
CHOOSING TO DO A HONOURS RESEARCH ESSAY (HRE) IN LAW AND LEGAL STUDIES

What is a HRE in Law and Legal Studies?

The Honours Research Essay (HRE) in Law is an optional full year course (1.0 credit) dedicated to an in-depth study of a topic of interest to the student. The Honours Research Essay (HRE) allows students to bring together their skills and knowledge in methods and theory with their curiosity and passion for a specific research area to produce an independent research project. Students work with a faculty supervisor on the development, conduct and production of that research project, and it is recommended they begin their search for a supervisor well before the start of the term in which they want to take the Tutorial.

An HRE can be a great learning experience if the student is a good fit for it, capable of consistently meeting the requirements of independent research and coursework deadlines without the structure of a formal course, and is able to find an appropriate supervisor with whom they can work well. Students are responsible to find a faculty member to supervise them in the HRE.

What does the HRE in Law involve?

- A statement of research interest - including the topic area and issues to be addressed; the rationale for the project; and a preliminary bibliography (details below)
- Regular meetings with the supervisor
- Approximately 10,000-15,000 words (40-60 pages) of written content plus references and bibliography
- Students are expected to spend 7-10 hours per week on this course

Is the HRE option appropriate for me?

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I work well independently in a variety of ways?
- Do I have strong communication skills?
- Do I have excellent writing skills?
- Am I well organized?
- Do I meet deadlines?
- Am I highly motivated?
- Do I have strong research skills and enjoy researching?

These skills are required for the successful completion of an HRE in Law and Legal Studies.

How is an HRE different from a fourth year research term paper?

For the HRE:

- Students select the topic for the HRE based on their own interests and curiosity
- Students follow a basic but flexible research process over the duration of the full year course under the supervision of a faculty member
- Students locate in-depth work in existing literature on a chosen subject, develop a proposal and write the paper in draft sections
- A 40- to 60-page research paper is produced
- The final paper is graded jointly by the supervisor and a second faculty member who could be inside or outside the Department of Law and Legal Studies (called a 'second reader')

What are the prerequisites for LAWS 4908?

Students must be in good academic standing with fourth year standing (14.0+ credits completed).

Students must also meet the prerequisites for the HRE in Law noted on Carleton Central as:

- Completion of LAWS 3908
- Law GPA of 9.0 or higher and written acceptance by a faculty member to supervise the HRE; or
- Permission of the Department and written acceptance by a faculty member to supervise the HRE

When and how should students search for a faculty supervisor?

The earlier, the better! Students should approach potential faculty supervisors toward the end of their third year, and no later than a few weeks prior to the start of the term in which the LAWS 4908 course will commence. Students can research available faculty expertise to find someone who is a match in the area of interest and who is able to take on the supervision by consulting the Department's listing of Faculty Supervision Areas found on the website at: <https://carleton.ca/law/faculty-supervision-areas/>. This document is updated each academic year to provide a summary of the research areas of available faculty members.

Faculty members accept only a limited number of students to supervise. If students wait until the start of term to find a supervisor, they will have a greatly diminished likelihood of finding one.

Students must identify a topic in the subject of Law or Legal Studies in advance of approaching a faculty member for supervision. The topic needs to be more particular than simply "criminal law" or "the Canadian Charter". It should be based on the student's existing foundation of knowledge developed in undergraduate courses. Students must prepare for the exploratory meeting with potential supervisors by preparing a statement of interest (see below).

Students should identify a list of 3 to 5 faculty members whose research areas align with the proposed research topic and then contact them (via email or in person) to inquire about their availability and set up a meeting to discuss the statement of research interest.

If students encounter difficulties in securing a faculty supervisor, whom should they contact?

Students may consult the **Undergraduate Supervisor** for guidance on supervisor selection, preparing a statement of research interest, and any difficulties that may arise during the process. However, it is up to the student to find an appropriate faculty supervisor. As this is an optional course, there is no guarantee that a supervisor will be available.

Note: Only professors in the Department of Law and Legal Studies may supervise an HRE. Contract or sessional instructors are not eligible to be supervisors.

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH INTEREST

Before the student approaches a potential supervisor, they should have prepared a 1 to 2 page Statement of Research Interest that should include:

- a concise statement of the topic area you have in mind;
- rationale for the project -- a statement of your interest and background on this topic;
- the research question(s)/issues within this topic area that you wish to address;
- a preliminary bibliography

The purpose of this statement is not to present a finalized definition of your topic or a full outline of your project, but rather to provide potential supervisors with evidence of your preliminary thinking on the proposed topic. This will enable the faculty member to assess her/his suitability, as well as the student's suitability. The statement of interest will provide the basis for further discussion and refinement of your HRE proposal once the project has been accepted. As a general rule, the better the student is in providing a faculty member with a clear, concise and tangible idea for their essay, the easier it will be for the supervisor to respond with helpful comments and advice and make the decision whether or not to supervise.

REGISTRATION

What is the registration process?

Once your faculty supervisor has been secured, you will need to complete the **Honours Paper Application Form**, which can be found on our website: <https://carleton.ca/law/tutorial-in-law-honours-research-essay/#hre>. This form must be submitted to the Department of Law and Legal Studies (C473 Loeb Building or Law@carleton.ca) for approval prior to the last day of registration for the term.

Once students have secured a faculty supervisor and submitted the completed Honours Paper application form, then the student must complete the **Registration Override Request** on Carleton Central for LAWS 4908 A. The approval permitting course registration will be sent via the student's Carleton University Email Account. The student must then register for the course using Carleton Central.

Note: Students cannot register for LAWS 4908 with January as the starting point.

THE COURSEWORK

How and when should students plan their HRE in Law?

At the start of the course, students work with their faculty supervisor to determine a proposal, relevant bibliography, essay outline and a time line. Any questions regarding style and format should be directed to the supervisor.

Students should communicate regularly with the supervisor with a brief update on their progress. The student should provide advance notice when they are about to submit written work for review. With such notice it is reasonable to expect the supervisor to provide comments on this work within a couple of weeks. Without such notice, it may take longer for the supervisor to provide input because of the many other demands on their time. Good communication is key to a satisfactory supervisory relationship.

What can students expect from their faculty supervisors?

The expectations for the HRE need to be discussed and decided between the student and the supervisor early on in the course. Students should keep in mind that the HRE is an exercise in *independent work*; it is not the faculty supervisor's task to police the student's work habits or cajole them into making deadlines or attending meetings. It is important for students to be in regular contact with the supervisor via email and/or through meetings.

Faculty supervisors will offer feedback and guidance, and make suggestions about additional materials that may be relevant to the topic. Supervisors may require multiple drafts and revisions of HRE sections.

Students may wish to consult their supervisor about publication, networking, and conference opportunities that relate to the work. The supervisor may make a great reference for the student for future employment or if they decide to further their education with a graduate degree.

Is there a dedicated space in which students participating in a Tutorial can convene to discuss their work and share ideas?

While there is no dedicated undergraduate student lounge, the **Chet Mitchell Resource Centre** (D580 Loeb Building) is available for students and faculty members (commonly referred to as the 'Reading Room').

Note: the Reading Room has specific hours of operation and use of the room requires the student to complete a sign-in form (please visit us at C473 Loeb).

COMPLETING THE COURSE

How is the HRE grade determined?

The paper is graded jointly by the supervisor and a second faculty member who could be inside or outside the Department of Law and Legal Studies. The supervisor, in consultation with the student, selects the second faculty member.

What if I am unable to complete the course?

If you anticipate being unable to complete the course by the deadline for final coursework submission, you have two choices:

1. You may withdraw from LAWS 4908 up to the last date for withdrawal from full credit courses in the session in which you are registered.

2. You may register in LAWS 4908 section B for the following term to continue the HRE (for example, a student taking their HRE in fall and winter can register in LAWS 4908B in summer). However, you must have permission from your supervisor and the undergraduate advisor before submitting an override request to register. If approved, you will have the full summer term (May through August) to complete your HRE, unless your supervisor states otherwise.

NOTE: First time registration in LAWS 4908 must be in section A which is a 1.0 credit course. If the course is not completed by the expected date, continuation for another term in LAWS 4908 must be in section B (which is considered a 0.5 credit course). All applicable fees apply.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION OR ASSISTANCE:

Reach out to the Undergraduate Administrator or Undergraduate Supervisor. Contact info can be found at <https://carleton.ca/law/faculty-staff/> or you may contact Law@carleton.ca.