommendation as resources and university staff structures allow.

**Response from the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS):** Recognizing the financial realities and their implications for smaller U of A faculties such as Law, GPS is committed to providing administrative support for areas where it can, for instance, coordinate master's and PhD thesis exams. GPS is in the process of hiring a Graduate Student Recruitment Partner to support graduate recruitment at an institutional level. This role will be able to provide recruitment support for the faculty.

### Faculty and Supervision

**Recommendation:** Continue exploring ways to ensure an open and transparent process for selecting graduate students and allocating supervisors, to maximize and equitably distribute opportunities for graduate student supervision.

**Response from the Faculty of Law:** The Faculty is aware of concerns that, in the past, the assignment of graduate students has not accorded with the needs of all Faculty members and has at times flowed from incorrect assumptions respecting Faculty member interest in graduate supervision. In light of these concerns, during this past academic year (2023/2024), the Faculty took steps to improve the process for selecting graduate students and allocating them to supervisors. In particular, for the first time, a Faculty-wide survey asking

Faculty members to describe their interest in graduate supervision was conducted prior to the graduate admissions meeting. This allowed Law's Associate Dean (Graduate Studies) to pursue supervision options arising from Faculty members' expression of interest, resulting in a more equitable distribution of supervision opportunities.

**Action Plan:** The Faculty will continue to annually canvas Faculty interest in graduate supervision in advance of the graduate admissions decision meeting and will match students with supervisors based on those expressions of interest.

**Response from the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS):** Considering the importance of matching graduate students with supervisors with similar research interests and areas, an effective strategy would be to advertise available supervisors' research interests and expertise on the Faculty's website with instructions on how applicants can contact potential supervisors for their master's or PhD program of research. This will also serve as a particularly useful graduate recruitment strategy.

**Recommendation:** Continue efforts to increase the diversity of faculty and students, including through specific efforts to recruit and expand opportunities for graduate students in ways that will enhance diversity and expand capacity.

**Response from the Faculty of Law:** The Faculty recognizes the ongoing importance of attracting and retaining a diverse complement of faculty members and students.

In regards to Faculty members, this understanding is reflected in the Faculty's recent hiring practices, which are consistent with recommendations made by the Faculty's 2020 Advisory Selection Committee Special Report. The Advisory Selection Committee is provided with materials and training designed to assure that this priority is respected in advertising, short-listing and interviewing candidates and making offers for faculty positions. Over the past four years (2020-2024), through regular hiring cycles and special diversity-focused university-wide hiring initiatives, the Faculty has hired 12 new tenure-track or tenured faculty members from a wide range of backgrounds and with a broad range of expertise. Retention initiatives have included cohort hiring, increased teaching release and research funding, as well as enhanced on-boarding and mentorship initiatives.

In regards to the graduate student body, the graduate admissions committee considers diversity issues, but notes that providing appropriate funding for international students is crucial to maintaining this important aspect of the graduate student body.



**Action Plan:** The Faculty will continue to support diversity in hiring and retaining Faculty members and admitting and retaining students. For graduate students in particular, these efforts will necessarily include developing principles for adequately supporting international students, especially through the transition to the Minimum Funding Guarantee for PhD students.

**Response from the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS):** GPS supports the Faculty in the recruitment and implementation of the Minimum Guaranteed Funding initiative, whose objective is to address the equity principle in the recruitment of both domestic and international students as well as students from diverse backgrounds and communities.

GPS offers a wide range of scholarships and Awards opportunities for a diverse range of applicants, including Indigenous and Black students. Active advertising of these opportunities contributes to successful inclusive recruitment and retention strategies.

The following GPS-administered scholarships could be used to recruit for further diversification of the graduate student body, including, Indigenous students, Black students, international students, and members of other underrepresented communities:

- Graduate Student Engagement Scholarship for Black, African-Canadian, African-American, or Afro-Caribbean or Afro-Latino heritage
- Alberta Graduate Excellence Scholarship (AGES)
- Alberta Graduate Excellence Scholarship (AGES) Indigenous (both Canadians and international students)
- Indigenous Graduate Award in Research

## Resources

**Recommendation:** Consider providing a dedicated space for graduate students to gather and/or a shared digital space for sharing information with and among graduate students.

**Response from the Faculty of Law:** A dedicated shared work space for graduate students currently exists on the first floor of the Law Centre and is made available to all graduate students.

**Action Plan:** The Faculty will continue with efforts to ensure that the Law Centre space allocated to graduate students meets their needs. Subject to available resources and student needs, the Faculty may consider renovating the existing physical space and/or creating a

virtual space for students to receive and share information. The latter would be an excellent project for a dedicated Graduate Program support staff person, if budgetary constraints and university service structures allow for the creation of such a position.

**Response from the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS):** GPS supports the action plan and suggests digital networking and connection opportunities such as flexible periodic virtual hangouts and virtual café events as engagement mechanisms to provide networking and professional development opportunities.

#### **Additional Recommendations:**

**Recommendation:** Consider potential synergies or opportunities for collaboration with other units in the University, especially within the College of Social Sciences and Humanities. There may be opportunities for cross-disciplinary research and shared initiatives that could make the most of the new structure that was created in the administrative reorganization of the University.

**Response from the Faculty of Law:** As noted above, over the past academic year (2023/2024) the Faculty's Associate Dean (Graduate Studies) is working with other graduate program leaders across the CSSH to develop a methods hub which will facilitate interdisciplinary synergies and opportunities.

**Action Plan:** The Faculty will continue to support work on the development of the proposed methods hub and to explore other opportunities for collaboration and engagement.

**Response from the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS):** The GPS Graduate Leadership Advisory Committee (GLAC) is a committee of all the Associate Deans, Graduate in the University and another venue to foster cross-faculty collaboration and a venue to exchange information and experiences. The Faculty of Law Associate Dean, Graduate may utilize this venue for any collaborative project ideas or initiatives.

**Recommendation:** It would be useful for the Faculty to engage in the development of a strategic plan, and encourage the Faculty to include consideration of graduate programs as an important part of those discussions.

**Response from the Faculty of Law:** Over the past several years, strategic planning at the Faculty level has been inadvisable due to the need for Faculty administration and faculty members to prioritize management of unanticipated extreme occurrences, including most

notably the COVID-19 Pandemic, government budget cuts to the university, and significant academic and administrative restructuring of the university. However, the situation has now changed and strategic planning has become more feasible.

**Action Plan:** The Faculty will undertake a Strategic Planning process in 2024/25. Any strategic planning exercise would necessarily include consideration of the graduate program.

**Response from the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS):** GPS is available for consultation and support on graduate matters in relation to the Faculty's strategic planning, including recruitment, graduate supervision, PD opportunities. GPS is currently working on a graduate student and postdoc experience and journey mapping to provide a coherent and holistic perspective of graduate and postdoc academic and personal experiences on campus and in their programs. Once completed, graduate and postdoctoral journey maps will be shared with the Faculty to support them in enhancing graduate and postdoctoral experience and the ways in which GPS and Faculty can partner to provide consistent and seamless support.

**Additional Notes from the Faculty and/or GPS**