

# Law FINAL PROJECT

Academic Coordinator: Giulio Allevato

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Academic Year: 2023-2024 (2<sup>nd</sup> semester)

Year/Degree: 4<sup>th</sup> LLB, 5<sup>th</sup> LLBBIR, 5<sup>th</sup> PLELLB

Category:  BASIC  COMPULSORY

No. of Credits (ECTS): 12

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## 1. Purpose

The purpose of the Final Thesis Project (“FP”), a key step in the student’s educational path, is the composition and presentation of an original, independent, and thorough research work on a specific legal topic.

The FP is a concise paper which critically analyzes and discusses a topic, related to one of the subject areas listed below.

The FP will be individually drafted and presented in English.

## 2. Skills

The FP will allow the students to acquire the following skills and competencies:

- Ability to conduct professional and academic tasks autonomously
- Analytical capabilities (theoretical and empirical analysis)
- Ability to think creatively, develop and present new ideas and concepts
- Time management and self-organizing skills
- Ability to search for, handle, and understand legal sources
- Acquaintance with academic standards in terms of management, presentation, structure, and citation
- Ethical and anti-plagiarism commitment
- Implementation of the knowledge acquired in the LLB program
- Writing and oral communication skills

## 3. Organization and format

The **students are responsible** for drafting and presenting their FP. The next paragraphs indicate the necessary steps and requirements to successfully complete the process.

### **3.1. Phase 1. Work preparation and data communication**

**Students will be contacted by Academic Management on 15<sup>th</sup> November to initiate enrollment in the FP.** As part of the process, Academic Management will provide a sign-up form containing a list of subject **areas**. Students will select up to two (2) preferred subject areas. Additionally, they will have the opportunity to indicate specific **professors** from those areas that they would like to work with. Please note that there is no guarantee you will be assigned your professor of choice, as allocations are made by GPA and depend on professors' availability. The deadline to submit the FP sign-up form will be **30<sup>th</sup> November**. Students who fail to complete the form on time will be automatically assigned a supervisor.

After that, students will be provided with a form to communicate the provisional title and **abstract** of the FP paper and a **15-line text** detailing the focus, the subject field and the methodology of the planned research, after contacting the supervisor and under their approval. The deadline will be **15<sup>th</sup> January**.

It is the student's responsibility to meet the deadlines. No changes in supervisors can be made after supervisors are assigned. Failure to submit by the deadline the provisional title and the abstract will result in the student failing the first ordinary call with a 0.

It is possible to amend the provisional title, but it is not possible to change the subject of the FP and the supervisor until after the second call. Only after the second call, it would be possible to change subject and/or supervisor, for justified reasons.

### **3.2. Phase 2. Researching and drafting**

**One mandatory Legal Research Methods session** will be held online, at the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester, with the Academic Coordinator. Student attendance is obligatory and a preliminary requirement to continue working on the FP. **Students who do not attend will fail the 1<sup>st</sup> ordinary call with a 0.**

**The Legal Research Methods session** will be held by Prof. Giulio Allevato on **18<sup>th</sup> January**.

Supervisors will hold **meetings** with their supervisees in an **online format**.

Students must comply with the calendar established by the supervisor to discuss their work progress. The rules on tutorships and other educational activities rigorously apply.

A **maximum of 15.000 words** is established as the limit (including all footnotes, bibliography, annexes, etc.). **Please see the table below with details and sanctions.**

The FP **paper** must include:

- Cover
- Table of contents
- Abstract
- Purpose and methodology
- Argument, presented in the most appropriate structure
- Conclusions
- Bibliography

The Annex “Guidelines for writing the final project” contains specific instructions and recommendations.

### 3.3. Phase 3. Submission

**In the first call, the supervisor’s permission, which must be provided via email, with the LLB Office copied is a requisite to present the FP.** The supervisor may refuse to grant permission to present the Final Project should they consider that the work does not meet the requirements/quality standards, or the student’s behaviour has not been professional. **Should that be the case, the student will not be permitted to present in the 1<sup>st</sup> ordinary call and will fail the call with a 0.**

**After obtaining the permission to present, the Final Project paper must be submitted via Turnitin on Blackboard Ultra by 3<sup>rd</sup> May (13:00 CET).**

The file must be submitted in a **.docx format** and with the following file name format: ***StudentLastName\_FirstName\_FP.***

**A PDF version of the file must also be shared, no later than 3<sup>rd</sup> May (13:00 CET), with the Supervisor and 2nd panelist via email (with [llb.ppletfg@ie.edu](mailto:llb.ppletfg@ie.edu) in copy).** Program Management will inform the students of the second panelist (evaluator) and provide their contact information beforehand. Slides and/or any other material that the student will use to support their presentation of the FP before the Evaluation Committee are not to be submitted along with the FP paper by the deadline.

**Please review the table below with point deductions for not complying with the aforementioned process.**

<b>Infraction</b>	<b>Penalty</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Failure to attend/complete Research Methods obligatory session	Automatic 0 in 1 <sup>st</sup> call	Student receives 0 in 1st call and goes straight to 2nd.
Failure to submit title and abstract by deadline	Automatic 0 in 1 <sup>st</sup> call	Student receives 0 in 1st call and goes straight to 2nd.
Paper submission surpasses the 15,000 maximum word limit (to 16,499 words)	2 points	
Paper submission is 16,500 words or more	Automatic 0	Student receives 0 in 1 <sup>st</sup> call and goes straight to 2 <sup>nd</sup> .
Paper submission via Turnitin or to panelists is not in the correct format/not properly titled	1.5 points	
Paper submission to Turnitin is late	Automatic 0	Student receives 0 in 1st call and goes straight to 2nd.
Failure to send paper to panelists with <a href="mailto:llb.ppletfg@ie.edu">llb.ppletfg@ie.edu</a> in copy by deadline	1.5 points	

Plagiarism detected in Turnitin submission	1-10 points	Up to the discretion of the Supervisor/Academic Coordinator. If an excessively high percentage of plagiarism is found paper will be reviewed by the Supervisor and Academic Coordinator to evaluate issues and apply sanctions. Students can lose points or fail various calls entirely depending on the severity of case. Students can also be subject to an Ethics Committee or more serious sanction.
Student does not obtain supervisor's permission to present	Automatic 0	Student receives 0 in 1st call and goes straight to 2nd.
Unprofessional behavior exhibited by student with supervisor, Academic Coordinator, Program Management	1-3 points	Up to the discretion of Supervisor/Academic Coordinator. Students can also be subject to an Ethics Committee or more serious sanction.

### 3.4. Phase 4. Presentation and discussion

Program Management will inform the students of the second panelist (evaluator) and provide their contact information in ahead of time.

Students must also submit their PowerPoint presentations via Blackboard Ultra the day **before the presentation at 23:59 CET**. Students must submit their presentations TWO times using the Blackboard items provided, once for the Supervisor and once for the second panelist. The assignments are called "TFG PRESENTATION – SUPERVISOR" and "TFG PRESENTATION – 2ND PANELIST". If you do not upload your presentation as indicated, we will not be able to communicate your grades and feedback.

The Presentation must include:

- Slide 1: title; 2: research question; 3: outline, 4: conclusions

The oral discussion will take place via Zoom and will consist of the following structure:

- **5 minutes max:** presentation by the student;
- **10 minutes max:** questions on methodological, formal, or substantive aspects;
- Strictly after 15 minutes the presentation will be broken off

### 3.5. Final Project Timeline

Activity	Deadline
Info session	<b>8<sup>th</sup> November, 6pm</b>
Supervisor & Topic Preferences Sign-Up Period (1 <sup>st</sup> call)	<b>15<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> November</b>
Submit Title and Abstract	<b>15<sup>th</sup> January</b>
Research Methods Session	<b>18<sup>th</sup> January</b>
Deadline to have work approved for submission by supervisor	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> May</b>
Submission of written work via Turnitin	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> May (13:00 CET)</b>
Deadline to send written work to panelists via email with <a href="mailto:llb.ppletfg@ie.edu">llb.ppletfg@ie.edu</a> in copy	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> May (13:00 CET)</b>

Oral presentations	<b>8<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> May</b>
Publish 1 <sup>st</sup> call grades and feedback	<b>23<sup>rd</sup> May</b>
Deadline for students to request review	<b>25<sup>th</sup> May</b>
Deadline for students to submit appeal	<b>27<sup>th</sup> May</b>
Submission of written work via Turnitin ( <b>2<sup>nd</sup> call</b> )	<b>16<sup>th</sup> June (13:00 CET)</b>
Deadline to send written work to panelists via email with <a href="mailto:llb.ppletfg@ie.edu">llb.ppletfg@ie.edu</a> in copy ( <b>2<sup>nd</sup> call</b> )	<b>16<sup>th</sup> June (13:00 CET)</b>
Oral presentations ( <b>2<sup>nd</sup> call</b> )	<b>22<sup>nd</sup> -23<sup>rd</sup> June</b>
Publish 2 <sup>nd</sup> call grades and feedback	<b>27<sup>th</sup> June</b>
Deadline for students to request review ( <b>2<sup>nd</sup> call</b> )	<b>29<sup>th</sup> June</b>
Deadline for students to submit appeal ( <b>2<sup>nd</sup> call</b> )	<b>Immediately after review session</b>

#### 4. Academic supervision

Students are responsible for the preparation and presentation of the FP under the **systematic guidance** and control of an academic supervisor.

The supervisor and student will establish a work plan taking into consideration the deadline of the ordinary call. The student must be in contact with her supervisor to discuss her work progress according to the agreed calendar and procedures. The supervisor will take best endeavours to help the student to deliver a Final Project of the highest possible quality, but ultimately it is the student's responsibility to do so.

The scope and content of the FP must be adjusted in accordance with the number of hours estimated in the plan for the LLB Degree (25 hours/1 ECT).

#### 5. Evaluation

The Evaluation Committee consists of two evaluators, each with a 50% weight in the determination of the final grade. The supervisor will be one of the evaluators, the other evaluator is a member of the IE faculty, appointed by Program Management.

Each evaluator will assess both the written paper and the oral discussion.

The Evaluation Committee will determine the final grade (from 0 to 10) in accordance with the weighting. The final grade will be incorporated to the student's transcript and will be used, properly weighted, to calculate the grade point average (GPA).

Based on the Evaluation Committee's recommendation, the Program Director may propose to the Rector the granting of an award to the most outstanding Final Project of the year.

Among others, the following criteria will be considered for the evaluation:

- Choice of topic and development of the research question
- Understanding of the problem and the available literature
- Comprehensiveness of the research and proficiency in the topic
- Appropriate expression, both in writing and orally
- Clarity and coherence of the argument

## **6. Final Project retake and subsequent calls**

In the retake period, students will work on the comments and feedback received and submit a revised version of the Final Project for evaluation and presentation. Students presenting the Final Project in the 2<sup>nd</sup> call can obtain a maximum grade of 8/10 (if the grade exceeds 8, the grade will be automatically lowered to 8).

The final project may be developed, at most, during two consecutive academic years, and will have two calls each year, one ordinary call and one extraordinary call.

## **7. Disclaimer and contacts**

This document contains specific guidelines for the Final Project and should be complemented with university regulation.

Please place the generic email in all your communications with the Final Project Coordinator.

Generic email: [llb.ppletfg@ie.edu](mailto:llb.ppletfg@ie.edu)

# ANNEX I: GUIDELINES FOR WRITING THE FINAL PROJECT

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## The Process

Writing a paper is a process that involves different phases:

- Selection of the topic and definition of the research question
- Research and analysis of the topic
- Planning
- Drafting, re-drafting, editing and preparing the final text

While conceptually it is possible to distinguish between these phases, in practice there is some overlap. For instance, you cannot define a research question without a decent amount of preliminary research. Or while writing you will see that the plan you originally designed for structuring the information needs refinement. Making ongoing adjustments to what you have done previously in the process is inevitable. But for the sake of clarity we will distinguish between these four phases of the process.

## Selection of the topic

The selection of the topic is your unique opportunity to come up and define your own research question, reflecting your own interests. You are expected to be spending on average 300 hours on the final project so you'd better make sure that you will work on something you like!

Some of you are combining your research for the project with curricular or extra-curricular internships. It is possible that you find some of the work you do in the internship so exiting that you want to develop it into the topic of your research. Some students are combining their LLB program with other program such as BBA or BIR. It is perfectly normal that you look for synergies between the theses of both program, although there is not an obligation to do so.

All papers should be answering a question: **this is the research question**. It goes way beyond the simple identification of a vague area of enquiry.

The hardest part is getting started. Some students find the possibility to work on something they like so overwhelming that they do not know where to start. Here are some steps you may want to go through:

- Step 1: think of what area of the law you are interested in. No idea? Then think further: What do you want to become in your professional life? What is your life goal? Do you want to help the world to get rid of some injustice? What course

during the LLB program at IE did you find particularly stimulating? Finding that area of the law first is crucial.

- Step 2: read. Take some standard works by respected authors on the area of the law that you have identified in step 1. You know what these standard works are, because probably they were on the reading list of the corresponding course that you had during your LLB program. You can also talk to some of the professors of your LLB program for guidance on the books to read.
- Step 3: write down all the questions that occur to you while reading the books of step 2. When you have read the books and look over your portfolio of questions again, maybe you see that many of these questions point towards the same direction. Maybe you start to discern a 'target'. Maybe you have identified a gap in existing research.
- Step 4: talk. Find a person whom you assume knows about the area of the law and talk with her (or him) about the books you have read, the questions that came up or the 'target' that you have identified. That person may give you further guidance on other scholarly literature or may help you to identify another expert. Again, most of the professors of your LLB program will be very helpful to provide that guidance.
- Step 5: narrow down on your subject. You have identified your target in step 3, you've spoken to someone, followed his/her suggestions and read some further research as in step 4, now you're ready to narrow down on your subject and formulate for the first time your research question. This is probably also a good moment to ask a professor of IE to become your supervisor (if you hadn't done so before).

While choosing the topic, bear in mind the following elements:

- The project you present serves to obtain a LLB degree. The law pervades almost all aspects of society, and sometimes there is the risk that, while researching, you focus more on the extra-legal aspects (e.g. public policy, economic efficiency, sociological context, marketing, ...) and less on the legal ones. Bear in mind that the research question as well as the methodological approach, including the sources, must essentially be legal.
- The research must have an identifiable innovative element, either in the subject chosen, the approach taken, the solution obtained. Describing existing research or paraphrasing others, even if it involves an individual journey of discovery and internal processing, is not enough to pass the course.
- It is also important to ask yourself the question: What for? The topic chosen must be relevant to a wider audience. If you are not sure on the relevance of your topic, consult the final project coordinator.

We cannot stress enough that coming up with a well-founded research question is key to deliver efficiently a successful paper: it will help you to choose the right methodology, to find your way easily to the source materials, to plan the work efficiently, to structure the information and to actually draft the paper. With the research question well-founded, half of your work is done. It is worth to dedicate sufficient time to it; you will earn it back three times over.



## Research and analysis of the topic

This is the fun part. You have identified the topic, you have your question, now has come the time to find the answer. Imagine yourself to be in the middle of the desert, completely dehydrated and out of hope to survive, when suddenly you find a fridge with some cool fresh water. This is what research is like: it satisfies your thirst for knowledge!

### a) Literature survey

The first steps in your journey of the research will include the undertaking of a literature survey and the selection of the relevant (and available) material on the topic. Basically, it involves the gathering of all the information that exists already on your topic.

Once you know what there is out there on your topic, you must assess the usefulness and the significance of the information. How do you distinguish between relevant and less relevant information? You can check:

- The author's credentials (is he an expert? someone who is academically trained? ... );
- Where was the information published (by an academically renowned publisher? in a tier-1 journal? ... )
- Is there evidence of quality control (peer-reviewed before published? referred to often in other articles or books? ... )
- Is the article up to date? Was it written before or after the law was last reformed?
- Is the information reasonable, thoughtful, objective? Are there conflicts of interest?
- Can the information be corroborated? Does the author list his sources? Is the documentation convincing?

We expect from you that you dominate the literature that exists on your topic and its field of study. Not only should you know who-wrote-what-when-where, but you should be able to explain to an interested stranger:

- what are the main 'schools' of thought on your subject and what are their main features;
- who are the authors that are considered to be the most authoritative ones and why;
- what are the articles, books or reports that are directly relevant to your topic, which materials are only peripherally important, and what other materials can be discarded;

The better you know the literature of your research topic, the easier it will be for you to help your readers understand what the innovative aspects of your project are, and thus its relevance.

### b) Methodology

Once you have an overview of the existing literature on your topic you will have to decide on the methodology you want to pursue for answering your question and researching the primary sources. Obviously, you must choose a methodology of which you can

reasonably expect beforehand that it will deliver results. Discuss the methodology with your supervisor before you set out on your journey:

- Should it be comparative? What jurisdictions will you decide upon for comparison?
- Should there be empirical elements? What will the fieldwork be like?
- Should it include legal theory, or will a practical focus do? (and vice versa)

### c) Analysis

It will be essential for you to identify your primary sources. The identification of your primary sources normally happens indirectly (because in the secondary literature the same laws and cases keep turning back), but not always.

Your research should be based on primary and secondary sources.

- Primary sources in law include statutes, cases, official reports, treaties and other authoritative documents (including soft law) that are not based on other sources. It is the raw material of your research.
- Secondary sources in law discuss primary sources. It includes original research on the primary sources and normally contains references to earlier literature relevant to the subject.
- Make sure that you know the primary sources that are relevant to your subject. You will find them by reading the secondary sources. Once you have identified your primary sources, make sure you conduct your own analysis of the original texts (ideally in their original language). Do not rely on secondary sources only.
- When writing make sure that the analysis you conducted on the primary sources shines through. We expect that your text refers to the exact paragraph of the exact article of the official document where relevant. Eg. if you claim that the corporate tax rate in country X is 30%, then refer to article 66, paragraph 2, a), 1° of the country's tax code, not to an article written by someone else, or, worse still, a brochure of a firm trying to attract new customers.
- It is also advisable that your research takes into account primary sources from more than one source of law; base your analysis not only on legislation for instance, but complement it with case law as well. Eg. if your research leads you to investigate the civil code of country X on the subject of Z, make sure that not only you read the relevant articles of the civil code itself, but also how the highest courts of X have interpreted the articles on Z.

Assessing the credibility of online sources can be tricky.

- Primary sources of law are widely available online via IE Library and other internet venues (official gazettes, courts, ...) Ideally you should retrieve these texts from the websites of the official relevant institutions or via trustworthy channels and databases.
- Secondary sources of law are increasingly available online and with the help of the staff of IE Library you should be able to access most of the articles in the top law journals worldwide that were published in the last 15 years.
- Other sources of online information should be assessed very critically. Much of the online information is unreliable for a wide variety of reasons.

- Not all the information that you'll need is available online, and if you base your research only on online resources some of you will be missing some vital materials. Most of you will have to spend quite some time in the library.

## Planning

After you came up with the research question, conducted the research and analyzed the primary sources, now has come the time to structure the paper and plan how you will convey the results of your research to your readership.

While structuring the information, keep in mind what is the purpose you have with each section or subsection and tell your readers also what that purpose is in the introduction to each section (or subsection). If you are not able to explain what the (sub)section is doing in the overall skeleton of the paper, then maybe you should not include it. While explaining to your readers the reasons of including a certain section, make sure you maintain a line of argument throughout the paper that runs from the Introduction to the Conclusion; this line of argument will of course be related to the research question.

Make sure that the structure you propose fits nicely with the methodology you devised for answering the research question. With a thorough look at the table of contents, an expert in the field should be able to have a good idea of what he can expect of your paper in terms of definition of the field of research, the methodology employed and the overall approach to the subject.

Generally speaking, the paper should include the following elements:

- Title page
- Executive summary / abstract
- Table of contents
- Introduction, including methodology and purpose
- Argument or body of the paper, logically structured
- Conclusion
- Bibliography
- Optional: annexes, list of tables, list of abbreviations, list of maps, ...

### a) Title page

- Includes the title (and subtitle), name and affiliation of the author, name and affiliation of the supervisor, the date of submission, and the following line: 'Final Paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Law (LLB)', IE University logo. Avoid any other element on the title pages, such as colorful images or logos from other institutions.
- The title should encapsulate the area of research and convey the research question. It doesn't have to be phrased in question form. Some 20 words should normally do it.

### b) Executive summary / abstract

- The abstract does not form part of the argument, that is, your readers must not be presumed to have read it before they start reading the actual paper, and vice

versa, the abstract must be comprehensible without having read the written paper in full.

- Between 250-500 words will do.

c) Table of contents

- Captures the structure of paper and offers the reader an overview of the chapters and the subdivision of each chapter.
- The table of contents must match the actual structure and names of the chapters and subdivisions of the paper.

d) Introduction

- One approach to the introduction may be to start with introducing the reader to the general field of study (you can expect your reader to be a lawyer). Then you move forward to explaining what is missing or what can be improved in the current state of research in that field of study, and what can be done to overcome that. This step probably requires a short review of the literature available on the research topic. Then you focus on how your paper helps to fill the detected gap. You then introduce the reader to the research question and its relevance.
- The introduction normally also includes a discussion on the methodology you employed to answer the research question, and why this methodology can be expected to offer an answer to the research question. As part of this methodological aspect, you can also offer a short discussion on what you didn't do in your research, and why not. Help your reader to understand how you narrowed down the topic and why you did so.
- The introduction can then be concluded by introducing the reader to a broad summary sentence that captures how the paper contributes to the overall field of study.
- Tip: write your introduction at the very end.

e) Argument of the paper, logically structured

- Make sure that the structure you propose fits with the methodology described in the introduction.
- Do not exaggerate with the number of chapters and subdivisions (two, maybe three levels will normally do), and make sure that the content table matches the titles or subtitles you give to chapters, paragraphs, etc.
- Start each chapter with a short introduction about what the reader can expect in the chapter and how it links with the overall set-up of the paper, and end each chapter with a short conclusion about what you've done.

f) Conclusion

- Remind the reader of the research question you set out with, repeat what you've done in order to come to an answer to the question, and then state out briefly your answer to the question as well as the main reasons for your answer. Then also explain why this answer should be considered a contribution to the field of study.

- The conclusion is not the proper place to introduce new ideas; the ideas you include in the conclusion should be clearly based on the research conducted throughout the work.

#### g) Bibliography

- The bibliography should be well considered, so that it contains all key sources in the field as well as previous studies that support or motivate the present work. By only looking at your bibliography a specialist of the field should be able to see whether you have a comprehensive understanding of the latest literature on the topic and the prevailing discussions among experts.
- As a final project in the LLB program, it is to be expected that the list of references includes cases, legislation, international treaties, EU law, soft law, as well as learned articles and books. Probably you will not find everything on the internet, especially books will have to be consulted in libraries.
- References should be made to the proper finding places of the materials you cite. In the case of legislation, for instance, you should cite to the proper Official Gazette, not to some place on the internet where you happened to find the document in question. Same thing with articles, reports and books. Avoid meaningless references of the following type: <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CDOC-110hdoc50/pdf/CDOC-110hdoc50.pdf>
- Make sure that the bibliography is properly structured (distinguishing cases, legislation, learned articles and books, by country ...), listing authors alphabetically on their family name (not their first name).
- Be consistent in your system of bibliography, footnotes and referencing. Unless specified otherwise by your supervisor, we do not impose a single referencing system, but we require consistency. If you need examples, check Harvard Law Review's Bluebook or Oxford University Standard for Citation of Legal Authorities. However, note that specific rules apply to the citation of EU legislation and case law. Therefore, when you cite or refer to the Treaties and EU legislation, you must make a reference to the Official Journal of the European Union where the Treaty or legal act in question can be found. For the case law of the EU Courts you should apply the ECLI method of citation, which is available at <http://curia.europa.eu/>.

#### h) Annexes

- If you make use of interviews, please include in an annex a list of the persons you interviewed, when and where you interviewed them, their job title or otherwise the reason why you interviewed them, and the list of questions you asked them. Make also sure that you then also refer in your argument to the interviews.
- Make sure that your annexes are useful and when you include them, that you refer to them in the body of your text.

## Writing

Bear in mind that the point is not that you show how much you learned, how personally rewarding the work on the project has been or how much time you invested in the research. Not everything you have read or done can have a place in your final paper.

You must select between the information that is relevant to convey the results of your research, and information that is not. Drop the information that is not relevant: your paper will be so much more powerful. The evaluation committee does not want you to write words just for the sake of it. Page-filling as such is not appreciated (at all). This process of having to abandon some elements of your research is almost inevitable and it requires courage. But remember that dropping part of materials that you had initially in mind forms part of the learning process and the maturing of your mastery over the topic, a maturity that will shine through in the result.

Even more frustrating is when you conclude that you must throw away parts that you have written already. But the same caution applies as the paragraph hereabove: you should always be able to justify why you include information; if you're not capable of doing so, then consider not including it. Better still, ask the question: if I leave this information out, will a reader still be able to understand my message? If the answer is yes, cross it out.

Always write with your readers in mind. Try to put yourself in their position. Make sure that you help your readers to follow your logical flow of argument. Bring your reader step by step further, without skipping necessary steps and without filling the space with needless information or details. Always think of what message you want to convey and what are your arguments for it.

A typical mistake of many students is that they write *descriptively*. They do not go beyond the reporting of a situation as it stands. They set a background, but they do not develop an argument. They present information but do not discuss or transform it. They do not engage critically with the sources. Descriptive writing is easy, certainly if you fall in the word count trap. But your readers smell that. And they might think that you don't have really something to say of your own.

We expect you to write *critically* because it will contribute something to the academic debate. Writing critically does not mean that you write dismissively about other people's work; it implies that you identify positive and negative aspects of others; that you're capable of weighing up the evidence presented; that you confidently (but not arrogantly) contribute your own analytical work or carefully built arguments and put them in the balance (so that you expose yourself to 'critical' reviews by others). Such type of writing is more challenging and is based on a more profound research and analysis.

A good paper combines elements of descriptive writings with elements of critical writings. A certain amount of descriptive writing might be needed, for instance to set the background of the research, to offer a summary of the historical-political events that led up to a certain change in the law, or to describe the methodology you employed. But make sure that the critical element is visibly present. Also resist the temptation to include too many quotes from primary and secondary sources. If after careful consideration you quote a paragraph of case law or other primary sources, you should add your own comments and explain why this quote is relevant: what is the legal rule or principle you extract from it to build up your argument?

If you use a comparative approach, it is not sufficient to merely describe one legal system after another: you need to critically compare the different legal systems throughout the paper. Although it may be useful to describe the norms, concepts, institutions, etc., the comparison should focus on those issues in the different legal systems which fulfill the same functions; in other words, the focus must be on a concrete legal problem. You should identify the differences and similarities and explain the reasons for the similarities and differences between the systems and determine how they influence legal decisions and the interaction of legal actors. You should try to critically assess the different solutions from a new and common perspective, focusing on the functionality of the solutions.

#### Format

- Unless specified otherwise by your supervisor, there are no requirements regarding font, interlinear spacing, etc. However, this is a formal written paper, which means that its general look-and-feel must be professional.

#### Formal writing

- Your ideas must be well structured and organized to express them as clearly and coherently as possible.
- Employ frequently used academic vocabulary; beware of common grammatical errors. Make correct use of punctuations.
- Adopt a formal, academic style (hedging, formal word choice, conciseness, transparent sentence structure).
- Use structural devices (linking words, topic sentences, paragraphs) to improve coherence.
- Make critical use of various language resources (dictionaries, online tools, thesaurus).
- Use a reasonable number of abbreviations when appropriate and include a list of abbreviations before the introduction.
- Include images, schemes, tables, matrices etc only when relevant and cite the source. Refer to them in the argument of the paper. If they are not sufficiently relevant to merit mentioning, do not include them.
- Use quotations sparingly; avoid submitting a text which is a collection of quotations.

#### Footnotes

- Avoid plagiarism and use source materials correctly. When you refer to ideas from others because you want to elaborate on them, contradict them, or just use them, make sure you include footnotes in the text.
- Include all references that have been cited in your footnotes in a bibliography at the end of the paper.
- Be consistent in your system of bibliography, footnotes and referencing. We do not impose a referencing system, but we require consistency. If you need examples, check Harvard Law Review's Bluebook or Oxford University Standard for Citation of Legal Authorities. Remember that specific rules apply to EU legislation and case law as well as official documents.

Re-draft your paper

- When you finished your first draft, leave it alone for a few days and try to take some mental distance from it: Read something completely unrelated to the subject of your paper, go fishing or visit those friends you haven't seen in a while because you were in the library.
- After this mental break, read your draft again with the eyes of someone who reads the text for the first time. Polish the text and amend the content as appropriate. Then send it to your supervisor for feedback and adjust accordingly.
- Repeat this process as many times as possible.

## PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR

We expect from our students a professional relationship with their supervisors. We do not prescribe any template on how this relationship should work, but generally it implies:

- Agreement with the supervisor on what can be expected from her/him at what point of the process. Generally, this implies the development of a timeline and the regular set-up of meetings / conference calls; depending on each supervisor this timeline must be detailed and the conference more or less frequent/regular.
- Make sure that your supervisor knows of your expectations from him/her before you start working together.
- Deliver on the commitments you take on (submit drafts of the texts well on time, showing up for meetings, etc.)
- Implement your supervisor's suggestions or explain why not.

Unprofessional behavior with the supervisor can result in a fail.

## LITERATURE

You may consider consulting the following work on how to write a legal research paper:

- Volokh, Eugene, *Academic Legal Writing: Law Review Articles, Student Notes, Seminar Papers, and Getting on Law Review*, Fifth Edition, Foundation Press, New York, 2016.

### **Disclaimer**

*Each final project is different. These guidelines can therefore be adapted to the requirements of your project, but make sure you consult your supervisor if you deviate from them and that you can explain why you did not follow them.*