

Auckland Law School 2026 Postgraduate Law Courses Short Descriptions

Full Course outlines are available at: Curriculum Catalogue

Course	Short Description
LAW 700 Legal Research Methodology and Advanced Writing Offered in: Semester One and Two Course Type: Intensive Points: 0	The course is designed to provide students with up-to-date research and academic writing skills. The different components of the legal research and writing process including initial analysis, research ethics, writing style and writing a legal research essay are canvassed in this course. New students are provided with information about the Davis Law Library, its collections and resources and legal data base training.
LAW 701 The Legal System: Sources, Structures and Method Offered in: Semester One and Two Course Type: Full-Semester Points: 30	Examination of the core substantive components of the New Zealand legal system, in comparison with other municipal legal systems and international law. Analysis of the sources of New Zealand law, including statute, case law and custom. Legal methodology in theory and practice, including: judicial reasoning and the doctrine of precedent, techniques of statutory interpretation, and the resolution of disputes. Different modes of legal analysis and approaches to legal theory. This course is co-badged with LAWGENRL 464.
LAWCOMM 724 Mergers and Acquisitions Offered in: Semester Two Course Type: Intensive Points: 30	Mergers and acquisitions (M&A) have become ubiquitous in the corporate world. Whether in times of a boom economy or a financial crisis, M&A activity continues. Only the frequency, size, and nature of transactions may vary depending on market conditions. The course will begin with an evaluation of the business rationale for M&A and a discussion of the various types of transactions and related terminology. The regulatory issues surrounding these transactions will be analysed through an examination of the applicable laws and regulations. The course will approach topics from a comparative perspective and explore legal trends in the leading jurisdictions of the United Kingdom and the United States along with a few other jurisdictions within the Commonwealth. While corporate and securities law issues form the thrust, incidental reference will be made to accounting, tax, and competition law considerations. Finally, the transactional perspective will consider various matters pertaining to deal-making, including key transaction documentation, due diligence, and valuation.
LAWCOMM 731 ST: Commercial Law in Asia Offered in: Semester Two Course Type: Intensive Points: 30	This course provides students with an opportunity to critically examine commercial law in an Asian context. Although parallels can be drawn between Asian jurisdictions in terms of their economic and legal development, their commercial law systems are too diverse to be treated uniformly. Instead, the principal objective of this course is to cultivate a set of analytical toolkits for understanding and evaluating commercial law in Asia. This is achieved through focused analysis of selected legal and practical issues from comparative and economic perspectives. In order to facilitate comparative analysis both across and within the common law and civil law traditions, this subject will focus on commercial law in the four jurisdictions of China, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan. Basic economic principles will be introduced and utilised to evaluate the efficacy of the respective legal rules, while comparative methodology will be employed to provide contextual appreciation of the socio-economic factors driving legal development. Covered topics will include contract, business associations, corporate finance, and taxation. The subject will be of interest to those interested in doing business in Asia.

LAWCOMM 732 ST: Contractual Interpretation Offered in: Semester One Course Type: Intensive Points: 30	Commercial lawyers spend much of their working lives reading and writing contracts. Most of the contract problems which occur in practice are concerned with the meaning of the words which have been used in the contract. That is why the interpretation of contracts is such an important issue in practice. The purpose of this course is to discuss the conceptual issues involved in the interpretation of contracts and the types of problem which are encountered in practice. Contractual interpretation is largely concerned with questions of judgement. But that judgement must be exercised in accordance with the principles of contractual interpretation which we will be studying.
LAWCOMM 733 ST: Shaping the Law in the Tech Driven Era Offered in: Semester One Course Type: Intensive Points: 30	This course provides a deep dive into the intersection of law and disruptive technologies, emphasising the legal, ethical, and societal challenges posed by innovations like artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, quantum computing, and beyond. The aim is to equip students with a foundational understanding of these technologies, not just their applications, but the principles behind how they are built, and how computational thinking shapes their design and function. By understanding computational thinking, students can also reflect on the similarities and differences with legal thinking and improve their understanding of their own analytical thinking. By doing so, students will be better prepared to critically analyse how these innovations intersect with existing legal frameworks and propose appropriate legal, ethical, and regulatory responses.
LAWCOMM 737 ST: Financial Markets Regulation Offered in: Semester One Course Type: Intensive Points: 30	This course introduces the law and regulation of financial markets, combining theoretical foundations with practical application. Students will examine why and how governments regulate securities markets and how legal frameworks shape market behaviour and investor protection. The course draws primarily on United States and New Zealand law, and may include visits to institutions such as the New Zealand Stock Exchange or the Financial Markets Authority.
LAWCOMM 739 ST: Corporate Lawyers Today Offered in: Semester Two Course Type: Intensive Points: 30	What do corporate lawyers do? This question has vexed academics for a long time. For some, lawyers merely write down what others tell them. For others, lawyers provide a reputational stamp on the transaction itself. A leading theory is that lawyers act as 'transaction cost engineers' to help make transactions more efficient. But do they actually do any of that? This course reviews different theoretical approaches to the role that law plays in corporate transactions, and the role that lawyers play in corporate transactions, and then brings in leading Aotearoa corporate lawyers to discuss their practice. We will therefore discuss what others have said that corporate lawyers do, and try to find evidence for that in practitioner discussion of what they actually do.
LAWCOMM 740 ST: Corporate Governance Offered: Semester One Course Type: Intensive Points: 15	This course will explore both legal and theoretical perspectives to corporate governance. It will explore the foundational pillars of company law, the basis for corporations. It then maps these across comparative corporate governance to identify a global framework. The course then explores the normative question as to why we need this framework and the role of corporate law.
LAWCOMM 747 ST: International Commercial Transactions Offered in: Semester One Course Type: Intensive Points: 30	This course introduces major components of the law impacting on cross-border business, especially from New Zealand, Australian, and some Asian perspectives. It considers: (i) market access for goods and foreign investment (under both domestic and international law, namely World Trade Organisation, free trade and investment agreements), (ii) international sales of goods (especially the UN Sales Convention, with some comparisons to the UNIDROIT Principles of International Commercial Contracts), and (iii) cross-border dispute resolution (WTO and investor-state dispute settlement, international commercial arbitration, mediation and litigation).

LAWCOMM 750: Start-Up Law Offered in: Semester Two Course Type: Part-Semester Restrictions: LAWCOMM 478 Points: 15	Critically examines complex legal frameworks through theoretical and practical lenses, equipping students with analytical tools for advising emerging ventures. Students will master international start-up law through direct collaboration with start-ups and advanced problem-solving methodologies, addressing the complete business lifecycle from ideation through exit strategies.
LAWGENRL 713 Selected Issues on Family Law Offered in: Semester One Course Type: Full-Semester Points: 30	A selection of topics designed to consolidate and advance understanding of the theory and practice of family law. The topics covered will vary according to current legal developments but are likely to include: law relating to cohabitation and marriage, the establishment of parenthood, and the relationship between parent and child, as well as the interrelationship between the state, the family and child protection and support, and the financial and property implications of family breakup including State support for families. How the law allocates duties, rights, and responsibilities in families, including extended family and whānau, as well as how power in relationships is restrained will also be foci for the course.
LAWGENRL 728 ST: Video Game Law Offered in: Semester Two Course Type: Part-Semester Points: 15	Video games are big business — far larger than music, movies, and even professional sports. But they have long been neglected in academic study, and law is no exception. Fortunately that is starting to change. The law is developing fast around the world, particularly in the United States but also in Europe. The course will cover those legal developments with a global perspective but with a substantial focus on United States law, which is the most developed.
LAWPUBL 736 Human Rights Litigation Offered in: Semester Two Course Type: Intensive Points: 30	The course focuses on how to bring and defend human rights litigation in New Zealand under the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993, as well as the bringing of claims under international human rights treaties (such as ICCPR) where that is possible. It will also deal with the use of the Bill of Rights in other forms of proceedings such as employment law and judicial review in various settings, such as health and education. The focus is on New Zealand law but this will involve reference to comparative law in order to understand the significance of case law and judicial approaches in other jurisdictions under different models of bills of rights.
LAWPUBL 744 ST: International Humanitarian Law Offered in: Semester One Course Type: Intensive Points: 30	One of the oldest branches of international law concerns its regulation of warfare between States, which formally dates back to the 1859 Battle of Solferino and the original Geneva Convention (the Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field) of August 1864. We shall trace the development of this law through to the landmark four Geneva Conventions of August 1949 and their two Additional Protocols—one for international armed conflict; the other for non-international armed conflict—of June 1977. This course will explore many topics related to the regulation of warfare, including the classification of combatants and the treatment afforded to prisoners-of-war; the means and methods of warfare (including nuclear and chemical warfare, but also focusing on sexual violation and starvation); questions of targeting, proportionality and precautionality; the history and practices of belligerent occupation and the protection of cultural property and the environment.

LAWPUBL 749 ST: Indigenous Persons: Law and Policy Offered in: Semester One Course Type: Full-Semester Points: 30	The course generally takes issues concerning Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand as a starting point and uses these to consider issues affecting Indigenous peoples more broadly. Students are encouraged to look beyond and learn how reform is achieved in their own legal systems by looking at best practices, successes and failures in other domestic, international and Indigenous legal systems. It is hoped that students will feel empowered to be creative, resourceful and informed when they craft their own solutions for their own Indigenous communities and clients. The course will provide comparative legal and policy perspectives in regard to the development and re-construction of domestic and international legal systems that recognise and protect the rights and status of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous communities. It will also consider Indigenous peoples' customary laws, legal systems and diplomatic traditions expressing their own visions of their rights and status in relation to other peoples.
LAWPUBL 753 ST: Comparative Constitutional Law Offered in: Semester Two Course Type: Intensive Points: 30	This course explores the methodology and substance of comparative constitutional law. Attention will be given to several constitutional schemes including those of the United States and the United Kingdom, which have historically served as models for constitutional structures in many jurisdictions. Time will also be devoted to New Zealand's distinctive constitutional arrangements and constitutions from other parts of the Commonwealth. The course will have an emphasis on constitutional theory. A strong grounding in theory from key the secondary literature is critical to understanding constitutionalism in context. In adopting this comparative approach, students will also be expected to develop a sophisticated sense of how to read relevant primary materials, such as constitutions and key political documents, and an understanding of constitutional decision-making by courts and other actors.
LAWENVIR 719 ST: Environmental Law of the Pacific Rim Offered in: Semester Two Course Type: Part-Semester Points: 30	<i>TBC</i>
LAWENVIR 720 ST: Climate Change Litigation Offered in: Semester Two Course Type: Intensive Points: 30	Climate change litigation has expanded exponentially over the past decade, with over 3,000 cases addressing climate law, policy, and science. Litigation before national and international courts has become a vital part of the legal response to the multifaceted threats of the climate emergency. This course enables students to understand and critically assess the role of litigation in addressing climate change.
LAWENVIR 723 Climate Change Law Offered in: Semester One Course Type: Intensive Points: 30	Addressing climate change and its adverse impacts requires unprecedented transformative changes in terms of scale and scope of all sectors and systems (IPCC 2021). The law, both in an international and a national context, is a core governance tool to bring about such necessary changes. This course will provide an overview of the best-available climate science as assessed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and will analyse the legal responses in place for their adequateness, effectiveness and fairness in light of this science.

LAWENVIR 741 ST: Sustainability and Natural Resources Law Offered in: Semester Two Course Type: Part-Semester Points: 15	This course examines the normative concept of sustainability in the international context, and its application through law and policy in the use and development of natural resources in New Zealand. Specific attention will be given to minerals, hydrocarbons and other energy resources, and selected natural resources including water, fisheries and forestry. The course includes a comparative element with selected examples of approaches to the development of natural resources in Canada and Australia. The course will be of interest to those who may intend to work in legal practice, in government service, in public interest organizations, or in the private sector including mining and energy development.
COMLAW 740A/B Tax Base Offered in: Semester One Course Type: Double Semester, Intensive Courses Points: 30	An advanced study of the breadth of the New Zealand income tax base, including the different concepts of income, its timing and recognition. Comparisons between the nature of capital and income, and the differing treatment of each, provides a deeper understanding of the policy behind the New Zealand income tax regime. Provides a theoretical background and detailed technical knowledge of the scope and application of the most significant regimes for income, deduction and timing in the Income Tax Act 2007.
LAWCOMM 767 ST: Transfer Pricing Offered in: Semester Two Course Type: Intensive Points: 15	This course offers an advanced study of aspects of International Transfer Pricing. The course offers students a thorough analysis as to the workings of the Arm's Length Principal ("ALP"), as set by the OECD in its Transfer Pricing Guidelines (2017). The course will outline how multinationals set their cross border related party transfer prices for goods, services, interest, management fees and royalties. Accordingly, students will be provided a solid grounding in the foundations of transfer pricing method selection and application, as well as the governmental documentation requirements. New Zealand's specific domestic law transfer pricing provisions, transfer pricing guidelines and relevant Tax Treaty Articles will also be covered in this regard.
LAWCOMM 775A/B International Taxation Offered in: Semester One Course Type: Double Semester, Intensive Courses Restriction: LAWHONS 748 Points: 30	An advanced study of New Zealand's international tax regime. The course covers the test of residence for individuals and corporates, and the wider tax base for off-shore income of New Zealand residents. It also covers the taxation of income derived by overseas residents from New Zealand activities and the application of the Double Tax Conventions to various sources of income and transactions. The course also addresses the selecting of country of residence in the form of treaty shopping, anti-avoidance measures directed at transaction activity and the use of tax havens. This course is co-badged with LAWHONS 748.
LAWCOMM 770 ST: Asia Pacific Tax Offered in: Semester Two Course Type: Intensive Points: 15	This course offers an advanced study of certain aspects of Asia Pacific Taxation. Specifically, this course will provide a solid grounding in how Multi-national Enterprises (MNEs) structure business models from an operational and tax perspective in Asia (covering relevant core Asia wide business and tax topics, while providing the practical experience to apply the knowledge to real-life cases).
LAWCOMM 780: Corporation and Investor Tax Offered in: Semester One Course Type: Intensive Points: 15	This is an advanced course studying New Zealand's international tax regime. The objectives of the course are to provide students with both a theoretical background and high level of technical knowledge of the scope and application of the most significant aspects of inbound and outbound investment under the Income Tax Act 2007 and the Double Tax Agreements. Where appropriate, a comparison is made with the international regimes of our major trading partners, in order to provide a deeper understanding of the policy behind New Zealand's international tax regime.

LAWCOMM 788 ST: Current Issues in Tax Offered in: Semester One Course Type: Intensive Points: 15	This course offers an advanced study of aspects of current international and domestic tax issues and policy development. It seeks to provide students with a solid understanding of recent trends in international and domestic tax policy development. This includes a move to tax base broadening by governments, including the introduction of new types of taxes, including digital taxes, environmental taxes and capital gains taxes.
LAWCOMM 772 Intellectual Property and Practice Offered in: Semester One Course Type: Part-Semester Points: 15	This course is designed for those with little or no background knowledge in intellectual property law. The course aims to provide a general outline of intellectual property law in the context of New Zealand and Australian legal systems. The course is intended to provide an introduction to the main intellectual property laws encountered in practice and to provide a foundation for further specialised study into particular areas of intellectual property law. This course is accredited to meet Topic Groups A1, A2 and B from the curriculum of studies set by the Trans-Tasman IP Attorneys Board for those seeking registration as a patent attorney.
LAWCOMM 782 Trade Mark Practice Offered in: Semester Two Course Type: Intensive Pre/co-requisite: LAWCOMM 796 Points: 15	This course is about the practice and process of filing and registering trade mark applications under the Trade Marks Act 1995 (Cth) and Trade Marks Act 2002 (NZ) and relevant trade mark regulations. It addresses the processes involved with oppositions, revocation and invalidation proceedings. The course also addresses practical aspects involved with the maintenance and exploitation of registered trade marks and a trade mark portfolio, including some of the professional obligations of trade mark attorneys. As well as these practical aspects of trade mark practice in Australia and New Zealand, the course will cover some key aspects of international trade mark law and overseas trade mark regimes. This course is accredited to meet Topic Group D from the curriculum of studies set by the Trans-Tasman IP Attorneys Board for those seeking registration as a patent attorney.
LAWCOMM 785 Patent Practice Offered in: Semester Two Course Type: Intensive Pre/co-requisite: LAWCOMM 793 Points: 15	This course is about the practice and process of filing, prosecuting, and maintaining patent applications in New Zealand and Australia. It addresses the processes involved in oppositions and revocations, and covers issues involved with the exploitation of patent rights. The course also covers the law and practice related to patent protection overseas and significant patentability issues in key overseas jurisdictions. Part of the course also examines alternative protection regimes in New Zealand and Australia, including plant variety rights/plant breeder's rights legislation. It is recommended that this course is taken alongside LAWCOMM 793 – Patent Law. This course is accredited to meet Topic Group F from the curriculum of studies set by the Trans-Tasman IP Attorneys Board for those seeking registration as a patent attorney.

LAWCOMM 793 Patent Law Offered in: Semester One Course Type: Part-Semester Pre/co-requisite: LAWCOMM 772 Restriction: LAWCOMM 462 Points: 15	This course is about Australian and New Zealand law relating to the protection of innovative ideas and inventions. The primary focus is therefore on the statutory rules and case law that relate to the Patents Act 1990 (Cth) and the Patents Act 2013 (NZ). The course addresses the creation, exploitation, enforcement and loss of patent rights under such legislation. However, before addressing patent legislation, the course deals with the protection of innovative ideas and inventions by the common law breach of confidence action. This course is co-badged with LAWCOMM 462. This course is accredited to meet Topic Group E from the curriculum of studies set by the Trans-Tasman IP Attorneys Board for those seeking registration as a patent attorney.
LAWCOMM 795 Copyright and Design Offered in: Semester Two Course Type: Part-Semester Pre/co-requisite: LAWCOMM 772 Restrictions: LAWCOMM 433 Points: 15	This course is about how Australia and New Zealand law can be utilised to protect product design. It examines the law of copyright, which in New Zealand is the primary mechanism that can be, and is, used to protect the design of products. The course also addresses the requirements and process for obtaining registered design protection in Australia and New Zealand, interrogates the nature and scope of such protection, and examines how both jurisdictions seek to deal with overlaps between copyright and design protection. This course is co-badged with LAWCOMM 433. This course is accredited to meet Topic Group I from the curriculum of studies set by the Trans-Tasman IP Attorneys Board for those seeking registration as a patent attorney.
LAWCOMM 796 Trade Marks and Related Rights Offered in: Semester One Course Type: Intensive Pre/co-requisite: LAWCOMM 772 Restriction: LAWCOMM 463 Points: 15	This course provides a detailed examination of the Australian and New Zealand laws that govern the protection of commercial symbols and indicia. A significant part of the course is devoted to the protection of registered trade marks under the Australian Trade Marks Act 1995 and New Zealand's Trade Marks Act 2002. The course also covers various other methods of protecting unregistered or unregistrable trade marks or commercial symbols and indicia, including the law of passing off, consumer protection legislation, special events legislation, domain name protection and the protection of geographical indications. This course is co-badged with LAWCOMM 463. This course is accredited to meet Topic Group C from the curriculum of studies set by the Trans-Tasman IP Attorneys Board for those seeking registration as a patent attorney.