

# NUS law school reviews course

It may scrap grades in first year, to discourage narrow focus on results

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THE National University of Singapore (NUS) Law School may stop issuing grades to first-year students and opt for a pass/fail system – in a bid to broaden their perspective instead of focusing on results.

Other possible changes could also see administrative law – where public interest or judicial review cases are raised in court – being made a compulsory study subject.

These are among a slew of suggestions up for discussion as the school seeks feedback in its first full-scale curriculum review in 10 years.

The law school, which published a discussion paper on Monday outlining potential areas for change, last engaged in a thorough review in 2002.

“The legal sector has undergone significant expansion and liberalisation; a second law school has been established; and our undergraduate and graduate programmes have become more diverse and complex,” said the co-chairs of the curriculum review committee, NUS law dean Simon Chesterman and vice-dean Ng-Loy Wee Loon, in a preface explaining the paper.

“We see ourselves as part of a global conversation about the study and practice of law. At the same time, we produce the majority of Singapore’s lawyers who service the legal needs of all sectors of the community,” they added.

The other law school is at Singapore Management University.

The review comes at a time when competition to study at the NUS school is very keen, and is seen as the university planning ahead to sustain its pre-eminent position. According to the 2012 QS World University Rankings for the best school to study law, NUS is the only Asian university in the top 10 of 200 law schools worldwide.

It is ahead of other top names such as the University of California at Los Angeles, Cornell University and King’s College, London.

The areas in the discussion paper range from the composition of first-year subjects to the teaching of legal ethics and students’ workloads, with comparisons culled from top law schools abroad.

It said a “particular issue” was how to shape the experience of law students in their first year to widen their outlook instead of being focused narrowly on grades.

It noted that the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine at NUS recently started a system that removes letter grades for first-year subjects.

“This pass/fail approach has generally been regarded as successful,” said the paper.

The law school may consider limiting formal assessments for the freshman year to help shift the narrow focus on high grades and encourage a quest for knowledge and passion for the career.

After the feedback and review process is completed and ratified, the school aims to introduce the curriculum changes for the intake in August 2014.

Practising lawyers said the law school currently has a sophisticated curriculum but periodic reviews are needed to ensure it is responsive to market shifts, changes and demands.

Feedback can be submitted to [lawcrc@nus.edu.sg](mailto:lawcrc@nus.edu.sg) by Jan 15.  
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