

EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION DOCUMENTS

Doctor of Philosophy in Private Law

University of Sharjah (UoS)
College of Law

United Arab Emirates

July 2024

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International evaluation and accreditation

EVALUATION REPORT

Doctor of Philosophy in Private Law

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The University of Sharjah (UoS) has mandated Hcéres to perform its Private Law doctoral programme evaluation. The evaluation is based on the “Evaluation Standards for a doctorate/PhD abroad”, adopted by the Hcéres Board on January 31, 2022. These standards are available on the Hcéres website (hceres.fr).

On behalf of the experts committee¹ :

Sandrine Clavel, President of the committee

For the Hcéres¹ :

Stéphane Le Bouler, Acting President

¹In accordance with articles R. 114-15 and R. 114-10 of the Research Code, evaluation reports are signed by the chairman of the expert committee and countersigned by the President of Hcéres.

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I. DOCTORATE IDENTITY SHEET

- University/institution: University of Sharjah
- Component, faculty or department concerned: College of Law
- Programme's title: Doctor of philosophy in Private Law.
- Training/speciality: Private law
- Year of creation and context: 2011/2012
- Site(s) where the programme is taught (Town and campus): Sharjah

PROGRAMME DIRECTOR

- Surname, first name: Saleh LUHAIBI
- Profession and grade: Professor of Private Law
- Main subject taught: Civil Law

METHODS AND RESULTS OF THE PREVIOUS ACCREDITATION(S)

- On a national level: Accredited by the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA), Ministry of Education, United Arab Emirates (UAE)
- At an international level: N/A

HUMAN AND MATERIAL RESOURCES DEDICATED TO THE PROGRAMME

- Human resources

The departments of public and private law are composed of 45 Faculty members (full professors, associate professors and assistant professors), plus 10 teaching/research assistants and 6 administrative staff dedicated to the College of Law. Only associate professors and full professors (as opposed to assistant professors) can teach at PhD level; the applicable rule is, but for exception, that Faculty members dedicate around 70% of their teaching load to the bachelor program (with one single course at the master or PhD level).

- Material resources

The main campus of the College of Law is composed of the M1 Building, designated for male students, and the W1 Building, for female students. Both buildings are alike (but for the theatre hall).

The M1 Building offers 14 smart classrooms, a computer lab, a simulated courtroom resembling real court setups with integrated electronic displays, and a theatre hall for academic discussions and conferences.

Similarly, the W1 Building includes 14 smart classrooms, a computer lab, a simulated courtroom. The theatre hall in the M1 Building is used by both male and female students (mixed events). Generally speaking, women use indifferently the M1 or the W1 Building; non-mixed classes are the rule at the Bachelor level, but at the master and PhD levels all classes are mixed.

Administrative offices, and teaching staff offices are located in W1 and M2 Buildings, equipped with necessary furniture, computers, and a meeting room. The university has four libraries, two of them (one for male students, one for female students) including extensive law sections.

STUDENT POPULATION: EVOLUTION AND TYPOLOGY OVER THE LAST 4 YEARS, INCLUDING NUMBER OF GRADUATES

Among the students enrolled, 18 students obtained their PhD out of 36 students for the period 2013-2018 (54%). The graduation average time is over 4 years. Due to the low number of students between 2013 and 2017, the percentage of graduated students are not significant annually.

Batch	Newly Enrolled 1st Year	Graduated end of 1st Year	Graduated end of 2nd Year	Graduated end of 3rd Year	Graduated end of 4th Year	Graduated end of 5th Year	Graduated >= 5 Years	Total Graduated	Graduation Avg Time
2013	4	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	3 75%	3 75%	6
2014	2	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 50%	0 0%	1 50%	5
2015	2	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 50%	0 0%	0 0%	1 50%	4
2016	2	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 50%	1 50%	6
2017	8	0 0%	0 0%	2 25%	3 38%	0 0%	2 25%	7 88%	4.29
2018	15	0 0%	0 0%	1 7%	0 0%	4 27%		5 33%	4.6
2019	18	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%			0 0%	0
2020	20	0 0%	0 0%	1 5%					
2021	15	0 0%	0 0%						
2022	17	0 0%							

Nota. Some students enrolled in 2017 and after are still in study

II. EVALUATION PROCEDURE

COMPOSITION OF THE EXPERTS PANEL

Chairman of the committee:

- Sandrine CLAVEL, Full Professor of Private Law at Université Paris Saclay, UVSQ

Academic experts:

- Philippe ACHILLEAS, Full Professor of Public Law at Université Paris Saclay
- Laure CLÉMENT-WILZ, Full Professor of Public Law at Université Paris Est-Créteil
- Derek EL ZEIN, Lecturer of Political science at Université Paris Cité
- Etienne PATAUT, Full Professor of Private Law and Criminal Sciences at Sorbonne Université

Student expert:

- Nawal DAFEUR, Postdoctoral student at University of Poitiers

Hcéres was represented by Evelyne Lande, Science Advisor, Europe and International Department.

VISIT DESCRIPTION

- Date of the visit: 2nd of May to 7th of May 2024
- Organisation of the visit: see table
- Cooperation of study programme and institution to be accredited: the University and the College organized the visit so that the committee could meet all the stakeholders and visit the premises. Everything has been done to respond to the requests of the committee's experts.

PEOPLE MET

Thursday the 2nd of May, 2024

Time	Session	Audience
12:00-12:30	Opening session with top management: Presentation of Sharjah University challenges	Chancellor, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Vice Chancellor for accreditation, and Dean of College of Law (four people met)
12:30-13:00	Campus visit	First part: main building (amphitheatre, cafeteria...), and Law college Male building (classrooms, labs...)
14:00-15:00	Institutional meeting Presentation of the College of Law, its programmes	Dean of the Faculty of Law, Director of Studies, Directors of the six courses assessed (five people met)
15:10-16:10	Quality assurance	Staff involved in quality assurance and management. Evaluation & Academic Accreditation representatives. (Two people meet),
16:10-17:30	Academic and non-academic partners	Executive department of Francophonie relations (Government of Sharjah), Director of Alliance française, representatives of the Supreme Legislation Committee, Co-head of dispute resolution at Al Tamimi & Cie law firm and legal consultations, Partner at Al Rasheed & partners law firm and legal consultation (Seven people met)

Friday the 3rd of May, 2024

Time	Session	Audience
08:00–09:00	Bachelor's programme managers	Dean of the college of Law, Head of training; three for Private Law and one for Public Law (five people met).
09:00–10:00	Bachelor's Teaching staff	Representative panel of teaching and research staff in the course: tenured, contract and part-time lecturers from various disciplines, not including those responsible for the degree (seven people met)
10:10–11:10	Bachelor's students	Meeting with a representative panel of students from the Bachelor in terms of gender, nationality, year of studies, learning arrangements, etc. (eight people met)
Debriefing (Bachelor)		
13:00-14:00	Master Air and Space Law programme managers	Heads of training (two people met).
14:00–15:00	Master Air and Space Law Teaching staff	Representative panel of teaching and research staff in the course (four people met)
15:10–16:10	Master Air and Space Law Students	Meeting with a representative panel of students from the program (four people met)
Debriefing (Master Air and Space Law)		

Monday the 6th of May, 2024

Time	Session	Audience
08:00-09:30	Master and PhD Public Law programme managers	Heads of training and administrative secretaries (four people met).
09:40–11:00	Master and PhD Public Law Teaching staff	Representative panel of teaching and research staff in the course, not including those responsible for the degree (eight people met)
11:10–12:00	Master Law students	Meeting with a representative panel of students from the program. (six people met)
12:00–12:45	PhD Public Law students	Meeting with a representative panel of students from the program (six people met)
14:00-15:00	Campus Visit	Second part. Documentary resources
15:00-16:00	Alumni	Five people met graduated from the different programmes evaluated
Debriefing (Master and PhD Public Law)		

Tuesday the 7th of May, 2024

Time	Session	Audience
08:00-09:30	Master and PhD Private Law programme managers (Q&A, no presentation)	Heads of training and administrative secretaries (five people met).
09:40–11:00	Master and PhD Private Law Teaching staff	Representative panel of teaching and research staff in the course, not including those responsible for the degree (eight people met)
11:10–12:00	Master Private Law students	Meeting with a representative panel of students from the program (four people met).
12:00–12:45	PhD Private Law students	Meeting with a representative panel of students from the program (five people met).
Debriefing (Master and PhD Private Law)		
14:00-15:00	Campus Visit	Third part. Law college Female building (classrooms, labs...)
15:00-16:00	Closing session (final questions/answers on the 6 diplomas, no feedback)	Dean of the Faculty of Law + degree directors

III. PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

The PhD programme is part of an expanding plan of the College of Law of the University of Sharjah. The College of Law was established in 2001 to meet of the local and regional community's needs for jurists and Law specialists by offering a Bachelor's programme in Law. Subsequently, the College expanded its offerings by introducing a Master's programme in Public Law in Autumn 2004/2005, and a Master's programme in Private Law in Spring 2005/2006.

Continuing of its mission to graduate professionals and specialised personnel, the College launched the Doctorate programme in Law (Public and Private Law) in the Fall of 2011-2012. The PhD programme is accredited by the Ministry of Education in UAE.

The PhD programme in Private Law's main objective is to train qualified legal, judicial, and higher education professionals to meet the needs of the local job market, in line with the dynamic economic and cultural development policy of the UAE. Additionally, the PhD programme contributes to the continuous improvement of the Faculty members and to the creation of a local pool for future recruitment of Faculty members.

The programme is organised around individual research, combined with legal training through courses, workshops and seminars. Each PhD student must complete six compulsory courses and two elective courses, as well as successfully complete the thesis and/or essays as specified in the curriculum.

The PhD is awarded upon successful completion of both oral and written exams, including a public defence of a thesis.

PRESENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME'S SELF-EVALUATION APPROACH

The self-evaluation approach is the result of a collaborative effort between the Academic Accreditation Department of the University of Sharjah and the Faculty members of the College of Law. The Academic Accreditation Department was responsible for collecting and providing the relevant data necessary for the evaluation. Based on this data, the College of Law's academic team prepared a comprehensive self-evaluation report. This report was subsequently reviewed by the Academic Accreditation Department. The final result is an extensive self-assessment report, supplemented by numerous appendices that offers a wealth of objective information.

IV. EVALUATION REPORT

1. DOCTORAL POLICY

The doctorate's positioning is consistent with the institution's main strategy, which is to provide high skilled lawyers for both legal higher education and legal practice. Ongoing developments affecting this strategy may, in the middle term, justify a repositioning of the PhD programme in Private Law towards greater specialisation.

The PhD programme is a continuation of the ever-expanding scheme of the College of law, which began with the establishment of the bachelor's programme in 2001, followed by Master's programmes in 2004-2006, and then Doctorate programme in 2011-2012. Sharjah master's students now have access to a full doctorate, enhancing the University of Sharjah's national and regional attractiveness.

The doctoral programme in Private Law is developed in coherence with the Master's programme in Private Law, of which it is the logical sequel. The institution support for evolving the strategy towards greater specialisation could eventually lead to the construction of specialised tracks in both the Master and the doctoral programmes. A renewed PhD programme is planned for the year 2025, designed to include specific tracks from which PhD students can choose, such as Commercial law, Civil law, Procedure.

The organisational structure of the PhD programme in private law is designed to align with the institution's strategy.

While research and research-based training are central to the programme, the doctoral training includes robust courses and workshops that blend theoretical and practical aspects. This structure supports the objective of producing PhDs capable of pursuing both academic and socio-economic careers.

The research-based training is a strong point of the PhD programme in Private Law of the University of Sharjah.

Most PhD students already hold a master's degree from the University, where they were required to submit a thesis. During the PhD programme, several courses and seminars are specifically designed to develop research skills, in addition to the thesis itself. To obtain their diploma, PhD students must publish two papers in law journals, which are usually chapters of their PhD thesis.

The programme is tailored to meet the expectations of the socio-economic world. To enhance the programme's effectiveness in preparing PhDs for the socio-economic environment, stronger connections with public institutions and private entities should be established.

Currently, the College has established an Advisory Council comprising experts from various community sectors, along with alumni of the doctoral programmes in law. This Advisory Council as a valuable bridge between the College and the external community. Its role is pivotal in facilitating communication and alignment with the goals and strategic objectives of the College.

The doctoral training is designed to meet the needs of the socio-economic world, focusing research on topics relevant to external partners, especially the employers of doctoral students.

While there are formal partnerships in place with various socio-economic entities through Memorandums of Understanding (MOU), the effective implementation and use of these agreements has not been fully demonstrated. However, benefits from strong informal links with the socio-economic world, leveraging the employment situation of many doctoral candidates within important public institutions such as the Dubai Legislative Committee and various ministries in Sharjah. To enhance the programme's impact and relevance further, it would be beneficial to strengthen these existing links with keys entities.

The PhD programme demonstrates some international appeal, although there is potential for further internationalisation efforts.

Currently, the programme includes a significant number of students from abroad, with 54 students from the United Arab Emirates and 25 students from non-UAE countries enrolled for the academic year 2023-2024. However, it is important to note that the evaluation committee was unable to determine how many of the non-UAE students were already residents of Sharjah versus those whose specifically moved to Sharjah to pursue their doctoral studies. This distinction could provide valuable insights into the programme's attractiveness. The presence of students from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries suggests that the programme holds appeal within the region where opportunities for PhD programmes in Law are limited.

Outgoing mobility during the PhD studies, on the other hand, does not appear to be highly developed, even though the university offers conditions that could encourage such mobility. While the University of Sharjah has been a member of the International Organization for the Exchange of Training Offers (IASTA) since 2000 and has signed several agreements and memorandums of understanding with law schools and institutions internationally: University of Arizona, University of Kansas, University of Brussels, *Institut de droit comparé*, etc.

these agreements have not been fully implemented or effectively utilized to facilitate outgoing mobility for doctoral students. Recent efforts to support outgoing mobility include the establishment of a *Study Abroad Unit* in May 2022, aimed at encouraging Emirati students enrolled at the University of Sharjah to study abroad for one to two consecutive semesters. This is supported financially by the Ministry of Education, which covers all expenses related to the study period abroad. However, the programme has not yet seen significant activity. One of the challenges identified is the difficulty for doctoral students who hold positions in the public or private sector to benefit from outgoing mobility for extended periods. Despite this, some doctoral students have expressed interest in shorter periods of study abroad.

Conclusion

The doctoral policy of the College of Law is characterised by its ambition and strong focus on research, aligning with the broader objectives of the University of Sharjah to cultivate local competencies and achieve excellence in education. This commitment has been consistently upheld since the inception of the PhD programme in Private law in 2011. While the programme has maintained a broad positioning thus far, there is growing recognition of the need for greater specialisation. This shift is driven by the evolving expectations of the local socio-economic environment, which increasingly demands highly specialised legal expertise. Strengthening the existing links with the socio-economic world, as well as encouraging outgoing mobility, could also contribute to the university's objectives of meeting the highest international standards.

2. TRAINING, HOSTING AND SUPERVISION ARRANGEMENTS FOR DOCTORAL STUDENTS

The doctoral programme is clearly structured around two axes: rigorous doctoral training and training through research. However, the temporal sequencing of these two types of activity is rather rigid and could be made more flexible. The specialisation of courses could better meet students' expectations.

Before actually starting their research assignment, doctoral students are expected to follow and pass a number of courses. Course marks are distributed so that part of them is devoted to class activities and the students' duty to present lectures (40%). In each course, the PhD student is committed to preparing a topic related to the course in agreement with the course teacher and presenting it to all classmates under the supervision and guidance of the course teacher. All students participate in the discussion of this presentation, ask questions, and express their points of view on the ideas and information presented. Some students from the PhD in Private Law programme have expressed the view that courses could be more specialised in accordance with their interests.

Those lectures are built according to local and international standards. This point must be stressed since the PhD programme is obviously designed to meet international criteria. It includes alignments between qualifications systems in the UAE and the qualifications and certification systems of other countries such as the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the emerging Arab Qualifications Framework, and the Framework of Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA, or 'Bologna' Framework).

The actual research work begins once the courses have been validated. Some doctoral students have indicated that they would prefer to start their research work immediately, while taking the doctoral courses at the same time. Regarding research, the obligation to write two papers before the PhD thesis itself (but based on the PhD thesis) is a very effective way to progressively accommodate the students to the requirements of long-term research.

Recruitment for the PhD programme in private law is selective, based on clearly defined requirements. Financial support is available through positions at the Faculty or scholarships.

The Marketing and Student Recruitment Department (MSR) manages enrolment for both undergraduate and graduate studies at the University of Sharjah. Enrolment in the PhD programme is subjected to two main requirements: (1) The student must hold a master's degree in law with a minimum grade of "Very Good" (3.0 out of 4.0) and a bachelor's degree in law with a minimum grade of 2.5 out of 4.0 or equivalent from a university, college, or an institute recognised by the Ministry of Education of the UAE. (2) The student must meet the English language proficiency (TOEFL) requirement.

Some of the PhD students in the programme are assigned as Research Assistants (RA) or Teaching Assistants (TA) at the university, working under the supervision and guidance of a faculty member who benefits from financial support. Currently, two PhD students in Private Law students are working as teaching assistants, which includes full paid tuition and financial support.

Many PhD students, and almost all the UAE students, benefit from scholarships, which is remarkable considering the significant tuition fees.

The high-quality of supervision of doctoral research is one of the strengths of the program.

Students benefit from the supervision of both an academic advisor and an academic supervisor. The role of the former is particularly noteworthy, as they assist PhD students during the initial phase of the programme, guiding them through the lectures and seminars they must attend. Once the thesis subject is chosen, the academic advisor also helps students to navigate the process of publishing the required papers before their thesis. PhD students interviewed, especially those unfamiliar with the College of Law's functioning, have highlighted the importance of this advising body.

The role of the academic supervisor is traditional yet invaluable. A supervisor is selected from experienced faculty members based on the preferences of the student and the professor's area of expertise. The supervisor overseeing the student's thesis must have the rank of full professor. In exceptional cases, supervision may be delegated to an associate professor if they have research activity related to the thesis topic, at the discretion of the Dean.

The supervision process begins with the student preparing a thesis plan by submitting it to the department head. A meeting date is then scheduled within two weeks for the student to discuss the plan in the presence of graduate studies committee members, the supervisor, academic faculty, and fellow graduate students. Following the discussion, the committee reviews the plan, ensures necessary amendments are incorporated as per the supervisor's guidance, and then submits it to the Deanship of Graduate Studies. Within two weeks of submission to the dean, the plan is either approved, rejected, or recommended for amendments. The supervisor provides a detailed report on the student's progress each semester to the department head, with a copy to the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies. If needed, the Dean may authorise changes to the plan or its title, accompanied by appropriate justifications.

The supervisor ensures that the student implements all suggestions aimed at improving the thesis's quality. Regular meetings between the supervisor and the student facilitate this process, with the College of Graduate Studies providing guidance on these procedures. These mutual obligations between supervisor and student are clearly communicated to doctoral students. Additionally, an Advisory Committee conducts annual reviews and monitors the progress of PhD students.

Lastly, regarding the defence process, it follows a traditional yet rigorous format. Initially, an external rapporteur, whose identity remains anonymous, evaluates the thesis's quality. Upon receiving approval from the rapporteur, the defence itself is scheduled to proceed.

The doctoral training programme incorporates mechanisms aimed at supporting international doctoral students, albeit with some areas requiring enhancement.

Currently, one compulsory course, "Legal Studies in Foreign Language" is conducted in English, providing an opportunity for international students to engage in English-language instruction. However, the majority of the courses are primarily taught in Arabic, potentially limiting accessibility. To enhance the programme's international appeal and better prepare students for global careers, expanding the number of courses taught in English, and possibly in French given the presence of French-speaking faculty members, could significantly improve attractiveness. Moreover, while theses are typically drafted in Arabic, students are encouraged to publish their research papers in English or French, in addition to Arabic.

Regarding attendance requirements, physical presence in courses is generally expected. However, the programme demonstrates flexibility by allowing remote attendance under justified circumstances, accommodating the diverse need of doctoral students.

Conclusion

The PhD programme is meticulously structured, offering students robust support through comprehensive supervision provided by both a thesis supervisor and a personal advisor. This close guidance facilitates meaningful engagement in research activities. While lectures and seminars are well-designed, there is room for improvement in their specialisation. The requirement to complete doctoral training before starting research work, coupled with stringent admission criteria, ensures high-quality outcomes but may deter potential PhD candidates. Enhancing the programme's internationalisation could be achieved by increasing the number of courses taught in foreign language, particularly English.

3. ATTRACTIVENESS, PERFORMANCE AND RELEVANCE OF THE DOCTORATE

The PhD programme in Private Law maintains a strong visibility and attractiveness within the region.

As one of the few PhD programmes in law available locally, it stands out, evidenced by the enrolment numbers and the diversity of nationalities among the students. Assessing international attractiveness proves challenging due to the complexity of determining student's geographical origins solely by their nationality, especially in a diverse environment like the UAE. Many international students are supported financially by their home countries, drawn to the programme's established reputation.

UoS programme managers play a crucial role in maintaining a centralised platform aimed at disseminating essential information about the PhD programme. This includes details on research opportunities, faculty expertise, funding systems, including scholarships, and other essential aspects that potential candidates consider when making informed decisions about pursuing a doctorate.

Individual follow-up of doctoral students is handled with great care, thanks to clearly defined mechanisms that are well known to all stakeholders involved.

At the College level, a structured framework of lectures and seminars, couple with regular supervisor-student meetings, ensures consistent monitoring of each doctoral student's progress. Nevertheless, to date, the rate of graduation remains low (54% on the period 2013-2017).

Additionally, the university employs an advanced e-file system overseen by The Office of the Vice Chancellor for Institutional Effectiveness and Accreditation (OVCIEA). This system serves as a comprehensive documentation and monitoring tool, facilitating the programme's commitment to continuous improvement. The OVCIEA plays a pivotal role in supporting the programme through routine evaluation activities, ensuring that academic standards are upheld and enhancing the overall effectiveness of the doctoral programme.

Many tools have been set up to monitor the career development of PhD holders, although evaluating their effectiveness remains challenging, primarily due to unclear utilisation of the collected data.

University of Sharjah uses an occupational follow-up and cohort surveys as measurement tools. Despite efforts to capture both quantitative data and qualitative feedback, these surveys often yield inadequate responses from former students.

Additionally, the University collaborates with the Alumni Association to manage the PhD programme in Private Law. This partnership focuses on establishing robust communication channels between programme administration and the Alumni Association, promoting the exchange of information and support.

The Alumni office at the university organises executive committee activities, graduate job opportunities, and other events tailored to foster enduring relationships formed during doctoral studies. These initiatives create a supportive and collaborative community involving both current doctoral students and PhD holders. This engagement not only ensures continuity but also facilitates mentorship, knowledge exchange, and professional development opportunities. While these activities currently encompass the entire University rather than being specifically tailored to the College of Law, there is potential for greater efficiency by organising events at the College level. Additionally, despite having a dedicated website, its current level of activity and engagement could benefit from enhancement.

The Career Advising and Student Training Office (CASTO) plays a crucial role in providing career counselling and guidance to students and alumni. It is an integral part of the educational process, offering comprehensive services to support self-assessment, decision-making, and job search processes.

Conclusion

The programme's visibility and attractiveness are well-established, with effective monitoring of current PhD students yielding positive outcomes. However, tools aimed at tracking the careers of PhD holders, such as surveys and the Alumni Association, operate at the university-wide level, potentially reducing their relevance. Establishing an alumni organisation specifically for the College of Law could enhance effectiveness in maintaining strong connections with PhD holders from the College of Law.

4. MANAGEMENT AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF THE DOCTORATE

The doctorate is clearly supported and boosted by the institution's robust human resources and financial policies.

Specifically, the College of Law allocates significant resources to its PhD programme. Only associate professors and full professors, not assistant professors, teach at the PhD level, ensuring students are instructed by highly experienced academics. Faculty members are under considerable pressure to publish research, excel in teaching, and contribute to collective service. At the end of each academic year, faculty submit electronic academic reports encompassing teaching, community service, and scientific research. These reports are evaluated by the department head and the dean, with a strong emphasis on scientific research output, including the number and quality of publications in internationally recognised journals. Faculty are expected to produce two research papers annually published or accepted in level A international journals approved by the university.

The research environment for both faculty and PhD students is characterised by high quality. The University library, notably equipped with dedicated spaces for postgraduate students, offers an extensive collection in Arabic, English and French, alongside access to major global legal databases. The library's proactive acquisition policy ensures researchers have access to the latest and most relevant publications.

Internal evaluation and continuous improvement processes are integral to strengthening the PhD programme in private law.

The Office of the Vice Chancellor for Institutional Effectiveness and Accreditation (OVCIEA) oversees an e-file system that documents and monitors the programme's learning outcomes and individual course achievements.

Course instructors and coordinators utilise course-level data including grade distribution, student and faculty feedback, and teaching effectiveness to propose improvements. They also ensure alignment of student assessments within the courses.

At the program level, the Chairperson or programme coordinator reviews cohort analyses, grade distributions, student and faculty feedback, advisory board and external evaluator input, and capstone experiences. Additionally, student evaluations of courses provide valuable feedback to professors.

Conclusion

The PhD programme undergoes regular analysis and evaluation, with each course or seminar reviewed at the end of every semester. Academic staff are highly motivated to excel in publishing, teaching, and contributing to collective tasks. The material conditions for research are excellent.

V. CONCLUSION

Overall, the doctoral policy of the College of Law of the University of Sharjah is highly ambitious, research-oriented, and aligned with the broader objectives of the university to foster local competencies and excellence. Since its inception in 2011, this policy has been consistently and successfully implemented.

The PhD programme is meticulously crafted, offering students well-developed supervision that supports their research endeavours effectively. The University of Sharjah demonstrates a strong commitment to the success of its College of Law's PhD programme. Lectures and seminars thoughtfully designed, and students substantial support from their supervisors throughout the research process. The university library is of exceptional quality, providing dedicated spaces for postgraduate students to facilitate their academic pursuits.

The doctoral programme ensures a balance between structured training (courses and seminars) and research-based education. However, some PhD students have raised concerns about the lack of course specialisation and a delayed immersion into research. The ongoing initiative to establish specialised tracks within the programme, such as Commercial law, Civil law, and Procedure, is commendable and should be supported.

The PhD programme of the College of Law is demanding for students, reflecting its ambitious nature. However, students receive exceptional support, facilitated by effective monitoring of their activities, which enables them to efficiently manage their responsibilities. This attentive oversight contributes partially to the programme's success, as the graduation rate is to date 54% (18 students graduated since its inception).

The PhD programme undergoes regular analysis and evaluation, with each course or seminar reviewed at the end of every semester. Academic staff are strongly motivated to publish, teach effectively, and contribute to collective tasks. Students receive close monitoring throughout their studies.

However, this focus on academic excellence may detract from fostering relationships with local socio-economic actors and international partnerships. Outgoing mobility opportunities are currently almost inexistent, but foundational efforts such as international agreements with foreign universities, scholarship for studying abroad, and recognition of training abroad are in progress.

Monitoring the careers of PhD holders has shown modest results. Centralising surveys and Alumni Association events at the university level may diminish their effectiveness and impact. Establishing an alumni organisation specifically for the College of Law could potentially enhance efficiency in maintaining strong connections and supporting the professional trajectories of PhD holders from within the College.

STRENGTHS

- Truly research-oriented training, based on a double commitment of successfully defending a PhD thesis and publishing at least two articles.
- PhD Programme's organisation consistent with the Master's programme in Private law of which it is the sequel.
- Sustainable programme that enjoys strong support from the university, not only in terms of academic policy but also in terms of human and material resources.

WEAKNESSES

- Weak outgoing mobility of students meant to work in an international business environment.
- Doctoral training lacking specialisation opportunities for PhD students
- Limited formal links with professionals (law firms, private companies, courts...).
- Upgradable Alumni policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

The courses and seminars for the PhD in Private Law programme should be adapted to provide greater specialisation, aligning with the university's evolving strategy. The distinction between the PhD programmes in Public and Private Law could be strengthened. The planned 2025 project to offer specialisation tracks within the doctoral training should be implemented.

Recommendation 2

The internationalisation of the PhD programme should be strengthened. Developing joint PhD programmes could incentivise students to establish relationships with universities in other countries. This initiative would be of paramount importance for the PhD in Private Law programme.

Recommendation 3

The relationships with major actors in the legal field should be improved and formalised. Developing and effectively implementing Memoranda of Understandings (MOUs) with private sector entities at the College of Law level could be an effective way to establish and maintain these relationships.

Recommendation 4

The monitoring of the Alumni should be improved, particularly by designing dedicated monitoring programmes at the College of Law level.

VI. COMMENTS OF THE INSTITUTION



University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates
College of Law

**Response to Recommendations for
Accreditation of the
Doctor of Philosophy in Private Law**

Submitted to
Europe and International Department
French High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (HCERES)

05-09-2024


Document History

Date	Action
2 to 7 May 2024	HCERES Site Visit to UoS Campus
31 July 2024	HCERES Evaluation Report Sent to UoS
5 September 2024	UoS Response sent to HCERES

In the Name of the College of Law, University of Sharjah

College Dean:

Name: Professor Adnan Sirhan

Signature: 

Stamp:



Introduction

The College of Law at the University of Sharjah would like to thank the HCRES members for their great efforts, continuous support, and their valuable recommendations provided to the College regarding the accreditation request of its six academic programmes. The college has the honor to submit its response to these recommendations.

The concerned six programmes:

1. Bachelor of Law in English
2. Master in Air and Space Law
3. Master in Private Law
4. Master in Public Law
5. Doctor of Philosophy in Private Law
6. Doctor of Philosophy in Public Law

Doctor of Philosophy in Private Law

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The courses and seminars for the PhD in Private Law programme should be adapted to provide greater specialization, aligning with the university's evolving strategy. The distinction between the PhD programmes in Public and Private Law could be strengthened. The planned 2025 project to offer 3 specialization tracks within the doctoral training should be implemented.

UoS Response:

The college has introduced a new study plan for the programme, which includes specialization tracks in Civil Law, Commercial Law, and Procedural Law with more specialized course titles, set to begin in 2025. This plan aims to deepen students' expertise in these areas through specialized teaching and research courses that have been developed and are currently awaiting approval from the Academic Accreditation Commission in the Ministry of Education. Once approved, the college will implement the new tracks, enhancing the programme's focus and relevance.

Recommendation 2

The internationalisation of the PhD programme should be strengthened. Developing joint PhD programmes could incentivise students to establish relationships with universities in other countries. This initiative would be of paramount importance for the PhD in Private Law programme.

UoS Response:

The college is actively involved in the internationalisation of its programmes through several initiatives. These include participating in international university exhibitions to market the university's programmes, including those of the Faculty of Law, and having professors represent the college at global events. The college also maintains strong relationships with diplomatic corps in the country, where academic programmes, including those of the College of Law, will be offered. Additionally, the college has formed academic cooperation agreements with international universities in various countries, fostering collaboration between the College of Law and law faculty worldwide.

As part of the college's upcoming five-year strategic plan, a doctoral programme in Air and Space Law will be introduced in English. This programme will include several courses in private and public law, and we are currently seeking to collaborate with a prestigious university to offer it as a joint programme. This partnership will allow students to benefit from the expertise of professors from both institutions. If this initiative proves successful, the college plans to expand this model to the doctoral programme in Private Law.

Recommendation 3

The relationships with major actors in the legal field should be improved and formalised. Developing and effectively implementing Memoranda of Understandings (MOUs) with private sector entities at the College of Law level could be an effective way to establish and maintain these relationships.

UoS Response:

The college has established numerous research and training cooperation agreements with various official and unofficial organizations, companies, courts, and law firms both within and outside the country. These agreements are designed to leverage the practical expertise of these partners for the benefit of our professors and students. The college is continually working to maximize the advantages offered by these partnerships.

As part of the college’s training plan, the Seminars and Conferences Committee will host numerous professionals and legal experts to share their practical experiences with students. Dates for several of these seminars and training workshops have already been scheduled, and the participating professional organizations have been identified.

As part of the college's new five-year strategic plan, we will focus on activating and establishing several research and academic agreements with various professional organizations in the legal sector. These partnerships are aimed at providing students with valuable professional and training experiences.

Recommendation 4

The monitoring of the Alumni should be improved, particularly by designing dedicated monitoring programmes at the College of Law level.

UoS Response:

The university has established a specialized office to oversee graduate affairs, enabling the college to track the progress and employment status of its graduates regularly and consistently. The Alumni Office cooperates with the College of Law to update alumni data and follow them up. Alumni office enhance communication with graduates to provide a platform to raise their opinions, concerns, and aspirations and to work collectively to give back to the society of which we all belong and to fulfill the UoS mission. Among those services that the university is keen to provide to the alumnus are:

- Connecting alumnus with employers, companies, and institutions to provide suitable jobs in line with the graduates' qualifications.
- Monthly meetings with the various colleges and seminars to exchange experiences and social networking.
- Recommendations and advice regarding the skills and experiences required to be enhanced in line with the requirements of the job market.
- Free training courses and workshops.
- Opportunities for community service through the association's clubs. A space to benefit from the alumnus experiences gained in the field of their work to participate in the enhancement of the curriculum.
- Keeping the alumnus in constant contact with the academic and scientific climate to exchange opinions and update their scientific knowledge by following up on the latest scientific developments through the channels of communication provided by the university.
- Establishing the concepts of democratic practices, the spirit of dialogue and respect for the other opinion among the alumni.

More information about the Alumni Office can be found on the below links:

<https://www.sharjah.ac.ae/en/Administration/aao/Pages/ov.aspx>

Moreover, the dean of the College has initiated the formation of a committee at the college level, comprised of a selected group of distinguished faculty members. This committee is responsible for maintaining regular communication with graduates and monitoring their progress. Their duties include organizing quarterly meetings with graduates to stay informed about their professional and career development, as well as leveraging their expertise to support the college and its students. Additionally, graduates are encouraged to participate in various events and activities organized by the college.



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International evaluation and accreditation

ACCREDITATION DECISION

Doctor of Philosophy in Private Law

University of Sharjah
College of Law

Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

September 2024

SCOPE OF THE ACCREDITATION GRANTED BY HCÉRES

HCÉRES has based its evaluation process on a set of objectives that study programmes must pursue to ensure recognised quality within France and Europe. These objectives are divided up into four accreditation criteria.

The Accreditation Commission issues an opinion about the accreditation of the study programme after examining the file. The Hcéres President takes the decision based on the Commission's opinion and the final evaluation report of the programme. This accreditation decision, taken in plenary session, is the result of a collegial and reasoned process.

The decision issued by Hcéres regarding the accreditation of the study programme corresponds to the awarding of a label to the evaluated entity.

This decision is independent of the accreditations carried out by the French State and therefore does not entail recognition in France of the institution or the diplomas issued by it.

Decision No. EI-2024-44 on the accreditation of the Doctor of Philosophy in Private Law delivered by the University of Sharjah, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

The President of the High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education,

Considering the Research Code, in particular Articles L. 114-3-1 to L. 114-3-6;

Considering the Board's deliberation of 29th September 2022 on the accreditation criteria for international study programmes;

Considering the Decision No. 2023-9 of 16th March 2023 on the international accreditation procedure of the High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education;

Considering the agreement DEL_2023_CONV27 of 21st December 2023 for the evaluation/accreditation of the Doctor of philosophy in Private law delivered by the University of Sharjah, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates;

Considering the opinion issued by the Accreditation Commission on 27th September 2024;

Decides:

Article 1

Noting that the Doctor of Philosophy in private Law delivered by the University of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates meets the four accreditation criteria, voted by the Board of the High Council on 29th September 2022, as follows:

ACCREDITATION CRITERION 1: DOCTORAL POLICY

The College of Law's doctoral policy is characterised by its ambition and strong research focus, which is in line with the University of Sharjah's wider objectives of nurturing local expertise and achieving excellence in education. This commitment has been consistently maintained since the creation of the PhD in Private Law programme in 2011.

While the programme has maintained a broad positioning, the need for greater specialisation is increasingly recognised. This change is driven by the changing expectations of the local socio-economic environment, which increasingly demands highly specialised legal expertise.

Strengthening existing links with the world, as well as encouraging outgoing mobility, could also contribute to the University's objectives of meeting the highest international standards.

ACCREDITATION CRITERION 2: TRAINING, HOSTING AND SUPERVISION ARRANGEMENTS FOR DOCTORAL STUDENTS

The doctoral programme is meticulously structured and offers students solid support through comprehensive supervision by both a thesis director and a personal supervisor.

This close supervision facilitates meaningful engagement in research activities. If courses and seminars are well designed, specialisation can be enhanced. The requirement to complete doctoral training before starting research, combined with strict admission criteria, guarantees high quality results, but may deter potential doctoral candidates. The internationalisation of the programme could be enhanced by increasing the number of courses taught in a foreign language, especially English.

ACCREDITATION CRITERION 3: ATTRACTIVENESS, PERFORMANCE AND RELEVANCE OF THE DOCTORAL PROGRAMME

The visibility and attractiveness of the programme are well established and the effective monitoring of current doctoral students is showing positive results. However, the tools for tracking doctoral students' careers, such as surveys and the alumni association, operate at a university-wide level, which may reduce their relevance. The creation of an alumni association specific to the College of Law could improve the effectiveness of maintaining close links with Law School doctoral students.



ACCREDITATION CRITERION 4: MANAGEMENT AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF THE DOCTORAL PROGRAMME

The PhD programme is subject to regular analysis and evaluation, with each course or seminar reviewed at the end of each semester. Academic staff are highly motivated to excel in publishing, teaching and contributing to collective tasks. The research environment is excellent.

Article 2

The Doctor of Philosophy in Private Law delivered by the University of Sharjah, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, is accredited for a period of 5 years from the date of this decision.

Article 3

The decision is accompanied by the following recommendations and comments:

The courses and seminars for the PhD in Private Law programme should be adapted to provide greater specialisation, aligning with the university's evolving strategy. The distinction between the PhD programmes in Public and Private Law could be strengthened. The planned 2025 project to offer specialisation tracks within the doctoral training should be implemented.

The internationalisation of the PhD programme should be strengthened. Developing joint PhD programmes could incentivise students to establish relationships with universities in other countries. This initiative would be of paramount importance for the PhD in Private Law programme.

The relationships with major actors in the legal field should be improved and formalised. Developing and effectively implementing Memoranda of Understandings (MOUs) with private sector entities at the College of Law level could be an effective way to establish and maintain these relationships.

The monitoring of the Alumni should be improved, particularly by designing dedicated monitoring programmes at the College of Law level.

Article 4

This decision will be published on the Hcéres website.

Paris, 17th October 2024.

The acting President
signed
Stéphane Le Bouler



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