

LL.B. FINAL PROJECT

Coordinators: Bart Wauters, Marco de Benito, Marina Aksenova

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2018-2019

DEGREE COURSE YEAR: First Second Third Fourth Fifth
1st SEMESTER 2nd SEMESTER

CATEGORY: BASIC COMPULSORY OPTIONAL

NO. OF CREDITS (ECTS): 12

1. Purpose

The purpose of the Final Project is the elaboration and presentation of an independent, original, thorough and individually elaborated research work on a certain legal aspect or a topic related to law.

As a general rule, the Final Project will be individually drafted and presented in English. Only for duly justified reasons can exceptions be granted.

The Final Project must include at least the following parts or references:

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

Length is not the most important aspect of the Final Project. Quality, not quantity is what matters. Therefore a maximum total number of 20.000 words is established (including all footnotes, bibliography, annexes, etc.). **Students who do not respect the established maximum will fail the course.**

2. Skills and competences

The Final Project will allow the students to acquire the following skills and competences:

- Capacity for analysis and synthesis.
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- Ability to search for, manage, and understand legal primary and secondary sources.
- Acquaintance with academic standards and usages of presentation, structure, and citation.
- Ability to think creatively and develop and present new ideas and concepts.
- Ethical and anti-plagiarism commitment.
- Implementation of the knowledge acquired in the LL.B programme
- Writing and oral communication skills.

3. Organization and format

The student can choose to develop the Final Project in two possible formats: a **class-based** format in which the student enrolls in one of the 'Final Project subjects' offered by LLB faculty, or an **individual format** in which the student defines a specific topic him/herself (not offered in the class-based system) and looks for a suitable supervisor to guide the project.

3.1. *Class-based format*

- The LLB Program will publish a list of 'Final Project syllabi' covering a range of topics within law; students can browse through all syllabi and select a topic of interest and then enroll in that subject. Each syllabus will describe general or specific topics that the student can work on for the project and will also describe the specific requirements that may apply to sign up for a syllabus.
- Each Final Project subject will be handled by a LLB Professor who will guide and supervise the project carried out by the students enrolled in the subject. Therefore, the Professor in charge of each syllabus will become the supervisor of all students enrolled in his/her class,
- The Final Project subjects may have limited capacity (which will be announced in the syllabus of each subject).
- The rule of enrollment in the Final Project subjects is first-come, first-served.
- Final Project subjects will imply a number of group sessions (with all the students signed up in the same subject) plus a number of individual face-to-face meetings determined by the professor. Attendance to the group sessions and individual meetings are mandatory.

3.2. *Individual format*

- Students who wish to work on a specific topic that is not covered by a syllabus offered in the class-based format, can choose to write a Final Project proposal for that specific topic; the proposal has to be submitted early in the semester for review by the Final Project Coordinator.
- The student is expected to contact a supervisor associated to IE University for assistance, continuous monitoring and control of the project. Exceptionally and for duly justified reasons related to the characteristics of the Final Project, the Program Direction could approve a supervisor from outside IE community. The Program Direction may also approve two Academic Supervisors to one single Final Project or a Technical Supervisor who could be an external professional not related to the University.

- Both the proposed supervisor and topic for the research require the Coordinator's approval. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that students start looking for a supervisor the semester before the proposal is due.
- The student will draft a proposal for the Final Project. It should be drafted after close communication with the supervisor. It will have to be approved by one of the Final Project Coordinators. It is the responsibility of the student to meet the established deadline. Failure to submit by the established deadline a proposal that is formally in order and that is clearly the result of the maturing process described under section 'selection of the topic' and in particular steps 1-5 of Annex II to this syllabus, will result in the student missing the first ordinary call of the Final Project. Once the proposal has been approved it is not possible any more to change the subject of the Final Project until after the second call. Likewise, it is not possible to change supervisor until after the second call. Only in the third call would it be possible to change subject and / or supervisor, and only for duly justified reasons. However, it can happen that in the course of elaborating the project some elements will be narrowed down or defined more sharply than what is possible to do in the proposal, without that this implies changing the subject altogether. If you want to make such changes, you should consult your supervisor first and then communicate them to the Final Project Coordinator. Annex I includes further information and requirements regarding the Final Project proposal.
- In the individual format 4 classroom or online sessions will be organized to explain basic information about how to develop a legal Final Project. These sessions will take place during the first two weeks of the semester in which the paper is due. Attendance to these sessions is mandatory. The sessions will be imparted by one of the Final Project Coordinators.

	Topic of the session
1.	Finding a suitable research question.
2.	Conducting a literature review and choosing the right methodology.
3.	Planning of the research and structuring the findings.
4.	Writing the research paper

3.3. Work preparation

In either format, the student is responsible for the preparation and defense of the Final Project under the conditions determined by the University.

The scope and content of the proposed Final Project must be adjusted in accordance to the number of hours of dedication estimated in the plan for the LLB Degree (25 hours/1 ECT).

The student must comply with the work calendar established by the supervisor in order to discuss his work progress. The rules on attendance and participation in classroom sessions, tutorships and other educational activities required will be rigorously applied.

4. Academic supervisor

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

Supervisor and student will establish the work plan taking into consideration the deadline of the ordinary call. The student must be in permanent contact with his supervisor in order to discuss his work progress according to the agreed calendar and procedures.

The supervisor will take best endeavors to help the student to meet the deadline with a Final Project of the highest possible quality, but ultimately it is the student's responsibility to do so.

The supervisor's permission is a requisite to present the Final Project. The supervisor may refuse to grant permission to present the Final Project should she or he consider that the work does not meet the minimum requirements or quality standards, or the student's behavior hasn't been professional (not respecting mutually agreed deadlines, no-shows for meetings, etc.). Should that be the case, the student will miss the corresponding call, with a zero ("0"). The student will not miss the extraordinary call of the enrollment, except in the case of non-compliance with the attendance rules.

5. Evaluation system

The evaluation system will vary according to the chosen format.

In the *class-based format* the breakdown of the evaluation will be the following:

- *Written paper (60%)*: The written paper will be graded by the supervisor.
- *Oral presentation of the report to the Evaluation Committee (40%)*. The evaluation tribunal will be comprised by the Supervisor and a professor from IE University.

In the *individual format* the breakdown of the evaluation will be the following:

- *Written paper (50%)*: The written paper will be evaluated by an evaluation committee of two members of IE faculty, other than the supervisor.
- *Oral presentation of the report to the Evaluation Committee (40%)*. The evaluation committee shall comprise of the same two members who read the written paper.
- *Supervisor evaluation (10%)*: Coinciding with the deadline for Final Project submission, the supervisor will submit a signed document grading the student's work (grade between 0 and 10) and describing the performance of the student throughout the Final Project completion period. This evaluation will emphasize aspects relating to the process of the Final Project development (commitment to the project, professional attitude, diligence, whether expectations were met, etc).

For both formats the oral presentation will consist of the following structure:

- 12 minutes of presentation by the student. This limit will be strictly enforced.

- 5-15 minutes of questions by the members of the evaluation committee on methodological, formal, or substantive aspects of the paper and presentation.
- After strictly 30 minutes the presentation will be broken off.

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

Based on the tribunal's recommendation, the Program Director may propose to the University Rector the granting of an award to the most outstanding Final Project in the corresponding academic year.

The following criteria will, among others that may be considered relevant in the specific case, be considered for the evaluation:

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

Annex II contains guidelines to write a Final Project, with additional evaluation criteria. Annex II forms part of the syllabus.

Failing the Final Project in the 1st call

Among others, the following circumstances will lead to failing the Final Project:

- Non-delivery of the written report and supporting documentation on time and under the established conditions without duly substantiated cause (this implies a grade of "0").
- The non-appearance before the Evaluation Committee at the requested time.
- Breach of the rules on attendance to classroom sessions or other educational activities imposed by the Supervisor (this implies a grade of "0" and missing both the ordinary and extraordinary call).
- In the individual format: Failure to submit by the established deadline a proposal that is formally in order and that is clearly the result of the maturing process described under section 'selection of the topic' and in particular steps 1-5 of Annex II to this syllabus.

6. Final Project retake and subsequent calls

In the retake period students will have to work on the comments and feedback received in the oral defense of the ordinary call and submit a revised version of the Final Project for evaluation and defense. Students presenting the Final Project in the 2nd call will aspire to a maximum grade of 8 out of 10.

The final project may be developed, at most, during two consecutive academic years, and will have two calls each year, one ordinary and one extraordinary, in accordance with the relevant University rules.

7. Calendar

The following is the reference calendar for the ordinary call, subject to exceptional adjustments on a case-by-case basis:

Activity	Timeframe
Proposal of Final Project and supervisor (Individual Format only)	23 January 2019
Submission of Final Project after having obtained the supervisor's permission	13 May 2019
Public presentation in first call	16 May-24 May 2019 (TBC)
Submission of Final Project in extraordinary call	27 June 2019 (TBC)
Public presentation in second call	28 June 2019 (TBC)

8. Disclaimer

This document contains specific guidelines for the Final Project in the LL.B. degree, and should be complemented with university regulation.

9. Coordinators' contacts

In your communication with the coordinators, please address your message to all coordinators at the same time.

bwauters@faculty.ie.edu

marco.debenito@ie.edu

marina.aksenova@ie.edu

ANNEX I: LLB FINAL PROJECT PROPOSAL

The final project proposal should not generally exceed 1,000 words and is expected to include the following elements:

- Title page
- Abstract
- Table of contents
- Research question
- Methodology
- Work plan
- References

Each of these points should address the following issues:

1. Title page (see template hereunder)
 - Short, descriptive title of the proposed project
 - Include author's name, degree, IE University, e-mail addresses (both at IE as otherwise urgently reachable), mobile telephone number
 - Supervisor's name, affiliation, telephone number, e-mail address(es) where he is readily reachable
 - Your confirmation that the supervisor has approved the proposal as you submit it
2. Abstract
 - Brief summary of your proposal
 - Should not exceed 200 words
3. Table of contents
 - Preliminary structure of the written paper
4. Research question
 - State the context and background of your project
 - Capture the essence of your project in a couple of sentences
 - Can take the form of a hypothesis, question, or goal
 - If needed, set out boundaries and exclude related questions
 - Explain why it is worth it, its major implications
 - Cite relevant references as footnotes
5. Methodology
 - Describe your approach, main type of sources, and procedures
6. Work plan
 - List the main stages of your project in a table format
 - Set expected deadlines for completing each stage of the project
7. References
 - List the main bibliographic references in the field

Submit your proposal to prof. Bart Wauters (bwauters@faculty.ie.edu).

[Template for the title page of the proposal]

Title and subtitle of the thesis:

Author's name and surname:

Author's degree programme at IEU:

IEU e-mail address of the author:

Alternative e-mail address of the author (optional):

Mobile telephone number of the author:

Supervisor's name and surname:

Affiliation: IE University (if not, explain where the supervisor works)

Primary e-mail address of the supervisor:

Alternative e-mail address of the supervisor (optional):

Direct line telephone number of the supervisor:

Did your supervisor approve the proposal as you submit it: Yes / No

ANNEX II: GUIDELINES FOR WRITING THE FINAL PROJECT

The Process

Writing a paper is a process that involves a number of 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. You can't for instance define a research question without a decent amount of preliminary research. Or while writing you'll see that the plan you originally designed for structuring the information needs refinement. Making ongoing adjustments to what you've done previously in the process is inevitable and to a certain extent healthy. But for the sake of clarity we'll 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're expected to be spending on average 300 hours on the final project so you'd better make sure that you'll work on something you actually 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. Other students are combining their LL.B programme with other programmes such as BBA or BIR. It is perfectly normal that you look for synergies between the theses of both programmes, although there is not an obligation to do so.

All papers should be answering a question: this is the research question. When you turn in your proposal (Annex I), the research question should be already sufficiently worked through and discussed in detail with your supervisor. 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 actually work on something they like so overwhelming that they don't 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 programme 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 LL.B programme. You can also talk to some of the professors of your LL.B programme 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've 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 LL.B programme 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 actually 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 in itself 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're not sure on the relevance of your topic, consult the final project coordinator.

We can't 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've 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 make an assessment of 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 a 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 are the innovative aspects of your project, 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 actually 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 field-work 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're 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 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 in order 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 jobtitle 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 actually 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've read or done can have a place in your final paper. You have to make a selection between the information that is relevant to convey the results of your research, and information that isn't. Drop the information that isn't relevant: your paper will be so much more powerful. The evaluation committee doesn't want you to write XX.XXX 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 final result.

Even more frustrating is when you come to the conclusion that you have to throw away parts that you have actually written already. But the same caution applies as the paragraph hereabove: you should be able to justify at all times 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. Resist also 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 has to be more or less 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.

Disclaimer

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