

FAQs – School of Legal Practice

Updated - December 2019

What has been decided?

After a comprehensive international and independent review in 2018, and extensive consultation in 2019, The Australian National University has taken the decision to cease offering programs through the School of Legal Practice (SLP) within the ANU College of Law and to close the School.

This decision, made by the University's Senior Management Group, will see the cessation of teaching in the Graduate Diploma of Legal Practice (GDLP) and the Master of Legal Practice (MLP) – two vocational practical legal training programs offered by SLP. The University has committed to teaching out these programs.

Following the completion of the teach-out period in December 2021 and the cessation of these programs, the academic positions within the School will not continue and the School will close.

Why has ANU decided to cease teaching programs and close the School of Legal Practice?

This is a decision, based on a comprehensive, international, independent review and broad consultation.

The Australian National University has offered a practical legal training program required for admission to legal practice through the School of Legal Practice since 1971. It was one of the first institutions in Australia to offer this kind of vocationally oriented legal qualification.

However, over time the market has changed, and there are now a number of other providers providing programs of an equal quality and with a bigger market share. The School of Legal Practice is now in a very competitive, price-sensitive market occupied largely by private sector providers and this situation is unlikely to change. The University is unable to compete with these providers.

In addition, ANU has a strategic priority to deliver research-led teaching in subjects of national importance. In the field of law this includes its internationally recognised programs offered by the Law School in the ANU College of Law. The vocationally oriented programs within the School of Legal Practice do not align with the University's teaching priorities.

The ANU College of Law, through its Law School, has a strong and long-established research culture. It makes a significant contribution to the University's top rating of 5 in Australia's national research evaluation framework, *Excellence in Research for Australia* in the Law and Legal Studies category, placing the ANU among a select group of Australian universities to achieve this.

This focus is not supported by the current programs and structure of the School of Legal Practice.

How many staff are affected by this decision?

The School of Legal Practice currently has 31 staff (30 academic and one professional staff).

Which staff will be affected by the decision to close the School?

The positions affected are those delivering teaching across the current GDLP, MLP, Military Law Program. The closure of SLP will result in the reduction of 27 (25.15 FTE) continuing academic staff positions.

What happens to staff following the decision to close the School of Legal Practice?

The University has developed a teach-out program in consultation with the School to enable students to complete their current programs.

A range of one and two year fixed-term academic appointments have been made and will support the teach-out the GDLP and MLP programs.

One (1) continuing professional staff position will be directly transferred to the ANU College of Law at the end of the teach-out period.

Three specialist academic positions will be transferred to the Law School.

The University remains committed to and will continue to work with and support the academic staff within the School throughout the teach-out period. This includes identifying the options available to them that best meet their individual circumstances as the School. Support for staff will continue to be provided and available through the University employee assistance program.

Can academic staff from SLP transfer to the ANU College of Law?

To support the delivery of the strategic education and research objectives of the ANU College of Law and the University, the Law School has confirmed the direct transfer of three (3) academic staff members to new positions within the ANU Law School.

These new positions are:

- one full time academic position - Entrepreneurial Fellow, Level C;
- one full-time academic position Associate Professor – Level D with research interests in legal education, legal ethics and the legal profession;
- one full-time position – Associate Professor – Military Law, level D .

What programs does the School of Legal Practice teach?

The School of Legal Practice currently offers four programs:

- The Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice (GDLP): a practical legal training program qualifying law graduates for admission to practise;
- The Master of Legal Practice (MLP): a program enabling students to convert their GDLP into a masters qualification by undertaking an additional four masters-level courses;
- The Military Law program: a program providing three separate levels of qualifications as required by the Australian Military Law Centre (MLC) and Department of Defence (DoD) and delivered under a contract to supply legal education services; and
- The Migration Law program (2006-2017): a masters-level program has closed effective December 2019 .

What happens to the programs which the School of Legal Practice currently teaches?

ANU has committed to teaching out both the GDLP and MLP.

The School of Legal Practice is accepting new enrolments into the GDLP and MLP for 2020 with completion required on or before 31 December 2021.

The Migration Law program is no longer offered and the teach-out period has now concluded. The ANU College of Law will continue to teach the Military Law Program.

How long will the teach-out period take?

The University has established a two year teach out schedule for the GDLP and MLP programs, with all teaching completed by December 2021.

At the end of the teach-out period the SLP programs will cease and the School will close. The current academic positions within the SLP would not continue after this time.

What happens to students enrolled in programs taught by the School of Legal Practice?

The University have made a range of provisions available to current students in the SLP.

Where a current MLP student wishes to transfer to an alternative Master of Laws (LLM) or Graduate Certificate of Law program offered by the ANU College of Law, the necessary arrangements will be put in place by the College to assist the student making an application to transfer. Students wishing to transfer will still need to meet minimum LLM program admission requirements.

Where a current GDLP or MLP student wishes to transfer their studies to an alternate program at another university, the College will support and, as appropriate, assist the student to make the necessary arrangements to facilitate this transfer.

Where a current GDLP or MLP Law student wishes to cease their studies before completing the full program, the College will assist the student to make the necessary arrangements to cease their enrolment.

Each student will be offered personalised advice on options by the College and support with any administrative actions required in order to meet the individual needs and circumstances of each student.

What does the closure of the School of Legal Practice mean for the rest of the ANU College of Law?

The ANU College of Law and the Law School are not affected by this decision.

The College is ranked 15th in the world and is Australia's national law school.

Through its Law School, the ANU College of Law will continue to provide the highest-quality, research-led law teaching across a range of internationally-recognised programs, including its Juris Doctor, Bachelor of Laws, Graduate Certificate of Laws, Master of Laws and higher degree by research.

I'm a current student of the School of Legal Practice. Should I be worried about the quality of teaching?

No.

The University is committed to teaching out both the GDLP and MLP programs and all programs will continue to be taught to the same high standards the School has always maintained.

ANU will ensure sufficient teaching staff, resources and support is in place until the programs are fully taught out in December 2021.

I'm a graduate of the School of Legal Practice. Should I be worried about the quality of my qualification?

No.

The ANU College of Law has always provided the highest-quality teaching.

SLP has consistently produced high-quality graduates and the University is proud of the quality of graduates which have come through the SLP programs.

My law firm/legal practice employs graduates of the School of Legal Practice. Should we be worried about their qualifications?

No.

The ANU College of Law has always provided the highest-quality teaching.

SLP has consistently produced high-quality graduates and the University is proud of the quality of graduates which have come through the SLP programs.

What was the review of the School of Legal Practice and what did it find?

In 2018 the University commissioned a review of the School of Legal Practice. It was part of the program of five-yearly independent reviews of academic schools and departments introduced by the University to ensure continuous improvement in the quality of our research and teaching, underpinned by efficient and effective services.

The School Review Panel provided a report to the University. The report identified a number of challenges faced by the School and recommended that the University make a decision regarding the future of the School as a matter of urgency.

It identified two options: the first was to continue to offer the GDLP in a redesigned form and with the expectation of research output from academics within the school removed. This, it noted, would require ANU to develop a career track that recognised excellence in ways that did not include research.

The second involved withdrawing from delivery of the GDLP and MLP programs and reorganising the ANU College of Law.

The University carefully considered the Review report and the formal response from SLP. The decision of the University Senior Management Group was to accept option two from the review and withdraw from the delivery of the GDLP and the MLP. This means, following a two-year, teach-out period for the existing programs, the programs will cease and the SLP will no longer be a viable academic organisational unit and the School will close.

Did the School of Legal Practice have an opportunity to respond to the review?

Yes.

A report from the review was provided to SLP staff on 20 February 2019 and a period of consultation commenced to enable the School to formulate a formal response to the Review report and recommendations.

During the four-week consultation period the ANU College of Law supported SLP in arranging two-days of externally facilitated workshops to support and enable discussions by the School and to assist in the formulation of the response.

In advance of the workshops, staff from within SLP were provided the opportunity to meet one-on-one with the external facilitator to assist them with background and preparation for the workshops.

A formal response from the SLP was provided to the University on 20 March 2019 with the preference being option one which would see the continuation of the GDLP and delivery of programs by the School.

Why was option two from the review adopted?

After careful consideration the ANU Senior Management Group decided option two from the review best aligned to the strategic priorities of the University.