

# Introduction

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**NOTES**

## Introduction to Legal system and method

This is a foundational module which provides you with some essential building blocks for the study of law. Learning about law and legal systems is endlessly fascinating and the material in this module provides a basis for your understanding of the other modules you will tackle as part of your University of London programme. This module will help you to become familiar with some of the special vocabulary of the law; it will introduce you to the essential skills of the lawyer – such as how to read legal cases and statutes (Acts of Parliament); and it will provide an overview of some of the key institutions and processes that make up what we understand as the legal ‘system’.

### This module is different from other law subjects

The material in this module is somewhat different from many of your other modules. While, for example, criminal law and contract law focus on detailed legal rules (what we refer to as ‘substantive law’), this subject looks more broadly at the machinery of the legal system which is necessary to make the law **work** – so that disputes are resolved peacefully and so that those who have broken the law may be brought to justice. You will need to have an understanding of what law is and its role in society as well as the meaning and significance of the concept of the ‘rule of law’. You need to understand some basic constitutional principles – such as the relationship between the government, law makers and judges – as well as how various parts of the legal system work together. You will also need to be familiar with some of the guiding principles of legal procedure in relation to dealing with civil disputes (such as disputes over contracts or property) and in relation to the detection, prosecution and punishment of criminal offences (such as theft or murder).

### Purpose and content of the module guide

This guide is designed to help you through the material that you need to learn, understand and apply. It is not a textbook, but the chapters introduce you to the factual information, ideas, policy issues and debates that form the subject matter of the module. It guides your further reading and provides a framework for understanding. Each chapter starts with an introduction to the topic and summarises the key issues that you need to know and understand. The sections of the guide direct you to Essential reading, comprising the set textbook, material in the accompanying study pack and relevant legal cases which can be found on the virtual learning environment (VLE) or in the Online Library. At the end of each chapter of the module guide there is a summary of key points and some questions for reflection, to test how well you understand the material you have read and to encourage you to undertake further reading and research, to develop your knowledge and understanding of the legal system and legal reasoning.

### Module aim

The aim of the module is to achieve an overview of the central institutions and processes of the English legal system and to introduce students to techniques of legal reasoning and interpretation.

### Learning outcomes

On successful completion of the module, you should be able to:

- 1.1 Understand the structure and operation of the central institutions and processes of the English legal system and have a basic facility with techniques of legal interpretation
- 1.2 Conduct legal research using primary and secondary resources