

# University of Guelph Law School Proposal

Federation of Ontario Law Associations  
May 13, 2026



UNIVERSITY OF  
**GUELPH**

## New Program Proposal: Juris Doctor

- The University of Guelph proposes the establishment of a professional, accredited College of Law that will grant Juris Doctor (J.D.) degrees
- The program will increase **access to justice** for all Ontarians and will feature a rigorous, experiential, and skills-based curriculum
- The program will build upon Guelph's long history and deep connection to rural Ontario to meet the continued and growing need for legal education in Ontario, including in rural and remote communities



## The University of Guelph

The University of Guelph's main campus is located an hour from Toronto – J.D. program would be located in Guelph

We are known for our leadership in Food and Agriculture, Animal, Human and Environmental Health (One Health), Engineering, Business, and issues facing rural communities

- One of Canada's top comprehensive and research institutions
- Home to a diverse community of 30,000+ students from 140+ countries
- 75+ undergraduate programs, 60+ Co-op Programs and 100+ graduate programs including **Criminal Justice and Public Policy and Justice and Legal Studies**



## Why A J.D. Program Now?

### Need for more legal education in Ontario

- A large number of Canadian students currently study law abroad
- A significant number of those students are unsuccessful in national accreditation exams
- Foreign universities and for-profit firms continue to actively recruit students promising that these programs are pathways to legal practice

### Need for lawyers in rural communities (all communities)

- Rural communities lack access to justice
  - Fewer lawyers per capita outside of Toronto (1:122 in Toronto compared to 1:595 outside)
  - Greying of the Bar and the impact on rural communities
  - The Federation of Ontario Law Associations has called for increased access to justice for Ontarians in underserved communities, including rural areas

## Why Guelph?

### **Connections with many of our disciplinary strengths**

- Food, agriculture, animal welfare, environment, public policy, new technologies, etc.
- Existing related programs
  - Criminal Justice and Public Policy, Justice and Legal Studies, Political Science

### **Strong student demand for legal education**

- Strong enrolment in related majors; Several extra-curricular student groups related to law/legal education; The University of Guelph has the highest proportion of students from rural Ontario in the sector

### **Experiential learning expertise**

- Co-op, experiential learning expertise, and competency-based training in professional programs will allow us to effectively prepare graduates for legal careers

### **Geographic location**

- No law schools serving residents of Guelph and the tri-cities or north of Guelph

## Values Guiding Program Development

### Access to Justice

- A curriculum grounded in **academic rigour**
- Skill and competency development through **experiential learning**
- Intentional integration of **emerging technologies**
- Pursuit of **inclusive excellence**
- Commitment to **Indigenization and reconciliation**
- Interdisciplinarity and **collaboration**

## Our Vision for the Program

- Guelph's J.D. program will include an enhanced Integrated Practice Curriculum (IPC+) that will incorporate experiential learning and practice elements throughout the curriculum
- The program will highlight issues of interest to rural communities
- We will incorporate a focus on law and emerging technologies including generative AI

## IPC+ J.D. Curriculum: Practice-Ready From Day 1

### Legal Practice course series:

- Five required courses across the program
- Students organized into mock law firms from admission
- Each firm mentored by faculty, practicing lawyers, and judges
- Longitudinal legal files from client intake to trial to appeal
- IPC competencies taught and assessed in real practice contexts

### Semesterly ‘intensives’:

- Short (1 – 2 week) courses focused on professional skills, legal research and writing, leadership for lawyers, etc.

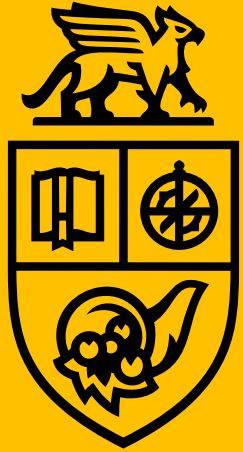
Embedded opportunities to work with legal clinics and a 15-week placement in year 3

## Unique Features of a Guelph J.D. Program

- Themes building on UofG disciplinary areas:
  - food, agriculture and agribusiness law
  - privacy and cybersecurity
  - computer science and artificial intelligence
  - One Health
  - animal welfare and the law
  - environmental governance
  - business skills for lawyers
  - land planning

## Proposed Timeline for Development

- Seeking approval from the Federation of Law Societies of Canada and the Law Society of Ontario in late 2026
- Seeking internal (University of Guelph Senate) approvals in Fall 2026
- **Proposed first intake:** Fall 2028
- **Proposed size of initial cohort:** 70 students



## Questions and discussion

University of Guelph Law School -  
FOIA Feedback

