



Legal Research Competencies for New Law Graduates

This list, compiled by the Australian Law Librarians' Association (Vic) Inc. in 2019, sets out the legal research competencies that an Australian graduate can be expected to have at the completion of their LLB, Juris Doctor, or higher law degree. The focus is on researching Australian law. It is assumed that graduates understand how legislation is made.

1. Legislation (includes delegated legislation)

- 1.1. Know the versions of published legislation: numbered, reprinted and consolidated versions
- 1.2. Find legislation by title, year and number, or subject
- 1.3. Find the authorised version of legislation
- 1.4. Find current, repealed and point-in-time legislation
- 1.5. Find assent and commencement dates
- 1.6. Find the amendment history of an Act or regulation
- 1.7. Find legislation judicially considered
- 1.8. Find Bills and extrinsic materials
- 1.9. Determine the stage a Bill has reached in the legislative process

2. Case Law

- 2.1. Know the possible versions of a case and its reporting hierarchy: reported in an authorised law report series, reported in an unauthorised law report series and unreported judgments
- 2.2. Know how to use a citator or noting up service for a case
- 2.3. Find cases by party names, citation or subject
- 2.4. Find the most authoritative version of a case (see item 2.1)
- 2.5. Find the litigation history and judicial consideration of a case
- 2.6. Find words and phrases judicially considered

3. Commentary

- 3.1. Find commentary on a particular subject, piece of legislation or a case in secondary sources, including encyclopaedias, subject-specific commentaries and journals.
- 3.2. Find the legal definition of a word or phrase

4. Plan and conduct research

- 4.1. Determine which jurisdiction(s) apply
- 4.2. Determine whether primary and/or secondary sources are needed
- 4.3. Determine main legal concepts for the legal issue being researched
- 4.4. Construct a search using keywords and applying search operators
- 4.5. Critically evaluate resources and results for currency, relevance and authority
- 4.6. Know how to decipher a legal abbreviation
- 4.7. Know how to cite according to the Australian Guide to Legal Citation, published by the Melbourne University Law Review Association Inc. in collaboration with the Melbourne Journal of International Law Inc.

