

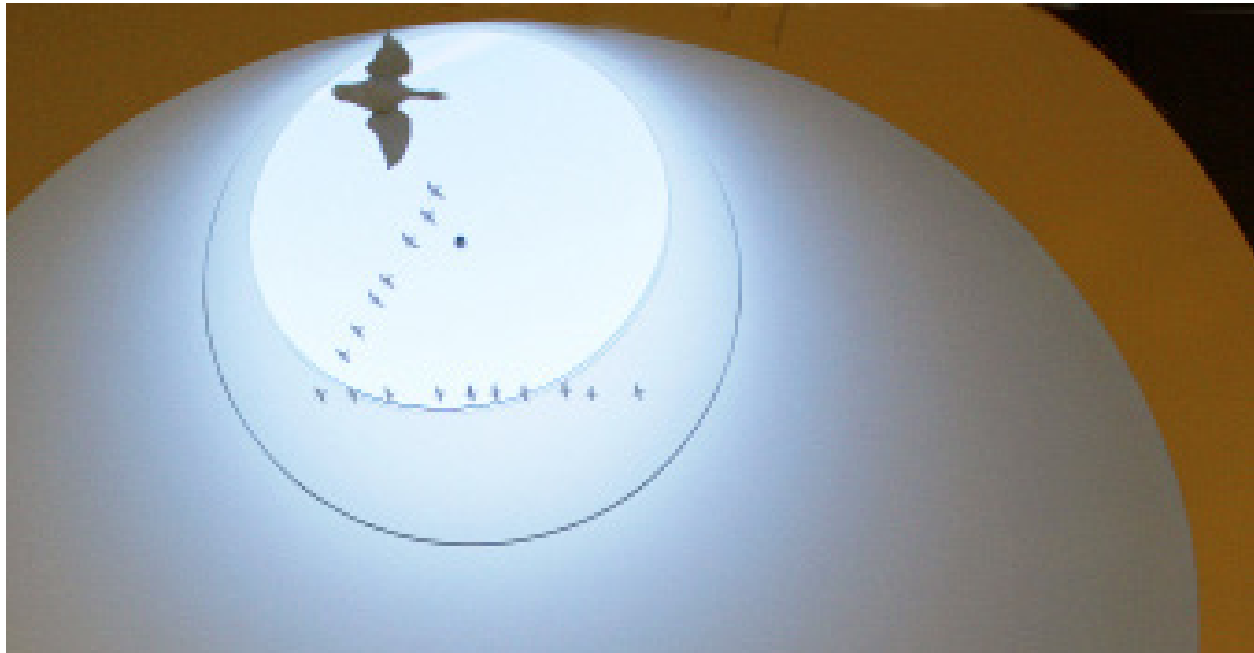


# UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND

Faculty of Law

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

SELF-REVIEW REPORT



April 2020





**UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND**

## Introduction

This report is an abstract of the Self-Review Report of the Faculty of Law at the School of Social Sciences, University of Iceland and is intended for public disclosure at the University's website.

In accordance with the Iceland's Quality Enhancement Framework at the University level in Iceland and the University of Iceland's Guidelines for the organization, schedule and process of institution-led review of faculties and interdisciplinary programs, the Faculty of Law (the Faculty), School of Social Sciences (the School), University of Iceland (the University), carried out self-evaluation during the autumn semester of 2019. The results are presented in this report. A Self-Evaluation Committee was established at Faculty meetings in April and May 2019.

The Committee members were:

1. Aðalheiður Jóhannsdóttir, Professor and Head of the Faculty, from 1 September 2019. Chair of the Self-Evaluation Committee.
2. Hrefna Friðriksdóttir, Professor and representative of tenured lecturers.
3. Björg Thorarensen, Professor and representative of tenured lecturers.
4. Eyvindur G. Gunnarsson, Professor and representative of tenured lecturers.
5. Helga Lind Mar, representative of undergraduate students (BA).
6. Jónas Már Torfason, representative of graduate students (Mag. jur.).
7. Örn Gunnarsson, Attorney at Law and Managing Partner at Lex law offices, representative of the alumni/market.
8. Sigríður Svavarsdóttir, Faculty Administration Officer.
9. Sigrún Daníelsdóttir Flóvenz, Project Manager, School of Social Sciences. Secretary of the committee.

The Self-Evaluation Committee first met with the University Council (UC) Quality Committee on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Two focus groups of students, consisting of undergraduate students and graduate students, respectively, were formed and delivered a report on the experiences of studying in the Faculty of Law, *Focus group research, Faculty of Law*. The Self-Evaluation Committee received a survey, commissioned by the UC Quality Committee, reflecting student satisfaction and dissatisfaction, covering the views of undergraduate, master's, doctoral, and postgraduate students (SSS).

The Committee also made use of a survey on job satisfaction conducted among employees in 2018. Finally, an important part of the evaluation was provided by the 2015 Self-Review Report's Action Plan and the Faculty of Law Strategy 2016-2021 (FLS), developed against the background of the Strategy for the University of Iceland 2016-2021 UI21, the Strategy of the School, and the Self-review Report 2015 along with its chief challenges. The FLS was adopted by the Faculty in 2017.

The Committee held several working meetings during the evaluation period. During 28–29 November 2019 it held two extensive meetings with international external experts. After

receiving the Externals' Report in mid-January 2020, it held its final meeting on 25 February 2020.

The Self-Review Report is divided into three main parts. Chapter 1, *Faculty of Law – Faculty Level*, provides general information relating to the Faculty, including its management structure and organisation of teaching, an overview of the present study programmes, information relating to human resources, an overview of Faculty finances, and information on the number of students and student satisfaction. Also provided is a summary of the Faculty's academic vision, the Faculty of Law Strategy 2016-2021, the Faculty's research impact, and its international collaboration. A description of measures relating to student support follows, including information on the student orientation available, on the dissemination of information on students' rights and obligations, and on support services. Nine actions are defined in the chapter.

Chapter 2, entitled *Study Programmes*, outlines and discusses each of the Faculty's study programmes and provides information on their objectives, structure, admission requirements, numbers of students, study progression, gender balance, and employability. Also discussed are surveys on student satisfaction and the outcome of the student focus groups, along with issues relating to teaching and learning, workload, and teaching methods. In total 37 actions are defined in the chapter.

Chapter 3, *Summary and Main Conclusions for the Faculty*, sets out follow-up action plans and a plan for the follow-up process and contains two action plans, one for teaching and learning, containing five actions, and for management of research containing two actions.

## Faculty Characteristics

The Faculty traces its origins to the School of Law established in 1908. When the University of Iceland was founded in 1911, the School of Law became its Faculty of Law. In 2008, with the implementation of the new University governance structure, the Faculty became one of six faculties within of the School of Social Sciences, which is the largest of the University's five schools.

The Faculty currently offers six degree programmes (Appendix 1, Table 1). From the time when the first law class graduated from the Faculty in 1912 until 2002, the programme was directed towards a Cand. jur. degree. In 2002 the Faculty decided, in accordance with the Bologna process, to offer a three-year undergraduate study programme in law (BA-degree, 180 ECTS) and a graduate study programme consisting of two years master's (Mag. jur., 120 ECTS). These two programmes are the backbone of the Faculty's activities and its services to Icelandic society.

In addition to the BA and Mag. jur. programmes of study, the Faculty offers a master's study programme in Natural Resources Law and International Environmental Law (LL.M., 90 ECTS), which is an international programme run in English, and master's study programmes in Taxation and Accounting (MA) (90 or 120 ECTS), which are interdisciplinary master's studies programmes run in Icelandic and are jointly organized by the Faculty and the Faculty of Business Administration. Moreover, the Faculty offers a doctoral study programme in law

(PhD 180 ECTS) and, since 2012, a joint PhD programme with the Faculty of Law at the University of Copenhagen (180 ECTS). Finally, the Faculty also offers a minor study programme in law (60 ECTS) that is open to BA and BS students enrolled in other faculties at the University.

As of 1 March 2019 (Appendix 1, Table 2), tenured faculty members were either professors (9, FTE 8.49), associate professors (8, FTE 5.35), assistant professors (4, FTE 2.18), or adjunct lecturers (1, FTE 0.25). During 2018, the number of sessional teachers was 82 (FTE 9.90). Of the full professors, all but one hold 100% positions, the remaining professor holding a 49% position. Of the eight associate professors, four held 100% position, one held a 75% position, and three held 49% positions or less. While one assistant professor holds a 100% position, the other three hold 49% positions or less. The general gender distribution must be considered acceptable, with men as 59% of the staff and women 41%. Measured in FTE, however, men are 46% and women 54% of the FTE units. For sessional teachers the situation is different, as men make up 62% and women 38%, measured in FTE, while men hold 71% and women 29% of the FTE units. Age distribution should also be considered acceptable, 77% of the faculty members are aged 40-59, 14% are over 59, and 9% under 40.

Currently, in autumn of 2019, the total number of students is 390. In comparison, in October 2015, the total number of students was 574. The introduction of the Learning Aptitude Test in 2014 had a negative effect on the Faculty's funding mechanism, and other negative effects are foreseeable, such as a decline in student enrolment. Although all the programmes seem to be successful (Appendix 1, Table 3), the retention rate and the completion rate in SRS431/441 is noticeably lower than in LÖG221/261 and LÖG441. The number of part-time students in programme LÖG221/261, where 70 out of 270 students were part-time, and in LÖG441, where 58 of 193 students were part-time, is also of interest. While the retention rate is only 23% in LÖG431, the completion rate (3-year rate) is 86%.

## Summary and Main Conclusions for the Faculty

### Lessons learned from QEF1

Since the previous Subject-Level Review of 2015, several measures have been taken to ensure the implementation of the 2015 Action Plan. Reflecting HI21, the School's Strategy and the Self-review Report of 2015, including its Action Plan, in 2017, the Faculty of Law adopted its own Faculty of Law Strategy 2016-2021 (FLS), currently also being implemented.

The following four items made up the core of the 2015 Action Plan.

*First*, safeguarding the permanent funding of the Faculty despite the structural changes following the introduction of the Learning Aptitude Test in 2014. Although satisfactory funding was ensured, the Faculty decided, in the autumn of 2019, to discontinue the Learning Aptitude Test. The main reason was to avoid unnecessary hindrances to law studies.

*Second*, improving funding for doctoral students. In addition to the co-funding mechanism of the Joint Doctoral Programme with the Faculty of Law of the University of Copenhagen, the Faculty will continue to co-fund at least one other PhD student at any given time. The first fully funded PhD student in the Faculty programme was hired in 2019.

*Third*, refining the internal quality control plan to ensure, for example, excellent teaching methods and active student participation in the classroom. An internal quality control plan is in place, and its development and refinement continue. Since the last self-review, teaching methods have developed considerably, and diverse study assessment is in place in all courses. Nonetheless, the latest student surveys (SSS) and the points brought out by the *Focus group research* indicate differences in the perception of teachers and students when it comes to the quality of teaching. As reflected by the SSS, 87% of undergraduate law students and 86% of master's law students are satisfied with the quality of their study programmes. However, the Faculty's score relating to diverse teaching methods and motivating students to actively participate in the classroom is lower than UI's and the School's. Regarding assessment and feedback, the response to two markers was also lower than UI's and the School's.

*Fourth*, continuing an existing plan to increase grants from competitive funds. Faculty members now rely on the excellent and growing services provided by the School (Director of Research) in preparing grant applications. While some changes have been made in the Law Institute's day-to-day management, the Institute also continues to provide assistance to individual Faculty members, with some success in funding research projects from various sources, including University research funds, for instance for PhD studies. This appears to have led to some increase in grant applications.

The four items are further elaborated in the FLS and are reflected in its goals, measures and responsibilities.

## Teaching and Learning

The Faculty of Law continues to offer excellent study programmes and overall student satisfaction continues to be high. The Faculty is dedicated to advancing the development of modern teaching methods, study assessment approaches, and constructive study feedback methods.

In addition to the largely quantitative information available through the teaching and course evaluation survey, an important component of the quality control is the Head of Faculty twice a year meeting with the student representatives. The main purpose of the meetings is to gather additional information on the quality of individual courses, including information on teaching methods. Depending on the information gathered using this approach, the Head is responsible for taking any necessary action. This usually consists of a short interview with the responsible teacher to ensure the quality of individual courses.

The development of diverse study assessment has continued since 2015. As a result, 100% final exams are no longer the norm, final exams generally account for 50 to 90% of the study evaluation, and some courses at the master's level rely solely upon continuous classroom assessment of student performance and the evaluation of student papers or other similar tasks making up parts of the assessment.

Development of diverse teaching methods is ongoing and important changes have been implemented since 2015. Many teachers use an interactive lecture method while others have experimented with flipped teaching methods and other forms of interactive teaching. Of

particular interest are the two-fold and recently implemented changes in the course *Legal Theory, Statutory Interpretation and Brief Overview of Icelandic Legal History* (18 ECTS). Facilitating these changes was the fact that the responsible teacher applied for and received a grant to advance the teaching methods in this important and fundamental law course.

In addition to the chief measures of the FLS teaching strategy, the main improvement tasks ahead include enhancing consistency in credits and workload of courses, advancing modern interactive teaching methods, supporting diverse assessment methods and feedback to students, improving student satisfaction relating to teaching and assessment of student work, strengthening the student teacher relationship with regular dialogue and regular meetings, and the progressive implementation of the CANVAS programme.

### Management of Research

The present Faculty members continue to form a strong, experienced and dedicated team of influential scholars.

The Faculty is critical of how legal research is valued through the Evaluation System for the Public Universities and is dedicated in improving the research output score. Complementing the chief measures of the FLS research strategy, and in addition to the inherent product-orientation of the Evaluation System for the Public Universities, the Faculty has in place a research output related monetary incentive for tenured teachers. While the average research output of Faculty members was slightly lower than the UI's and the School's during 2015-2018, Faculty research points stemming from peer-reviewed publication per FTE are almost identical with the School's mean, though slightly lower than the UI mean (Appendix 1, Table 4). Measures to increase research output include exempting new academics from a considerable amount of teaching (400 hours) over a period of two years.

In preparing grant applications, the services provided by the School's Director of Research are available to teachers. Moreover, once a year the Director is invited to a Faculty meeting where available research services, information on the upcoming grants and important dates are communicated to Faculty members.

### Follow-up Processes

The implementation of the Action Plan will be a standing item on meetings of the Faculty Board and similarly the Faculty Head will report on the progress regularly to the School Board. The Faculty Head reports formally to the School Dean on the status of the implementation and plans for the next year together with other relevant QA matters no later than 1 December, and this will be followed up in the School Board. The School Dean will subsequently make use of this report in a status report for all Faculties in the School, which will be submitted to the Quality Committee no later than 15 January. The Quality Committee writes a short report to the Rector no later than 1 February, which will subsequently be discussed in a meeting between the Chair of the Quality Committee, the Director of Quality Management and Rector, Vice-Rectors, Deans of Schools and the Managing Director of the Central Administration.

## Appendix 1. Key Figures.

**Table 1. Overview of present Study Programmes within the Faculty**

Name of Study Programme	Cycle <sup>1</sup>	Degree	Credits (ECTS)
LÖG261 Law	1.2	BA	180 ECTS
LÖG221 Law	1.1.	Minor	60 ECTS
LÖG431 Law, Natural Resources Law and International Environmental Law	2.2	LL.M.	90 ECTS
SRS431 Tax Law and Accounting	2.1	MA	90ECTS
SRS441 Tax Law and Accounting	2.2	MA	120 ECTS
LÖG441 Law	2.2	Mag. jur.	120 ECTS
LÖG561 Law	3	PhD.	180 ECTS

<sup>1</sup> See National Qualification Framework for Higher Education No. 530/2011.

**Table 2. Faculty members as of 1 March 2019 and sessional teachers 2018, number (No.) and full time-equivalent (FTE)**

	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	FTE	No.	FTE	No.	FTE
Professors	3	2.49	6	6.00	9	8.49
Associate Professors	6	3.60	2	1.75	8	5.35
Assistant Professors	3	1.18	1	1.00	4	2.18
Adjunct Lecturers	1	0.25	0	0.00	1	0.25
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>7.52</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8.75</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>16.27</b>
Sessional teachers	51	6.36	31	2.54	82	8.90



**Table 3. Total number of students, number of entrants, retention rate for first year, and completion rate (4-year mean).**

Programme	No. of students			No. of entrants <sup>3</sup>	Retention rate %	No. of graduates	Completion rate <sup>4</sup> %
	Total no.	Full time <sup>1</sup>	Part time <sup>2</sup>				
LÖG221/261	270	179	70	66	76	79	77
LÖG431	16	7.5	3.5	4.75	23	8	86
LÖG441	193	107	58	62	80	71	88
SRS431/441	21	2.5	9	5.5	40	3.8	63
LÖG561	6	1.5	-	0.25	-	0.75	100

<sup>1</sup> > 22.5 ECTS completed. For Ph.D. students > 1 ECTS completed.

<sup>2</sup> 1-22 ECTS completed.

<sup>3</sup> For all programmes except Ph.D., no. of students completing at least one examination in first term.

<sup>4</sup> 2-year rate for diploma, 4-year rate for B.A./B.S., 3-year rate for M.A./M.S., 5-year rate for Ph.D.

**Table 4. Research output of Faculty members, based on the Evaluation System for the Public Universities in Iceland, expressed by mean total research points (A) and mean research points from peer-reviewed publications only (B) per FTE.**

	2015		2016		2017		2018		Mean	
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
Faculty	32.5	24.3	39.8	28.5	29.0	21.3	27.8	19.1	32.3	23.3
School	37.7	22.5	38.1	25.9	33.6	21.4	37.9	25.7	36.8	23.9
University	37.8	24.7	37.1	25.1	34.8	22.8	37.8	26.4	36.9	24.8

## Appendix 2. Implementation of Action Plan for Teaching and Learning, and Management of Research in QEF2

	Actions	How	Deadlines	Responsible party
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### 1. FACULTY LEVEL

Ch. 1.2	Faculty Characteristics			
1	Strengthen human resources	Complete the hiring of 2-3 academics	September 2020	Head of Faculty
2	Ensure Faculty funding	Increase the number of first year student admissions	2020	Head of Faculty
3	Strengthen teacher-student discourse	Regular meetings	Ongoing	F & E Faculty
4	Strengthen the relationship between the Faculty and sessional teachers	Dissemination of information Participation in teachers' meetings	Each new agreement Ongoing	Admin. staff Head of Faculty
Ch. 1.3	Academic Vision			
1	Systematic implementation of the FLS	Regular assessment and action plans	Ongoing	Head/Faculty
2	Increase research output score	Information gathering and discussions with UI	Ongoing	Head/Science Committee
3	Support exchange programmes and other international collaboration	Active discussions and fostering of international programmes	Ongoing	Head of Faculty Admin. Staff UI Int Office
Ch. 1.4	Student Support			
1	Continue good student support with the aim of fostering integration and positive experiences	Regular meetings, collaboration and critical assessment of practices	Ongoing	Head of Faculty Stud. Assoc.
2	Strengthen access to information	Regular updates of all rules, regulations and guidelines and ensuring easy access on Faculty's website	Ongoing	Head of Faculty Faculty Admin. staff

### 2. STUDY PROGRAMMES

#### 2.1 LÖG221/261 Law (BA 60/180 ECTS)

Ch. 2.1.1	Students			
1	Discontinue the use of the Learning aptitude test	Decision	Autumn 2019	Faculty School of SS UI Council
2	Conduct activities promoting the Faculty in order to increase the number of applicants	Concentrated efforts in collaboration with students, such as visits to upper	Spring 2020	Faculty Stud. Assoc.

		secondary schools and social media presence		
3	Monitor course progress and general student satisfaction	Regular consultative meetings with student representatives	Twice a year after each term	Head of Faculty Student rep.
<b>Ch. 2.1.2</b>	<b>Teaching and Learning</b>			
1	Enhance consistency in credits and workload	Assessment of teaching schedules in collaboration with teachers	Spring 2020	L&E committee Course supervisors
2	Support modern interactive teaching methods linked to learning goals	Encourage teachers to apply for grants to advance teaching of individual courses	Ongoing	Faculty
3	Support diverse assessment methods and feedback linked to learning goals	Encourage teachers to advance diverse assessment and constructive feedback	Ongoing	Faculty Course supervisors
4	Improve student satisfaction on teaching and assessments	Regular student-teacher dialogue and meetings	Annual	L&E committee Faculty
5	Progressive implementation of CANVAS	Attend courses on the functions of CANVAS	Spring 2020	Faculty
<b>Ch. 2.1.3</b>	<b>Coordination between teaching and research</b>			
1	Strengthen research activities	Provide information and support for research grant applications	Ongoing	Faculty
2	Strengthen coordination between learning and research	Handbook on research and project work in the field of law	Autumn 2021	Head of Faculty Authors
1	Strengthen research activities	Provide information and support for research grant applications	Ongoing	Faculty

### 2.2 LÖG441 Law (mag. jur. 120 ECTS)

<b>Ch. 2.2.1</b>	<b>Students</b>			
1	Monitor course progress and general student satisfaction	Regular consultative meetings with student representatives	Twice a year after each term	Head of Faculty Student rep.
<b>Ch. 2.2.2</b>	<b>Teaching and Learning</b>			
1	Continue to ensure that all study programmes meet international	Regular review of course availability based on research	Annual	L&E committee Faculty

	standards and fulfil societal needs	activities and domestic and international developments in different fields of law		
2	Enhance consistency in credits and workload	Assessment of teaching schedules in collaboration with teachers	Spring 2020	L&E committee Course supervisors
3	Support modern interactive teaching methods linked to learning goals	Encourage teachers to apply for grants to advance teaching of individual courses	Ongoing	Faculty
4	Support diverse assessment methods and feedback linked to learning goals	Encourage teachers to adopt diverse assessments and to advance constructive feedback	Ongoing	Faculty Course supervisors
5	Improve student satisfaction on teaching and assessments	Regular student-teacher dialogue and meetings	Annual	L&E committee Faculty
6	Progressively implement the use of CANVAS	Attend courses on the functions of CANVAS	Spring 2020	Faculty
<b>Ch. 2.2.3</b>	<b>Coordination between teaching and research</b>			
1	Strengthen research activities	Provide information and support for research grant applications	Ongoing	Faculty
2	Strengthen coordination between learning and research	Handbook on research and project work in the field of law	Autumn 2021	Head of Faculty Authors
3	Advance opportunities for students to participate in research projects	Produce incentives	Ongoing	Faculty

### 2.3 LÖG431 Law, Natural Resources Law and International Environmental Law (LL.M. 90 ECTS)

<b>Ch. 2.3.1</b>	<b>Students</b>			
1	Monitor course progress and general student satisfaction	Regular meetings between Head of Faculty, admin. staff and students	Twice a year after each term	Head of Faculty Administrative staff
<b>Ch. 2.3.2</b>	<b>Teaching and Learning</b>			
1	Continue to ensure that all study programmes meet international standards and fulfil societal needs	Regular review of course availability based on research activities and domestic and international developments in different fields of law	Annual	L&E committee and Faculty

2	Support modern interactive teaching methods, assessment methods and feedback	Encourage teachers to apply for grants to advance teaching of individual courses	Ongoing	Faculty Course supervisors
3	Progressively implement the use of CANVAS	Attend courses on the functions of CANVAS	Spring 2020	Faculty
<b>Ch. 2.3.3</b>	<b>Coordination between teaching and research</b>			
1	Strengthen guidance in research methodology	Include in supervision	Ongoing	Course supervisors
2	Strengthen research activities	Provide information and support for research grant applications	Ongoing	Faculty

#### 2.4 SRS431&441 Tax Law and Accounting (M.A. 90/120 ECTS)

<b>Ch. 2.4.1</b>	<b>Students</b>			
1	Increase number of students in the programme	Increase prospective student awareness	2021	Supervisors
2	Make the multidisciplinary master's programme less complex and increase the information to the students.	Rearrange the inter-disciplinary master's programme by cancelling the 90 ECTS line and only offering the 120 ECTS line	2021	Supervisors of the inter-disciplinary master program
<b>Ch. 2.4.2</b>	<b>Teaching and Learning</b>			
1	Assess the compatibility of learning outcomes with teaching methods	Analytical assessment	2021	Supervisors
2	The selection of courses is based on the need of the two professional groups. It is always under review.	Follow up changes in the financial, law and accounting market	Every year	Supervisors
<b>Ch. 2.4.3</b>	<b>Coordination between teaching and research</b>			
1	To have the most tax or law qualified and specialists to be second supervisor on master thesis.	Supervisors	Every year	Supervisors
2	Constantly review the need for new knowledge regarding the two professional groups, lawyers and accountants.	Follow up changes in the financial, law and accounting market.	Every year	Supervisors.

#### 2.5 LÖG561 Law (PhD 180 ECTS)

<b>Ch. 2.5.1</b>	<b>Students</b>			
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1	Ensure the funding of one doctoral student at any given time	Direct funding and or grant applications	Ongoing	Faculty/Law Institute
2	Evaluate whether obligatory stay abroad is obsolete	Changes in the rules	2021	Science committee
<b>Ch. 2.5.2</b>	<b>Teaching and Learning</b>			
1	Revise the learning outcomes	By analysing and comparing to completed PhD projects	2020	Science Committee
2	Formalise the cooperation with foreign law faculties offering PhD courses	Agreements	2021	Science Committee
3	Formalise the mid-term assessment	Changes in rules on PhD studies	2021	Science Committee
<b>Ch. 2.5.3</b>	<b>Coordination between teaching and research</b>			
1	Strengthen research activities of PhD students	Provide information and support for research grant applications	Ongoing	School Science Committee
2	Advance opportunities for PhD students to participate in research projects	Develop incentives	Ongoing	Faculty members

### 3. Management of Research

<b>Ch. 3.3</b>				
1	Systematic implementation of the FLS	Regular assessment	Ongoing	Head/Faculty
2	Increase research output score	Information gathering and discussions with UI	Ongoing	Head/Science committee