



School of Law Research Strategy

**Director of Research
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Contents

- Introduction..... 3
- Clustering of Research Themes 4
 - Centre for Crime, Justice & Victim Studies (CCJVS)..... 4
 - Identifying Emerging & Niche Areas 4
 - Victim Studies..... 4
 - Penology & Deterrence 4
 - Internationalisation of Crime 4
 - Research Evidence into Policy Programmes and Practice 5
 - International Commercial & Economic Law (ICEL)..... 5
 - Identifying Emerging & Niche Areas 5
 - Law & Technology 5
 - Societal Change Including Business Activities 5
 - Changing Concepts of Property Rights..... 6
- Internationalisation..... 7
- Disciplinary Specific Publication & Dissemination 8
- Impact on the Economy & Society 10
- A Research Community 12
- Monitoring & Evaluation 14
 - Publications..... 14
 - Funded Research..... 14
 - Translational Research..... 14
 - Civic & Professional Engagement 14
 - Internationalisation..... 14
 - Research Student Recruitment 14
 - Dissemination & Profiling 15
 - Personnel..... 15

Introduction

The University of Limerick is proud of the vibrant and progressive research community of faculty and students in the School of Law made up of leading national authorities in such diverse areas as criminology, constitutional law, criminal law, contract, tort, competition, property and land law, penology, sport law (including animals in sport), and victim studies together with hate studies.

The reputation of the Law faculty among our peers is clearly evidenced in a number of key indicators including strategic participation in national and internationally funded research projects worth millions of euros, appointment of faculty to various government agencies and committees, editorial positions with prestigious journals, the hosting of and participation in prestigious international conferences, strong interaction with professional bodies, robust PhD recruitment, and an extensive network of international partners including a significant presence of top-flight visiting scholars from overseas.

Responsibility for research management at the School rests with the Director of Research who is not only responsible for providing strategic direction in research policy but also numerous other supports for faculty and students, including advocacy for legal research within the University.

Professor Raymond J. Friel

Director of Research

School of Law

University of Limerick



Clustering of Research Themes

Along with individual research activities, core to the research strategy of the School of Law are our two primary research Centres: Centre for Crime, Justice and Victim Studies and the International Commercial and Economic Law Group.

Centre for Crime, Justice & Victim Studies (CCJVS)

Building on the highly successful Centre for Criminal Justice, faculty and students are working on various areas with a particular focus on the rights of victims in the criminal justice process and the internationalization of crime.



Identifying Emerging & Niche Areas

The CCJVS has identified the following emerging and niche areas of specialization for future development based on an existing track record of success.

Victim Studies

Traditional criminal justice approaches have previously concentrated on the rights of the accused regarding criminal activities as a matter of exclusive concern between the state and the accused, often overlooking the needs and interests of the victim. Today, the impact of gender-based crimes and domestic violence on victims demands that they play a greater role in the criminal justice process.

Penology & Deterrence

Research on the underlying theories of why people commit crimes and the unsatisfactory nature of an over reliance on prison based sanctions.

Internationalisation of Crime

Today, crime no longer respects national borders and the CCJVS are working on various issues seeking to ensure that governments are not limited in their responses to their national territory

including the European arrest warrant and the investigation and prosecution of transnational crimes within the EU and the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court.

Research Evidence into Policy Programmes and Practice

The Greentown project is part of the Research Evidence into Policy Programmes and Practice project (REPPP) located in the CCJVS which is currently exploring the involvement of children in adult criminal networks.

International Commercial & Economic Law (ICEL)

Broadly put, this research grouping deals with general areas of commercial/private law. Their current focus deals with technological innovation and social change.



Identifying Emerging & Niche Areas

ICEL has identified the following emerging and niche areas of specialization for future development based on an existing track record of success.

Law & Technology

The rapid advance in scientific knowledge is putting existing legal frameworks under increasing stress providing uncertainty for companies and individuals. This includes research in areas such as self-driving cars, drones, medical treatment including palliative care and 3D printing. It also includes both the protection and exploitation through intellectual property management of new technologies and the uncertain liability regimes that these technologies give rise to. New developments in genetics and better understanding of animal psychology are opening areas of concern with respect to animal rights.

Societal Change Including Business Activities

The impact of social change on constitutional rights and a culture of liability based compensation and the growing “uber-isation” of the workforce are issues of specific concern as are the challenges to competition law arising from new technology and business models. The criminalization of commercial activities through regulation also presents difficult challenges.

Changing Concepts of Property Rights

Finally, the changing concept of property and associated property rights, including data and cyber property, creates a substantial case for reform in such areas as family property law, adverse possession, and business leases amongst other things.

Internationalisation

The School of Law considers internationalisation of its research activities as an essential element to providing a holistic environment to both the production and dissemination of its research output.

This can be best achieved through a variety of mechanisms including the hosting of international conferences by the School, inviting overseas speakers to present at faculty, student, and public talks and seminars and, of course, co-authorship between faculty from the School and international peers, particularly from those law schools around the world with which we have an established exchange agreement. Furthermore, in edited books, the use of international contributions should be regarded as the norm.

In addition, various individual supports are available to ensure that faculty in the School of Law have significant opportunities to engage with their international peers through conference attendance, research leave, and sabbaticals.

Finally, the use of internationally based disciplinary research metrics such as ISI and ERA to evaluate our research publications and dissemination will continue to anchor the School of Law in a global context.

Disciplinary Specific Publication & Dissemination

The University of Limerick strategic plan, Broadening Horizons 2015–2020 has a clearly enunciated research strategy within which each academic discipline has a key role. Integral to the success of the strategy is a clearly defined and justifiable mechanism for ensuring all research publications fall within the top quartile in accordance with disciplinary norms.

Following extensive review and consultation with peer Law Schools, both nationally and internationally, the School of Law has set the following guidance for faculty in terms of research publications.

[Web of Science](#) will remain an important metric for evaluating School of Law publications. However, it is also true that while there are a number of top ranking law journals on ISI, it does not represent many other journals that would be regarded as of equal, and in many cases, greater reputational value in the legal discipline.

While the School of Law believes this gap in ISI coverage may be resolved over time, it is vitally important that valuable research outlets that would enhance our international reputation are not excluded by Law faculty when targeting publications. It should be noted that almost no other Law School, nationally or internationally, uses ISI as a metric of any sort and that to focus on ISI exclusively will provide no reputational enhancement for our discipline or the University.

The School of Law therefore adopts the [Australian ERA rankings](#) as the externally recognised and validated journal ranking system to be used as an appropriate supplementary guidance to ISI.

Although the primary ranking for law journals is to be found in the law specific listing, as the Law School encourages cross discipline research, publication in other journals by legal academics will be governed by the appropriate discipline specific ERA ranking in the absence of an ISI ranking.

With respect to books, the School of Law remains convinced that the current University ranking of prestigious publishers is not discipline specific. Based on peer reputation, quality of authors,

and the target reader/ultimate user, the following represents the appropriate ranking of law publishers within the University system:

A+	A	B+	B	C
Hart		Kluwer Law	Gill and McMillan	Blackhall Publishing
		Sweet and Maxwell	Clarus	
			Bloomsbury	
			Four Courts Press	

For the avoidance of doubt, we define a law book as a serious academic work that advances legal knowledge, even if by way of survey, provided it comes with significant analysis and will be used by academic researchers and professional practitioners in business, the courts, and legislative agencies. Legal training requires law students to use such law books. In contrast, we define a law textbook as a product aimed exclusively at student use, notably as a study aid and would include nutshells, concise guides, or exam briefings.

Impact on the Economy & Society

The School of Law believes that research must have an impact in the real world, providing workable solutions to the increasing legal challenges our society faces. Legal research, by its very nature, is translational. In addition to publishing regularly in leading national and international prestigious journals, at the heart of our approach is the breaking down of barriers not only between different academic disciplines but between academics and the wider community. With that in mind, faculty at the School of Law are continually interacting with our stakeholders to provide relevant research of outstanding quality. Events such as the monthly IP Law Café create a space within which academia, business, and government agencies can interact and push boundaries. The CCJVS, for example, engages with stakeholders such as the Inspectors of Prisons and victims of crime organisations to produce national and EU funded research reports. It also accredits the training of An Garda Síochána at level 7 and level 9.

Furthermore, the School of Law also participates extensively in two other research groups: The Centre for Understanding Emotions in Society (CUES) whose director is from the School of Law and the Hate and Hostility Research Group (HHRG) that is co-directed by a School of Law faculty member. CUES is a cross-university initiative that seeks to address an understanding of the role of emotions in law and society, and provides a forum within which disciplines from every area can share their perspective. The HHRG is a multidisciplinary research group dedicated to conducting translational research on hostility towards difference. Together with partners from civil society and the international community, the HHRG explores manifestations of, and potential responses to, hate crime.

Moreover, our research activities have resulted in faculty from the School of Law being extensively involved with a variety of external stakeholders such as the Department of Justice, Law Reform Commission, the Law Society of Ireland, the Honorable Society of the Kings Inns, An Garda Síochána, the Revenue Commissioners, the Court Service, and the Irish Council for Civil Liberties to name but a few. The School also regularly hosts continuing professional development events for practitioners and policymakers in our key areas of expertise. At all levels within society, the research agenda of the School of Law is actively and integrally involved with important stakeholders.

Essential to this approach is the School of Law commitment to pursue funded research projects. These not only bring in valuable resources of their own but also provide access to international expertise and often multidisciplinary expertise that would not otherwise be available, either to the School of Law or the regional or national economy. The School of Law has an excellent record in such funding ranging from Horizon 2020, the Courts Service, the Department of Justice, the Law Reform Commission, and the Department of Enterprise and Employment among many others.

Research-led teaching is a core feature of the School of Law. In addition to inculcating a research ethos in all our students from the very beginning of their journey in law, the Advanced Lawyering programme enables faculty to share specific high-level research projects with our undergraduate students. In doing so, we create more employable graduates who can actively participate in economic and social development both regionally and nationally.

Curriculum development is also driven by our research and takes the form of new programmes such as the BA in Criminal Justice, revision to existing programmes such as the LLM in International Commercial Law, and module creation such as Regulatory Crime. Furthermore, the two research clusters within the School of Law are represented by both LLM programmes, one in International Commercial Law and the other in Human Rights in Criminal Justice. These programmes provide a springboard for further research at doctoral level and builds capacity and expertise for the legal and business community in economically important areas.

A Research Community

Flowing from this strategy, the School of Law aims to create a broad-based research community of scholars. The School recognises that no research strategy can succeed without significant support being given to its faculty and students. In that regard, the School of Law is committed to providing the requisite supports insofar as resources permit.

With that in mind, faculty members are supported through access to relevant source material either physically in the library or through online databases, a dedicated conference fund allocation, additional special funding for long distance travel due to the nature of the research project, a departmental progression support programme, together with special research leave for a semester and sabbatical leave available to all faculty.

In addition, faculty will receive support for continuing professional development programmes that are deemed relevant. Finally, research outputs from faculty are reflected in workload allocation on an annual basis. New appointments will also reflect the research strategy of the School consistent with teaching needs.

The recruitment of PhD and research LLM students linked to the research interests of staff, with the use of co-supervisors, is actively encouraged, including the availability of scholarships, subject to resources. Quality in recruitment will be strengthened by the creation of a research board to vet all applications, a phased annual review involving stage appropriate targets, and joint supervision with both intra Law School faculty and external faculty.

All PhD and LLM students benefit from a small amount of conference funding. A planned development programme is in place to enhance their research skills as well as for career planning, including teaching opportunities.

Postgraduate students are encouraged to consider publishing their research output in a responsible and ethically appropriate manner particularly through co-authored articles with their supervisors.

Finally, the School of Law makes every effort to raise the profile of the research activities of faculty and students through a number of different media, ranging from hard copy leaflets and booklets to more modern social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Whatever form it takes, this profiling of research activities is designed to maximise the impact of our research on the wider community.

Monitoring & Evaluation

The School of Law recognises the need to continually monitor and evaluate the success of its research strategy based on key performance indicators. As a result of this monitoring and evaluation, the implementation of the research strategy may vary from time to time.

The key performance indicators are:

Publications

An increase in the overall research publication rate and quality under discipline specific metrics including books, chapters in books, edited books, and journal articles in accordance with UL strategy.

Funded Research

An increase in the number of applications for funded research and a broader spread of applications to different funding bodies at national and European level in accordance with UL strategy.

Translational Research

An increase in conferences, workshops, and colloquia that involve non-academic and multi-disciplinary participation and attendance that reach out to our wider stakeholders.

Civic & Professional Engagement

Continued active input by faculty in various government, professional, and non-governmental organisations that use our research output.

Internationalisation

An increase in co-authored publications with international colleagues, visiting scholars, and active support for international networking.

Research Student Recruitment

An increase in PhD enrolment facilitated through increased joint supervision by faculty within the School, in other departments, and internationally in accordance with UL strategy.

Dissemination & Profiling

A comprehensive programme to disseminate and profile research activity in the School across all media.

Personnel

An active career development and support programme for faculty together with targeted future recruitment concentrating on developing themes of research within the School.