

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



Aspiring legal eagles offered a fast track to first-year law

Whether you're a journalist, occupational therapist, school leaver, jewellery-maker, stay-at-home mother or small business owner, if you've dreamed of studying law at university then there's a place for you at the University of Tasmania.

The first semester of the year is about to finish and students are preparing for exams. "This is the most diverse student body we've had to date at the Law School," notes the Dean of the Faculty of Law, Professor Margaret Otlowski. "Not all are looking to practise as lawyers, but all of them acknowledge the benefits that a law degree can provide."

Current students include Gillian Groom, an occupational therapist, who enrolled in a law degree after the fifth of her six children graduated in law, following not only in her children's footsteps but also those of her father and grandfather.

Marie-Paule Leroux, the 2001 Telstra Tasmanian Business Woman of the Year in the Small Business Category, dreamed of studying law as a young student in France but didn't get the opportunity until she found the unique first-year program at the University of Tasmania.

"I came to the law school having only experienced a civil law system and could not have embarked on common law subjects without a broader introduction to the Australian legal system. The first year of the law degree at UTAS was the most important for me – I don't know if I could have developed the skills I needed without it."

Tosimaea Tupua agrees with this sentiment. A Samoan journalist, Tosi came to Tasmania with his wife to study law after working for CCTV in Beijing and the Middle East. "The first year was the most eye-opening and the most significant and helped me get back into university study. I hope to stay and work in Tasmania to help others after I graduate."

Final-year student Hannah Vasicek began law after considering a degree in medicine, but wanted more flexibility from her university studies after finishing school. Hannah now runs a successful small jewellery business and believes her combined science/law degree will be useful in helping her expand this business when she graduates.

For the first time in the law school's history, the first-year unit that introduced these students and more to the study and practice of Australian law will be available intensively from 25 June for a three-week period.

The accelerated program is aimed at those who may not have been ready or able to start their law degree in first semester, but it allows them to catch up and continue their study in second semester.

The Introduction to Law intensive unit is co-ordinated and taught by Kate Cashman, with the assistance of Meg Good from the Faculty of Law and guest lecturers from the legal profession and other professionals who have utilised their law degrees in interesting and significant ways.

"This unit has always introduced students to the study of law and the expectations we have of students in the law degree in later years. The new three-week intensive will do this but in an even more supportive environment – a small class size, workshops with legal professionals, visits to the Magistrate and Supreme Courts and classes taken by a young and dynamic teaching team are on the agenda," Ms Cashman said. "It is not only useful for law students, but any university student looking for an interesting elective."

Professor Otlowski welcomes the new unit and encourages anyone who is interested to join the diverse range of students at the Faculty of Law. "This is the first step in a series of innovations in the law program, designed to ensure our curriculum meets student needs."

The new course covers a diverse range of areas, from 'thinking like a lawyer' to introductions on the Australian legal system and Constitutional Law, legal research, legislation, common law and precedent, judges and juries, human rights and legal problem-solving.

Anyone interested in joining the law school and becoming part of the winter school intensive should contact the Faculty of Law Executive Officer on (03) 62267510 or visit www.utas.edu.au/law/left-quick-links/mid-year-entry.

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