

**LLM (Research) and PhD, Law, Osgoode Hall Law School**

**Cyclical Program Review – 2006 - 2014**

**Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan**

**Reported to Joint-Committee on Quality Assurance: April 18, 2016**

**Program description:**

Osgoode Hall Law School offers an LLM (Research) and PhD program, as well as a professional stream of the LLM. The report is focused on the graduate research programs; the professional programs underwent a review in 2013.

The LLM offers two streams, a research-intensive stream which requires a thesis and a course-based stream which culminates in a Major Research Paper (MRP).

Program	New Registrations (heads) 2014	Enrolment FTES 2014	Degrees Awarded 2014
LLM	7 (17 in 2013)	19	14
PhD	18	33	8

**Reviewers appointed by Vice Provost Academic:**

Jean-François Gaudreault-Desbiens, Professor and Associate Dean Research, Faculty of Law, Université de Montréal

Nathalie Des Rosiers, Dean and Full Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Ottawa

Miriam Smith, Professor, Department of Social Science, York University

**Site Visit:** March 30, 2015

The reviewers spent one day at York University where they met with key administrative personnel, including Alice Pitt, Vice-Provost Academic, Barbara Crow, the Dean of Graduate Studies, Lorne Sossin, the Dean of Osgoode Hall Law School and the Graduate Program Director. In addition to meeting with the Librarian and Director of Graduate Studies Operations, there were two opportunities to meet with students.

**Outcome:** The Joint-Committee on Quality Assurance concluded that the Decanal response adequately addressed the review recommendations. The Dean of Osgoode Law School is responsible for implementing recommendations as per the Decanal Implementation Plan. Follow-up report due October 31, 2017.

The next Cyclical Program Review will be in Fall 2021 and will coincide with the Cyclical Program Review for the JD and the LLM Professional program.

**Program Strengths:**

- Critical interdisciplinary research is a Osgoode Hall Law School’s strong reputation and the ability of graduates from the doctoral program to attain academic positions is due, in part, to focused training and support at the law



school.

- Students benefit from regularly organized scientific events on campus and funding to attend conferences.
- Students commend the strength and diversity of the faculty. The Graduate Seminar in Legal Research and the Study Groups are particularly appreciated by students.
- Osgoode Hall Law School's new building provides adequate space for its graduate students and the Library is considered a place of pride for the Osgoode community.

**Opportunities for Program improvement (selected from self-study and reviewers' report):**

- Osgoode's strong international reputation is at risk due to the inability to fund international students.
- In addition, there needs to be clarity about the role of the doctoral program and its relationship to the professional practice of law for international students who attend. These graduate programs are not a route to the Bar. Clarity about the differences between the LLM Research and LLM Professional need to be made clear in communications about the program, particularly for international students.
- Interdisciplinary studies are a strength; however, academic positions require teaching of introductory courses in positive law; clarity about employment paths for students in graduate programs should be enhanced.
- Supervision of doctoral students could be enhanced, both from the student perspective of adequate feedback at significant junctures in the program and from the perspective of faculty who sometimes take on additional supervision to compensate for others less involved in supervisory activities.
- Requirements for doctoral students need to be clearer in terms of requirements leading up to the dissertation and consideration of alternatives to the dissertation could be explored, such as a collection of articles with an introduction.
- Funding structures that support the highly diverse student body in law and those that have a "sinuous" path to completion of their studies should be explored.
- For students who will not pursue academic careers (60%), more career development support should be provided. An opportunity to be explored is enhanced linkages with the Osgoode Research Centres.
- Students note that student services at Osgoode tend to be JD-centric and there needs to be further clarity about services provided by the Office of Graduate Studies and service providers at Osgoode.

**Decanal Implementation Plan (selected)**

The Dean's Implementation Plan comments on each of the recommendations in the Reviewers report. Recommendations that focus on career development of graduate students will be acted on through better support in the Career Centre and through regular workshops that begin in Fall 2015. Also in 2015 exploration of how to better integrate graduate students into activities of the research centres will begin. Information for prospective students will better clarify the role of graduate education.

Funding, in particular for international students, has been identified as a challenge, and Osgoode will take this up in university-wide discussions about graduate student funding at York University.

The Graduate Program in Law will consider how best to enhance the student experience around dissertation proposals, dissertations, a portfolio option and other recommendations related to degree completion in a timely manner, including supervision.

## **Summary**

Osgoode Hall Law School has a strong reputation both nationally and internationally as a result of graduate students who go on to academic careers and those who work in public policy and other pursuits. Graduate students benefit from a strong and diverse faculty and student engagement is enhanced by a new building with a Library that is considered to be a “place of pride”. The innovative interdisciplinary nature of the graduate programs is a strength and needs to be clearly articulated to prospective students who may be expecting to move to a professional practice of law. Graduate student funding options are being explored that will support all students as they move through their programs, including international students. Enhanced linkages with Osgoode’s many research centres, as well as focused career development support, will ensure students not pursuing academic careers have the skills to pursue professional lives in public policy, public affairs and other diverse areas.

Alice J Pitt, Vice-Provost Academic  
York University

