

# **YORK UNIVERSITY**

## **FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **CYCLICAL PROGRAM REVIEW**

**Osgoode Hall, Juris Doctor (JD), 2014-2022**

**Osgoode Professional LLM, 2014-2022**

**Osgoode Research LLM, PhD, 2015-2022**

This Final Assessment Report (FAR) provides a synthesis of the cyclical review of the programs listed below.

**Program(s) Reviewed:**

JD

Professional LLM

Research Stream LLM & PhD

**Reviewers appointed by the Vice-Provost Academic:**

Dr. Daniel Rodriguez, Harold Washington Professor of Law, Northwestern University School of Law, Chicago, Illinois, USA

Dr. Mary Anne Bobinski, Dean and Asa Griggs Candler Professor of Law, Emory University School of Law, Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Dr. Anita Lam, Associate Dean, Teaching and Learning, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies, York University, Toronto, Ontario

**Cyclical Program Review Key Milestones:**

Cyclical Program Review launch: September 15, 2021

Self-studies submitted to Vice-Provost Academic: December 2022

Site Visit: March 8-9, 2023

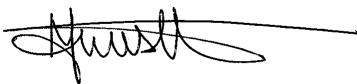
Review Report received: June 19, 2023

Program Response received: August 30, 2023

Dean's Response received: August 30, 2023

Implementation Plan and FAR confirmed by Joint Sub-Committee on Quality Assurance, February, 2024.

Submitted by Marcia Annisette, Vice-Provost Academic, York University



This review was conducted under the York University Quality Assurance Protocol, August 2020.

## **SITE VISIT: March 8-9, 2023**

One virtual site visit was organized for the review of all programs offered by the Osgoode Hall Law School. The first meeting was with Lyndon Martin, Vice-Provost Academic and Thomas Loebel, Dean and Associate Vice-President Graduate Studies, followed by meetings with the Dean, Mary Condon, Associate Dean Craig Martin Scott, Associate Dean Karen Drake, Trevor Farrow, Associate Dean Research and Institutional Relations as well as Janet Mosher, Chair of the Academic Policy and Planning Committee (APPC) and Yemisi Dina, the Chief Law Librarian.

Staff supporting the JD program met with the reviewers, including, Mya Rimon, Assistant Dean Students, Marcos Ramos Junior, Manager, Admissions and Student Financial Services, Lori Mishibinijima, Program Manager and Special Advisor, Brue Ryder, Chair Clinical Education, Lisa Del Col, Director, Experiential Education and Career Development, and all Clinical Program Directors.

Interviews with the Research Graduate Program administrators included: Susan Drummond, Research Graduate Program Director, Graham Sue, Manager, Research and Graduate Studies, and Prina Wong, Graduate Program Assistant.

Focusing on the Professional Graduate Program, the reviewers met with Victoria Watkins, Assistant Dean and Executive Director, Meghan Thomas, Director, Professional Graduate and International Programs, Audrey Fried, Director, Faculty and Curriculum Development and Jinyan Li, Professor.

The reviewers met with groups of students from the JD program, full-time and part-time students from the Professional Graduate program, and students in the Graduate Research program. The reviewers met with faculty members involved in all three programs and were invited to attend portions of the faculty hybrid symposium, "The Legal Implications of the Metaverse."

### **OUTCOME:**

The Joint Sub-Committee on Quality Assurance received the program and decanal responses to the recommendations and has approved an implementation plan.

A report on the progress of the initiatives undertaken in response to recommendations in general and as specified in the implementation plan will be provided in the Follow-up Report which will be due 18 months (August 2025) after the review of this report by the York University Joint Sub-Committee on Quality Assurance.

The next Cyclical Program Review will begin in the Fall of 2029 with a site visit expected in the Fall of 2030 or Winter of 2031.

### **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND STRENGTHS**

The external review report begins: "York University's Osgoode Hall Law School has long been one of Canada's leading law schools as measured by its size, the reputation of its faculty, the qualifications of its students, and the diversity and scope of its academic

programs...Thousands of Osgoode Hall graduates now serve their clients and society as members of the legal profession, judges, and government officials in Ontario, across Canada, and beyond.” The reviewers further note that the Osgoode Professional Development program has been and remains the leading program of its type in Canada. Graduates of the research-focussed LLM and PhD graduate programs serve in academia and other research-related roles in government, non-profits or other settings. The reviewers state they were “impressed by the school’s commitment to its values and the degree to which the community is actively engaged in strategic planning as it carries out those values in an ever-changing environment.”

The Juris Doctor (JD) degree program is the School’s largest and generally enables graduates to practice law. In 1996, Osgoode established the division of Osgoode Professional Development (OPD) to satisfy the demand for specialized legal education for the profession and now encompasses 16 different specializations. Graduate Legal Studies was initiated in the early 1960s and contributes to a lively research community at the law school. The reviewers note that the Osgoode Hall Law School programs are robust and comprehensive.

The reviewers note that the “highly professional, effectively organized, and well-run admissions process” ensure a consistently high-quality cohort of students in all programs. It was also noted that the law school has excellent facilities, including the remodeled Ignat Kaneff Building housing the JD and full-time graduate programs. The OPD is located downtown in Toronto and the facilities have recently been refreshed. The reviewers note, “The Osgoode Law Library is another great resource, with a notably large collection and creative and service-minded staff who are appreciated by both students and faculty.”

The faculty complement includes noted scholars and teachers who, as described in the review report, “have shaped the development of the law in many fields and who offer penetrating insights about promise and problems of law in our rapidly changing society”. The noted the commitment to experiential learning and public service. However, the reviewers expressed concerns over the budget model which may impact the goals and objectives of the school. The reviewers further noted that many faculty members described feeling overwhelmed and overworked, torn between the expectations of service, the production of high-level scholarship and effective teaching. “Faculty recruitment and retention will be key drivers of success moving forward,” states the report. The report also suggests that the School needs to make progress on healing rifts resulting from disagreements among colleagues.

Regarding the JD program the reviewers note that a comprehensive Ad Hoc Sub-Committee report identified issues that merit a considered response, including the heavy workload in first year, the need to ensure racism is addressed within the classroom and curriculum, and the importance of international, comparative, and transnational objectives of the curriculum. The reviewers note that the attrition level in the JD program is low, and the graduate rate is nearly 100%, demonstrating the clear alignment between admissions, recruitment and support during time in school. However, as with other schools, students are concerned with the significant level of debt they incur as a result of the tuition and fees. It is conceivable that there will be changes to the bar in Ontario, including how articling is organized, and Osgoode must be prepared to make adaptations to any modifications. However, the reviewers commended “the ways in which the faculty is attentive and

deliberative about ensuring that its curriculum undergoes continuing review and replenishment, and that it is congruent with contemporary developments (AI and other technology matters, for example) in the practice of law and in the interface among law, business, and social justice”.

The Research LLM and PhD programs have organized five “Study Groups” for students, designed to provide a deep exposure to key legal frameworks or theoretical perspectives: Law in a Global Context, Regulation and Governance, Law and Economic Relations, Law and Social Justice, and Theoretical Perspectives in Legal Research”, which offer a number of positive attributes. In addition to being efficient, the groups provide a community-building opportunity. However, students provided mixed reviews. The reviewers commended the School’s plan to revise certain aspects of this initiative in the 2022-2023 academic year. Additionally, reviewers were concerned with the low levels of financial support for students in the PhD program, particularly in light of the high cost of living in Toronto, and the impact this has on the timely completion of the PhD program.

The Professional LLM program offers sixteen course-based specializations, each of which has specific program learning outcomes. Offered in a variety of formats to facilitate access for a range of students, the majority of the programs are completed on a part-time basis while three can be taken as full-time or part-time. Faculty members are very well known in their fields and are drawn from Osgoode or other leading law schools in North America. OPD program leaders are urged, however, to ensure that grading and evaluation of students should be completed in a timely manner. The reviewers were impressed with how attentive program leaders were to the rapidly changing technological and economic changes that have roiled the legal profession.

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The chart below lays out the implementation plan approved by the Joint Sub-Committee at its meeting in February 7, 2024

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible for Follow-up</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
A.	That Osgoode consider additional comments and informal suggestions included in the body of the report.	Osgoode to carefully review and consider additional comments and informal suggestions embedded in the review report and provide an update on any related actions at the time of the 18-Month Follow-Up Report.	Dean	Ongoing
<b>JD program</b>				
1.	That the law school continue discussions how to adapt the curriculum to contemporary circumstances and challenges.	Osgoode to continue ongoing curriculum discussions.	Associate Dean Academic and relevant committees	2023-2024 academic year
1 a)	That the heavy first-year workload for the JD be addressed.	The school will continue with reforms from the sub-committee on L1 Curriculum Changes.	Associate Dean Academic and relevant committees	2023-2024 academic year
1 b)	That the law school consider additional streams within the JD program	The JD program provides opportunities for specialization through its many clinical programs. In addition, students may construct their own specialization by choosing from the many elective	n/a	n/a

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible for Follow-up</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
		courses available to them. No further action to be undertaken at this time.		
1 c)	<p>That a greater use of technology in course content and course delivery be considered.,</p> <p>The faculty is encouraged to consider the integrated curriculum option as part of its curriculum reform exercise.</p>	<p>The JD program has approved several courses under the umbrella of Law and Technology and the Working Group on Artificial Intelligence and Law will continue its deliberations. In addition, the development of the Flex JD will make use of technology in in course delivery.</p> <p>The Integrated Practice Curriculum is being explored by the Professional LLM Common Law program. In addition, several other courses are being approved for the JD program with the aim of bridging the practice gap.</p>	<p>Dean</p> <p>Associate Dean, Academic</p>	Work to continue through 2023-2024 and 2024-2025.
2.	That more faculty be hired, with some attention given to clinical faculty given need to ensure that all graduating students have exposure to a clinical course.	Continue with hiring of three approved positions, with continued consideration given to the availability of clinical courses and other experiential education	<p>Dean</p> <p>Faculty Recruitment Committee</p>	New hires to take up positions by July 1, 2024.

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible for Follow-up</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
		opportunities for all students.		
3.	That Osgoode continue exploration of distance learning options as permitted by the Federation of Law Societies.	Osgoode to continue development of the Flex JD.	Dean Relevant committees	Flex JD complete by June 2025.
4.	That there be continued monitoring of debt levels and the development of approaches to bolster student financial assistance.	The Tuition Fee Working Group to continue its work. Fundraising for financial aid to continue to be prioritized.	Dean	Ongoing
<b>Graduate Programs</b>				
5.	That the School consider reducing enrolment in the PhD program.	The Research Graduate Committee to consider proposals for changes in the 2023-2024 year, including enrolment in the PhD program.	Graduate Program Director Research Stream Graduate Committee.	2023-2024 academic year
6.	That the School continue with plans to revise the Study Group requirement for PhD students.	Continue with plans for reduction of Study Group requirements and teaching assignments. No further action required at this time.	n/a	n/a
7.	That Osgoode consider establishing a separate master's program for students without a first degree in law.	Consideration of an alternate degree type will be folded into the overall review scheduled for the 2023-2024 academic year by the	Graduate Program Director Osgoode Professional Development Director, International and	2023-2024 academic year



	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible for Follow-up</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
		Research Stream Graduate Program.	Professional Graduate programs.	
8.	That Osgoode diversify and enhance sources of revenue.	That Osgoode continue with its plans for diversifying its revenue stream including examining sources of funding for international PhD students.	Dean  Graduate Program Director  Director of External Relations and Communications	Discussions through the 2023-24 and 2024-25 academic years.