

PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE IN LAW

Start date:

May 2020

Delivery method:

Blended learning

Duration:

3.5 years

Fee: €5,000 per year

Aims

The Professional Doctorate in Law is offered in partnership with the Northumbria Law School and is specifically designed for qualified solicitors. It is a part-time programme structured to facilitate those in full-time employment. The programme is designed to provide a structured and supportive learning experience that will enhance a solicitor's theoretical understanding of their profession and will assist in the development of practice through critical insight and evaluation, building on academic and research skills acquired via formal subject delivery, and the doctoral research subsequently conducted. The research may be doctrinal, perhaps in a practice-based area such as criminal justice and evidence, or the law in action in areas such as human rights, or data collection and privacy, or legal education. Those that complete the Professional Doctorate in Law will have made a significant and original contribution to the creation and interpretation of a body of knowledge and who is at the forefront of practice development.

The programme aims to enable candidates to:

- Acquire a range of research skills and to be able to apply these to the conceptualisation, design, and implementation of a project, adjusting design in the light of unforeseen problems,
- Be able to translate ideas into a form understandable by and meaningful to their profession,
- Produce a thesis or portfolio of original quality in the professional area,
- Disseminate/publish that research and its outcomes to the professional audience.

The taught element of the programme is assessed by the proposal assignment, and the research element is assessed by submission of the final thesis or portfolio, culminating in a *viva voce* examination with two independent examiners.

During the programme, candidates will develop their research skills and critical abilities as autonomous practitioners in the legal profession. The programme has been designed to provide a means of progression from an established academic knowledge base of a master's qualification in law and/or an equivalent qualification with professional work experience in legal practice. The programme contains a number of methods by which the candidate may enhance their personal development and career progression. This will also impact on the profession as a whole. These methods include research appreciation, giving an opportunity to develop research as a craft; team working; project management; leadership; the ability to use and enable others to use R&D to advance practice; collaborative learning in a multi-professional context.

Who should attend

The programme is only open to Irish qualified lawyers and is designed for two kinds of candidate: firstly, those with a professional experience and a Master's degree within the last five years; and secondly, those with professional experience but without a Master's degree. All candidates will undergo assessment for advanced standing entry onto the programme, that will formally capture their attainment of the required Level 9 of the Irish National Framework of Qualification. Evidence for this will be provided both by their application and subsequent interview.

Taught element

The candidate will be required to successfully complete the Advanced Research Methods Module (30 credits), which takes place during the first six months of the programme. This module builds on candidates' previous research skills and knowledge of research techniques to further enhance understanding of methodologies, methods, and advanced techniques that are central to developing a coherent and well-argued research proposal.

During the taught element of the programme, students will also be required to develop and submit a research proposal. The research proposal will constitute not only the module assignment, but also bridges from the taught component to the research component of the programme.

Research phase

The programme of independent research begins once the proposal assignment has been accepted. The candidate and their supervisory team meet regularly (a minimum of monthly with the principal supervisor) and record their progress through the e-vision online recordkeeping system. Each year, the panel reconvenes to assess written evidence of the candidate's work (for example, a literature review chapter or an analysis of data) and to reconsider the shape of the research project as a whole, so that the candidate remains on track for a timely completion. Recommendations can be made at these progression points for additional training and support for the candidate or changes and additions to the supervisory team. It is recognised that the doctoral process is a complex and emergent one, and the programme aims to provide flexibility and support throughout.

The final artifact of the Professional Doctorate in Law can be either a thesis document, normally of a doctoral format familiar in the social sciences, or a portfolio submission. The assessment criteria are the same for both routes: the candidate must demonstrate critical engagement with the field and show a contribution to knowledge and practice.

How to apply

We welcome applications to this course. Please visit www.lawsociety.ie/diplomacentre or, for further information, please contact Rory O'Boyle at r.oboyle@lawsociety.ie.