

**Curriculum Content of Legal Education:  
A Practical Case of Law School– University of Jordan**

By:  
Dr. Osama Al-Naimat  
Law School – Philadelphia University – Jordan  
&  
Dr. Basem Melhem  
Law School - University of Jordan - Jordan

The University of Jordan was established in 1962. The Faculty of Law at the University is considered to be the oldest law faculty in Jordan. Since its establishment, it has been providing the country with qualified graduates capable of meeting the needs of the Jordanian community and has been instrumental towards spreading legal awareness. One could claim that a high percentage of practising lawyers, legal consultants, civil servants, and decision makers in key positions in the country are graduates of this Faculty. Scientific research remains to be an important element which the Faculty seeks to encourage and constantly enhance.

It is necessary to indicate that the Faculty of Law consists of the public and private law departments. However, this division takes an administrative and organisational nature and does not in fact reflect the student's specialisation in public and private law field. Therefore, it might also be necessary to study this issue with due care in the near future so that students can be specialised in public or private law. The Faculty of Law offers the bachelor program in Law in addition to Master programs. The Faculty confers the following academic degrees:

1. L.L.B in Law.
2. PhD degree in Public Law.
3. Master degree in Law (Thesis).
4. Master degree in Law (Comprehensive Exam).
5. Master degree in Intellectual Property in cooperation with the WIPO, in English language (Thesis).
6. Master degree in Intellectual Property in cooperation with the WIPO, in English language (Comprehensive Exam).

As far as the L.L.B program is concerned, the curriculum was designed to provide the needs of local community for well-qualified students. It includes variety of courses which covers different aspects of law. Additionally, the curriculum provides students with thorough understanding and broad knowledge relevant to law and requires that the aims and objectives of each course be outlined in its syllabus which is distributed to students on the first day of the each semester.

Academic progression is an essential foundation of the L.L.B programme. The L.L.B programme starts with the basic subjects in law which deals with the different theories relevant to different branches of law. In the third and fourth year the program moves to the more specific subjects. Hence, the aim of the third and fourth year courses is to develop the intellectual skills of students and to improve their capability of understanding, analysing and applying appropriate solutions to practical cases.

The Faculty of Law adopts the credit hours system which is applied by at the University. The Faculty offers a range of compulsory and elective courses that cover various legal disciplines. The

Faculty of Law requires its students to study 42 courses which include University requirements (18 compulsory credit and 12 elective credits), Faculty requirements (30 credit), Faculty specialisation requirements (45 credit hours), Faculty elective requirements (15 credits) and free selection courses (6 credits).

The Faculty gives its students the opportunity to choose subjects to match their tendencies and interests by offering a various range of optional subjects. The number of hours allocated for these subjects totals 15 hours, which the student chooses from a wide variety of subjects (human rights, environmental law, copyrights etc.)

It is important to note that there is no inherent deficiency in the credit hours system itself where it gives students the liberty to choose the courses according to the guidance plan. Students are also free to choose lectures times. However, the Faculty believes that such deficiency lies in the application of the system for certain subjects of specialisation as the time is insufficient to cover the subject thoroughly, particularly if it is presented during summer semester. As a temporary solution for this problem, the Faculty seeks to avoid offering specialized and important subjects during summer semester and offers such subject during the first and second semesters only. Although the time allocated for lectures is equal in all semesters, yet study during summer semester is condense where lectures are gives daily, which adversely affects the performance of students and teachers alike. This problem was also discussed at the Faculty's and necessary recommendations were made to increase credit hours for these subjects from 3 to 4 and to divide the subject into two parts to guarantee best and wider coverage of subjects.

While the Faculty of Law appreciates that the curriculum of the LLB programme needs constant review and evaluation, it must be admitted that the current status of the curriculum has some defects. Therefore, the Faculty is concerned with treating these defects constantly as different amendments were made to the curriculum since establishing the Faculty. Currently, study and evaluation of the Faculty syllabus are being carried out in a way that allows re-description of some courses and allocating more than 3 credit hours for some courses and dividing them (rights in rem-Civil Law, sources of obligation).

The Faculty of Law believes that practical application and professional rehabilitation of its students should receive the required attention. Hence, the Faculty allots some courses in its curriculum to develop practical and professional skills for students through presenting courses of practical nature (legal application courses of forensic medicine, criminal and civil procedures law and law of evidence). The Faculty also holds mock trials to develop student's practical skills.

Recognising the weak performance level of students in scientific research, the Faculty seeks to develop research skills for its students by presenting a specialised course (research methods course). The faculty dedicates also 10% of the total mark of the subjects presented in the program for scientific research and assignments. However, it must be admitted that a single optional course is insufficient to achieve the desired goals in the level that the Faculty of Law aspires to. Moreover, regulations for awarding the LLB degree in the University of Jordan do not allow increasing the 10% dedicated for scientific research and assignments. Therefore, the description of scientific research in the subject of Law should be changed as soon as possible so that it becomes an obligatory subject for all the Faculty students and to seek for increasing the percentage of grades assigned for scientific research.

In order to diversify the student's general education and knowledge, the Faculty allocates 6 credit hours in its syllabus, which the student chooses from presented subjects in different university faculties in addition to 12 credit hours the university optional requirements, which the student chooses from a set of subjects defined by the University administration to develop and diversify complementary disciplines for the student.

It is worth mentioning that until recently, there were no official institutions for general and specific accreditation concerning public universities. In 2007, the Jordanian Higher Education Ministry established an independent committee called Higher Education Accreditation Commission to supervise the higher education in Jordan. However, the Faculty of Law in the University of Jordan is considered the oldest and largest among other faculties of law in the Jordanian universities, and its staff is the largest and the most diversified and specialised in the field of Law Sciences. Its syllabus has been a reference to the rest of faculties of law in other Jordanian universities.

The credit hours that should be completed to get the Master degree in Law and the Master degree in intellectual property are (33) credit hours for the Master degree according to the comprehensive exam system without a thesis. (24) Credit hours and (9) credit hours for the comprehensive exam for the Master degree and (9) credit hours for the thesis to get the Master degree in Law or the Master degree in intellectual property according to the thesis system.

In addition to the required subject in the Master program, a special part in the subject is dedicated to be studied more thoroughly, besides conducting a research to complete the scientific degree requirements.

The Faculty of Law aims at keeping up with the developments in the various areas of Law. To achieve such purpose, the curriculum is under constant review.

The credit hours required by the Faculty of Law for awarding the L.L.B degree used to be (143) credit hours, as oppose to 126 at present. This was considered to be one of the highest loads among the various faculties of law in Jordan. Unfortunately, the university decided to reduce the required credit hours for awarding the L.L.B and most other specialisation to (126) hours.

The Faculty of Law realises the negative effect of this decision and thus it is concerned with restoring the previous number of the required credit hours to achieve the program objectives. The Faculty of Law seeks, in coordination with the University's administration, to increase the number of credit hours to (138) hours. In this context, the Faculty has recently received approval to increase the number of credit hours from (126) credit hours to (132) credit hours as an initial step towards regaining the previous number of credit hours.

In addition to the credit hours requirement for awarding L.L.B degree, the Faculty of Law organises many seminars, lectures and workshops in various Law topics. Faculty students and members of teaching staff are invited to attend and participate in such activities.

To achieve the intended learning outcomes of the Law Program, students are required in each course to write a paper on certain legal issue. However, it is recognised that we have a disadvantage of having large number of students in classes. At this stage, however, the general attitude of the Faculty is to ask each student to write a short essay instead of a paper. Additionally, the faculty introduces the "research methodology" course as one of department's elective courses due to the importance of such a course, it is to be hoped that this course should be amended to be a compulsory course instead of elective one. Recently, the faculty suggested an amendment to the

Curriculum syllabus so as to introduce a graduation project as a final test for research skills of students.

Since practical and training skills are very important in the field of law in order to link theories with practical experiences, the Faculty seeks to consider the judicial application's course as a compulsory one. Moreover, the faculty introduces mock trials in different subjects of law to increase the practical skills of students. Such trials were introduced by the Law of Civil Procedure and the Law of Criminal Procedure courses. In addition, there were some mock trials sponsored by a specialised institution in relation to the field of Intellectual Property Rights. In order to motivate the students, the institution has offered the participant students a paid-contract of work. Furthermore and since law is a practical subject, it is the responsibility of the Jordanian Bar Association to provide the law graduates with training opportunities.

However, it is recognised that there is no active role for the faculty to provide our graduates with training opportunities in law firms' offices. As a step forward, certain law firms have recently started contacting the Faculty to provide and help them in offering training opportunities for law graduates. The Faculty, however, hope that it will play a more active role in providing students with training opportunities through bridging the relationships with various Jordanian law firms. Furthermore, the Faculty hopes that courses in English language will be introduced for students who want to pursue their higher studies in the English Medium.

Finally, Law School at University of Jordan makes great efforts to bring its curriculum up to standards by revising it every academic year coping with the academic developments in the region and the world.