

Deakin Law School PhD Program





The law is ever-present in our modern society. Challenges facing the world – pandemics, immigration, cyber threats – all have legal elements. Without understanding the legal regimes governing these issues and their limitations, we cannot offer effective solutions to the problems they present. At Deakin Law School, we conduct rigorous research that helps us understand our global and domestic legal systems, and change the world for the better.

Why a PhD in Law?

A PhD in Law is the path to becoming a legal scholar, whether in academia, international organisations, NGOs, think tanks, or the Government. Legal scholars investigate a wide range of burning social problems, including, for example, the legality of government surveillance and contact tracing, immigration policy and the treatment of refugees, counterterrorism measures and the law of war, regulation of cyber space, racism, human rights, and police brutality. The knowledge created as a result of this research helps societies improve legislation, the judicial system, and the relationship between various legal regimes. Legal scholars demonstrate thought leadership through disseminating their research in academic and practitioner journals, influencing policy through publications of policy papers and parliamentary and court submissions, through training the next generation of lawyers and legal scholars, and through directly advising leaders of public and private institutions. While all academics can shape their fields, legal scholars have a unique opportunity to influence the academic, Government, and corporate sectors, and to make a positive impact on society.

The Deakin Law School Difference

At DLS, we place a strong emphasis on research that matters. The Law School comprises over 50 academic staff specializing in research on various aspects of Australian and international law. The strong research profile of our staff also translates into our strong Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) ratings ('above world class' and top 8 in Australia), as well as being ranked among the top 100 law schools internationally (ARWU subject rankings).

Our academics consistently author papers in top tier academic journals which shape the frontiers of knowledge in their respective fields, highlighting the supervisory and research capability of the law school. Research produced by our academics frequently appears in leading law journals domestically (including Melbourne University Law Review, University of NSW Law Journal, Sydney Law Review, and Federal Law Review) and internationally (such as Oxford Journal of Legal Studies and Harvard National Security Journal, Criminal Law Review, American Journal of Legal history, and Stanford Journal of Law and Policy).

As part of the Law School's commitment to the recruitment of world-class researchers, we hired a large number of academics who hold PhD degrees from renowned universities, eg., Stanford University, University of Melbourne, University of Pennsylvania, Queensland University, and Fordham University.

Our program is designed to empower you to become an independent researcher. Our rigorous research and subject matter training ensure that you have the tools needed to conduct independent and innovative research. Our strong research culture provides an ideal environment for the incubation and development of ideas that grow to impactful research projects. At the end of your journey, we support your job search with tailored seminars and individual coaching.

Our guiding philosophy in developing future legal scholars follows William Butler Yeats words that "education is not the filling of a bucket, but the lighting of a fire". Our students, with their intellectual curiosity, motivation, discipline, and passion for their field provide the fuel for the fire. DLS, in turn, provides the spark to start the fire and the oxygen to fan the flame. Our Intellectual Leaders Seminar Series exposes students to thought leaders from various disciplines to broaden student's horizons and give insights about achieving academic success. Our research seminars provide a rigorous intellectual environment to present and engage in discussions about various legal problems.

Our main research areas

At DLS we developed a particular expertise in the following areas:

- Public law (including Australian constitutional law, Australian administrative law, public international law, human rights, and immigration policies)
- Criminal justice (including criminal law, criminal procedure, evidence, sentencing and policing)
- Health law (including legal history of health regulations, bioethics, and end-of-life decision-making)
- Law and technology (including cyber law, human-machine interaction, and technology-assisted legal decision-making)
- Climate change and energy law and policy
- Corporate governance, financial regulation, and taxation law

Applicant Characteristics

1. High levels of motivation, intellectual curiosity, persistence and resilience.
2. Enthusiasm and passion for research.
3. Excellent written and oral communication skills.
4. Strong academic background in law.
5. Strong reference letters.
6. High quality research proposal, demonstrating the applicant's preliminary research in the area, writing skills, and ability to clearly articulate theoretical.

Student experience

The PhD program at DLS prepares students for an increasingly competitive academic job market, as well as high level research jobs in the private and public sectors. As a PhD student at DLS you will be part of a highly stimulating intellectual environment, where you will be challenged and encouraged to address the big research issues in your field. We place a strong emphasis on academic rigour and provide students with comprehensive training in advanced legal research.

Intellectual Leaders Seminar Series

Our Intellectual Leaders Seminar Series exposes students to authorities from a wide range of disciplines, ranging from history, neuroscience, cultural anthropology, and business. This unique seminar series is designed to broaden students' horizons and stimulate intellectual curiosity. Highly renowned speakers share their research as well as their experiences and tips for achieving success in academia.

Law School Research Seminar Series

Our research seminar series allows students to stay on top of the most recent developments in their field, and to become a part of an intellectual community of legal scholars, debating and considering various topical legal problems.

Job market support

Students in the final year interested in the academic job market receive personalized support to help them maximize their job market package. Candidates take part in job readiness workshops and receive 1:1 coaching from an internationally acclaimed PhD consultant and coach.

Degree structure

You will complete three coursework units in the first year. You will be required to complete a 12 month probation period, which culminates in a Confirmation of Candidature at the 12 month mark. Only once your candidature is confirmed, can you proceed with your project. Candidature is for a minimum of 2 years and a maximum of 4 years. The program structure and progression is illustrated below:

Year 1

Completion of mandatory coursework and development of research proposal. Confirmation of candidature at the end of the first year.

Year 2

Development of research project based on research proposal developed in the first year.

Year 3

Finalization of research project. Opportunity to workshop project outputs at domestic and international conferences. Students are encouraged to seek internship opportunities. Those students looking to pursue a research career take part in the Job Market Support program.

Admission requirements

To be eligible for consideration, you must:

1. Have completed an Honours or Masters by Research degree within the past 5 years, where the research thesis component consisted of at least 25% of year's full-time study.
2. Obtained an 80% average in your research degree, with a minimum 80% grade for the thesis (Honours or Masters by Research).
3. Meet the university's **English language requirements** by completing your qualification in an English-speaking country or demonstrating English language proficiency in an English language test.

Students who meet the eligibility to apply are invited to send their Expression of Interest (EOI) to bl-phd@deakin.edu.au, together with their academic transcript, CV, and research proposal.

