



SAKSFRAMLEGG

Til:
Studieutvalget ved Det juridiske fakultet

Møtedato:
24.05.2024

Sak:

Revision of the LL.M Law of the Sea at the Faculty of Law - applicable from the academic year of 2025-2026

Innstilling til vedtak:

1. The Academic Affairs Committee recommends that the Faculty board approves the proposed changes to the LL.M programme Law of the Sea and course plans presented in this case.

Background:

According to the Regulations for the Academic Affairs, sections 2.1 to 2.3, it is the Faculty Board that formally can establish proposed new courses and/or changes to the faculty's existing master programmes. The Academic Affairs Committee (hereinafter SU), as the program board for the faculty's master's programmes, has an advisory role in such matters and is therefore requested to provide its recommendation in this case. The recommendation will be put forward in a case presentation to the Faculty Board June 10th 2024.

External evaluation and report

An external evaluation of the LL.M programme in the Law of the Sea (hereinafter the LL.M programme) was conducted between September 2022 and February 2023. Based on a given mandate, written background material, campus visits and interviews, the external Evaluation Committee assessed the LL.M programme's level and content, as well as the programme's relevance to society and working life.

In briefing case SU 13/23¹, the SU was provided a short presentation of the overall findings from the periodic evaluation of the LL.M programme. In accordance with its mandate, the Evaluation Committee presented a number of recommendations, of both a short-term and long-term nature, and provided the following proposals for short-term improvement measures:

- Specify scope requirements regarding specialisation in international law and international politics as a basis for admission to the programme.
- Make some syllabus updates.

¹ <https://uit.no/moteportalen/um/mote?id=3412>

- Consider changing the name of the two introductory courses in the subject (*JUR-3050 General Law of the Sea* and *General Law of the Sea II*).
- Assess whether more can be done in relation to variation and balance in the programme of study's teaching and assessment methods, such as the inclusion of more working life-oriented learning activities.
- Assess the form of examination for the programme's courses, including whether more courses should have a home examination followed by an oral defence.

The Evaluation Committee had the following proposals for more long-term improvement measures:

- Assess the relationship and overlap between the two introductory courses in the subject (*JUR-3050 General Law of the Sea* and *General Law of the Sea II*).
- Consider the inclusion of certain other general topics in the first semester of the programme, for example a more systematic focus on the role of international institutions in the law of the sea, the role of non-state entities in the law of the sea, and the implications of the law of the sea gaining closer and closer ties with other areas of international law (the relationship between the law of the sea and human rights, international trade law, international refugee law, etc.).
- Assess whether the topics included in JUR-3052 (*Protection of the Marine Environment by International Law*) can have more space in the programme of study.
- Maintain focus on key law of the sea issues in the Arctic, but provide for greater focus on other ocean regions in the programme of study.
- Give students the choice of writing a master's thesis of 30 or 60 ECTS.

Changes suggested by the internal UiT Working Group

Following SU's recommendations in SU case 33/23², the Dean appointed a working group³ with a mandate of investigating how the input from the Evaluation Committee should be followed up. SU underlined in its recommendation that: "The working group is requested to undertake a comprehensive review of the LL.M programme, with the aim of investigating and operationalizing changes in the programme's academic profile and composition."

The working group's report from their investigation and recommendations to SU were presented in [SU case 3/24](#). The group addressed the majority of recommendations outlined in the external periodical evaluation report, noting that some of the recommendations included in that report should rather be addressed by the LL.M Director and teachers when undertaking the normal semester revision of the syllabi, devising new course materials, selecting relevant examples to use in class, etc. This is because not all recommendations require formal changes in the LL.M programme's description or in the individual course descriptions and learning outcomes. Moreover, some of the recommendations have already been addressed (for example, the syllabi for all the LL.M programme's courses have been updated during 2023).

The working group focused on the following main issues, offering specific suggestions for changes to be implemented for the 2025-2026 academic year and onward:

a) *Admission requirements*

² <https://uit.no/moteportalen/um/mote?id=3414>

³ The working group comprised the following members: Associate Professors Maria Madalena das Neves, Youri van Logchem, Eva van der Marel, and Senior Adviser Jørgen Ytreberg.

- Clarifying the admission requirements by defining the 80 ECTS specialization needed to qualify for the programme.
 - Forego the two-page motivation essay as part of the admission requirements.
- b) *Creation of a new course replacing JUR-3054 General Law of the Sea II*
- JUR-3055 Uses of the Oceans. Here the work group addressed both the suggestions of the external evaluation committee and the need to align the course description and learning outcomes with the other courses to achieve better overall coherence of the programme.
- c) *Changes to course descriptions and learning outcomes*
- Implementing recommendations of the external evaluation committee, in particular regarding the inclusion of certain other general topics in the first semester of the programme.
 - Aligning the course descriptions and learning outcomes in all the four main courses offered in the LL.M programme.
- d) *Changes to evaluation formats*
- Change of exam format in JUR-3054 from a 6-hour written school exam to a home assignment over the course of 7 days without taking an oral exam.
 - Transforming the moot court held in JUR-3054 into a mandatory assignment.
- e) *Changes to the LL.M programme description*
- Updating the text according to the suggested changes and improving the existing text of the study plan.
- f) *Possibility of offering both a small (30 ECTS) and a large (60 ECTS) master's thesis*
- The working group considers that it would be positive to allow students to choose between writing a small or a large master thesis – describing three ways of achieving this possibility. However, the group recommends that the faculty makes a cost-benefit analysis before deciding if offering both a small and a large master's thesis within the programme is feasible and appropriate.

The working group's suggestions for changes to study plan and course plans have been assessed by the LL.M. programme coordinator in cooperation with the vice dean for education and the faculty's study administration. The suggested changes will be commented on in the following, with the final proposal of changes for the SU to consider.

Proposed changes to the study plan and course plans

In accordance with Regulations for Programme Coordinator for LL.M in Law of the Sea (section 2.3)⁴, the programme coordinator Youri van Logchem has taken both the evaluation committee's and the working group's recommendations into consideration. He has further presented and discussed the suggested changes with the faculty leadership to give direction in the more strategic issues. Upon this basis he has completed the revision of the attached study plan and course plans (annex 1-5), focusing on the following main areas of the programme's development:

One of the main backgrounds to the suggested changes is that, in a broad sense, there is a need for updating and further improving the documentation related to the LL.M in the Law of the Sea.

a) Admission requirements

⁴ <https://en.uit.no/regelverk#v-pills-664824>

The working group has recommended introducing a requirement of 15 ECTS previous legal studies for admittance to the LL.M programme, in addition to forgoing the requirement of a motivational letter. This suggestion has been discussed in the faculty leadership, and the Vice Dean of Education has recommended not to introduce a requirement of 15-ECTS of legal studies at the time being, for several reasons. The programme is currently recruiting less students than in previous years, amongst other things, due to the new requirement of tuition fees for international students from outside the EU. The faculty leadership supports the suggestion of no longer requiring a motivational letter. The admission requirements have however been slightly adjusted by specifying bachelor degrees qualifying for admission, and admission requirements in the course JUR-3050 as a single course have been adjusted accordingly.

b) *Creation of a new course replacing JUR-3054 General Law of the Sea II*

One of the major suggested changes to the curriculum is in relation to JUR-3054. There is a need for overhauling JUR-3054 to avoid overlaps with JUR-3050 and to be able to include newer and more relevant topics in the curriculum. Therefore, a new course is suggested to replace JUR-3054 in its current form. This new course - JUR-3055 Uses of the Oceans – explicitly addresses a suggestion of the external evaluation committee of including a “more systematic focus on the role of international institutions in the law of the sea, the role of non-state entities in the law of the sea, and the implications of the law of the sea gaining closer and closer ties with other areas of international law”.

c) *Changes to course descriptions and learning outcomes*

As regards the suggested changes for the different courses, these are in line with the conclusions of the working group, of which the current academic director of the LL.M in Law of the Sea was a member. The gist of the report is that some suggestions have been made to change and improve the contents of the LL.M programme. Compared to JUR-3054, the other three courses (i.e., JUR-3050, JUR-3052, and JUR-3053) on the LL.M programme require some changes, but the extent thereof is more limited. This is because the focus of JUR-3050, JUR-3052, and JUR-3053 has largely remained the same. That being said, on points, the course description and learning outcomes of all three courses were slightly changed. The suggested changes to this course are the outcome of the discussions held within the working group. Three backgrounds for making these changes to the content and learning outcomes of these courses exist. First, to improve the quality of the course descriptions and learning outcomes. Second, to ensure and enhance the overall coherence of the LL.M programme in the Law of the Sea. Three, to ensure that there is coherency between the course descriptions and learning outcomes in all four main courses offered in the LL.M programme in the Law of the Sea.

d) *Changes to evaluation formats*

When JUR-3054 is replaced with the course JUR-3055, some of the key features known from the JUR-3054 are continued in the new course, such as the moot court exercise. The moot court held in JUR-3054 should be transformed into a mandatory assignment, especially against the background of that students are expected to invest significant amounts of time on this. The students have to pass the assignment at least two weeks before the exam⁵.

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Regulations for studies and examinations at the University of Tromsø – The Arctic University of Norway, § 17 (2): <https://lovdata.no/dokument/SFE/forskrift/2020-06-26-1617>

Another recommendation from the periodical review was to introduce more variation in the exams, for example a home examination accompanied by an oral exam. The internal Working Group in their report, suggested having a home assignment over the course of 7 days without taking an oral exam. Further discussion conducted by the Vice Dean of Education and the faculty administration has revealed that this is neither practically possible nor advisable. First and foremost, it is not recommended to introduce a new exam, consisting of only a home exam, without a subsequent oral exam, in light of rapidly increasing access to generative AI. A better option would then be to introduce a home exam with a subsequent oral exam. However, this would impact significantly on the schedule of the fall semester. It is impossible to arrange a mandatory work requirement, a home exam and an oral exam in the short fall semester.

e) *Changes to the LL.M programme description*

Updating the text and contents of Annex II of the LL.M Programme: the changes that have been suggested to this document are partly cosmetic in nature, to further improve the text and contents of Annex II, and to make sure that the descriptions contained in this document are consistent with others.

Need for changing the description of the LL.M in Law of the Sea on the website: There is a need for changing the description of the LL.M in Law of the Sea on the website, which is more outdated, can be improved upon, and not fully in tune with what is currently being taught on the LL.M programme.

- f) The programme coordinator Youri van Logchem has requested the faculty leadership for a decision concerning the potential of offering both a small (30 ECTS) and a large (60 ECTS) master's thesis. Although the leadership finds the idea interesting, it does not want to pursue this further for the time being. It is considered that this would probably only be interesting for a small number of the programme students, and that the costs therefore would by far outweigh the benefits of implementing such changes.

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Dokumentet er elektronisk godkjent og krever ikke signatur

Vedlegg

- 1 Annex II_LLM Programme Description - study plan 2025
- 2 JUR-3050 Changes in course description
- 3 JUR-3050 Track changes
- 4 JUR-3052 Changes in course description
- 5 JUR-3052 Track changes
- 6 JUR-3053 Changes in course description
- 7 JUR-3053 Track changes
- 8 NEW course JUR-3055 Uses of the Oceans replacing JUR-3054 General Law of the Sea II
- 9 JUR-3055 Uses of the Oceans Course description