

Programme Specification

Award and title: Master of Research in Law

<i>School:</i>	York Business School
<i>Subject area:</i>	Law
<i>Entry from academic year:</i>	2026-2027
<i>in the month(s) of</i>	September
<i>Awarding institution:</i>	York St John University
<i>Teaching institution:</i>	York St John University
<i>Delivery location:</i>	York
<i>Programme/s accredited by:</i>	Not applicable
<i>Exit awards:</i>	Postgraduate Certificate in Research Methods in Law
<i>Mode/s of study:</i>	Full time (1 year) Part time (2 years)
<i>Language of study:</i>	English

Introduction and special features

The MRes in Law enables you to follow your own research journey, proposing a thesis on a legal topic of your choice either within a distinct area of law or across disciplines working closely with active legal scholars and practitioners to complete your project. Our approach to the study of law is built on our experience of running successful research programmes that combine rigorous theoretical engagement with practical, policy-relevant application.

The aim is to provide you with the resources, skills, and intellectual environment that enable you to become a confident, reflexive, and ethically grounded legal researcher. We see our postgraduate researchers as vital contributors to the School's vibrant research culture in Law and to the wider interdisciplinary research community within the University.

The course will equip you with methodological, theoretical, and analytical competencies needed to undertake advanced research into law and legal institutions, and to engage with the key legal, political, and ethical challenges facing societies today. You will develop advanced skills in both doctrinal and socio-legal research methods, including critical analysis of case law, legislation, policy materials, and empirical data.

The MRes in Law enhances your capacity to undertake independent, high-quality legal research while strengthening your ability to engage with broader debates in justice, governance, and rights. You will also enhance your professional and interpersonal skills including collaboration with supervisors, peers, policymakers, and external stakeholders to ensure your work has both academic and real-world impact.

Law at YSJ sits within the York Business School alongside related disciplines such as Policing, Business, and Management. This interdisciplinary setting allows you to explore the intersections between law, policy, and society. Our design recognises the benefits of learning within a research cohort while embedding you in wider academic and professional networks. You'll be encouraged to contribute to the School's active research environment attending seminars, workshops, and symposia that connect theory and practice.

As a disciplinary area, we collaborate with a range of external partners who may help shape or inform your research, including local and national government (City of York Council, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs), legal practitioners and firms, judiciary bodies, NGOs and advocacy groups (Citizens Advice Bureau, Independent Domestic Abuse Services etc), and professional organisations involved in justice, equality, and policy reform.

Our vibrant postgraduate research community regularly hosts research events, debates, and collaborative projects across the School. As an MRes student, you'll be encouraged to present and discuss your work within these forums, developing your academic voice and professional network.

Key aspects of the MRes in Law include:

- A dedicated teaching team of active legal researchers and scholars.
- A thesis designed by you, supported through one-to-one supervision.
- The opportunity to study and apply a variety of legal research methodologies.
- Development of advanced skills in independent legal research through specialist research skills modules in Term 1.
- Training in both doctrinal and socio-legal approaches.
- Engagement with interdisciplinary and practice-oriented perspectives on law.
- Active participation in the School's research culture and events.
- Opportunities to collaborate with external partners, policymakers, and legal professionals.

Admissions criteria

You must meet the University's general entry criteria for [postgraduate study](#). In addition, you must have:

A 2:1 in Law or a closely related discipline. Applicants whose first degree is not aligned with the degree requirements will be accepted on a case-by-case basis to ensure that they have covered sufficient levels of Law or closely related discipline and research methods during their first degree.

Applicants whose first language is not English should have IELTS at grade 6.5 or above (including a minimum of 6.5 in the writing component) or another acceptable English Language qualification.

Candidates are required to pass an invited interview with a panel of academic/s from the discipline.

Programme aim(s)

1. The programme will provide you with an understanding of contemporary research in Law and its relationship to legal practice, policy development, and justice in both academic and professional contexts.
2. The programme will equip you with an understanding of the research philosophies, methodologies, and analytical skills that will support you to become a reflexive, critical, and ethical legal researcher.

3. The programme prepares you to undertake an extended legal research project and is particularly suited to those wishing to progress to doctoral study in Law or related fields, while also providing valuable research and analytical skills applicable across legal, policy, and professional environments.

Programme learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of the programme students will be able to:

Level 7

- 7.1 Critically explore and evaluate both published and emergent literature with regards its value to a Law research area and your chosen research.
- 7.2 Critically examine how your research contributes to Law as a disciplinary area, and how knowledge and skills related to your research can contribute both inside and outside the academy.
- 7.3 Identify, interpret and apply different research methodologies as they relate to your project and Law more broadly.
- 7.4 Produce an extended written thesis which demonstrates independent, novel research based on your critical engagement with discipline-specific research methodologies.
- 7.5 Demonstrate advanced research and academic skills, including the critical application of methodological approaches, the communication of evidence-based arguments (oral and written forms), and engagement with academic and research communities.

Programme structure

Full time

Code	Level	Semester	Title	Credits	Module status	
					Compulsory (C) or optional (O)	non-compensable (NC) or compensable (X)
YBR7008M	7	1	Advanced Methods in Legal Research	30	C	NC
YBR7007M	7	1	The Theory of Law	30	C	NC
YBR7009R	7	2&3	Thesis in Law	120	C	NC

Part time

Code	Level	Semester	Year	Title	Credits	Module status	
						Compulsory (C) or optional (O)	non-compensable (NC) or compensable (X)
YBR7008M	7	1	1	Advanced Methods in Legal Research	30	C	NC
YBR7007M	7	1	2	The Theory of Law	30	C	NC
YBR7009R	7	2&3	2	Thesis in Law	120	C	NC

Please note that both 30-credit modules must be passed at the relevant level to progress to the Thesis module.

Learning, teaching and assessment

Our learning, teaching, and assessment ethos is founded on active research development, enabling you to develop as a legal scholar well-versed in advanced research methodologies, doctrinal analysis, and contemporary approaches to legal inquiry. Using inclusive and participatory teaching methods through a mixture of workshops, seminars, and one-to-one supervision the course will help you explore critical legal thinking through application and reflection. You will work with active legal researchers on subjects that may include commerce and business, human rights and social justice, criminal law and procedure, environmental and sustainability law, legal technology and innovation, equality and discrimination, constitutional reform, and the relationship between law and policy.

The first taught module on research methods is **Advanced Legal Research Methods**. Through in-depth workshops and practical exercises, you will engage with a variety of legal research approaches, including doctrinal, socio-legal, and comparative methods. You will also gain experience in using digital and empirical tools relevant to legal research (such as case law databases, policy datasets, and qualitative analysis software). This module provides the foundation for your independent research, ensuring you acquire the methodological expertise and critical skills needed to undertake your dissertation or apply your research experience beyond academia. Assessment will take the form of two research reports (totalling 5,000 words) focusing on the design, analysis, and evaluation of legal research.

The second taught module, **The Theory of Law**, engages with key theoretical and jurisprudential debates shaping the modern understanding of law. Drawing on the expertise of staff in the Law School, the module examines how contemporary legal scholarship interrogates foundational questions about the nature, purpose, and legitimacy of law. You will explore diverse schools of thought and critical perspectives including legal positivism, natural law theory, critical legal studies, feminist jurisprudence, law and literature, law and economics, and postcolonial theory and consider how these frameworks inform and challenge current legal research and practice. The module develops your ability to evaluate complex theoretical arguments, to situate your own research within broader intellectual traditions, and to reflect critically on law's relationship to morality, power, and society. Teaching will be workshop-based, and assessment will take the form of a qualitative research portfolio (totalling 5,000 words) exploring different theoretical approaches to contemporary legal scholarship.

The **Law Thesis** forms the core of the MRes in Law programme and offers you the opportunity to develop and undertake original legal research, mastering relevant methods to deepen your understanding of an area of legal or socio-legal significance. The thesis is a 20,000-word project based on a topic designed by you, negotiated and agreed with your supervisor. Projects may be doctrinal, theoretical, socio-legal, comparative, or policy-oriented or combine these approaches. Formative feedback will be provided through supervision meetings and constructive guidance on project planning, research design, ethics, stakeholder engagement, data analysis, writing, and dissemination. Supervision will include regular review points and follow formal approval of your project through the University's ethical clearance process. You will also have the opportunity to present your proposed research alongside other postgraduate researchers in the York Business School as part of the annual PGR Research Event. Throughout your studies, you will have access to a wide range of University support structures and research development resources.

All modules are designed and delivered through a range of teaching, learning, and assessment techniques, which may include in-person, online, and video lectures, workshops, seminars, debates, discussion forums, and tutorials.

Progression and graduation requirements

The University's [regulations](#) for taught postgraduate and research degree awards apply to this programme.

Any modules that must be passed for progression or award are indicated in the Programme Structure section as non-compensable.

Internal and external reference points

This programme specification was formulated with reference to:

- [University Mission, Culture and Values](#)
- [University 2026 Strategy](#)
- [QAA subject benchmark statements](#)
- [QAA Master's Degree Characteristics Statement](#)
- [Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications](#)

Date written / revised: 04 June 2026

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