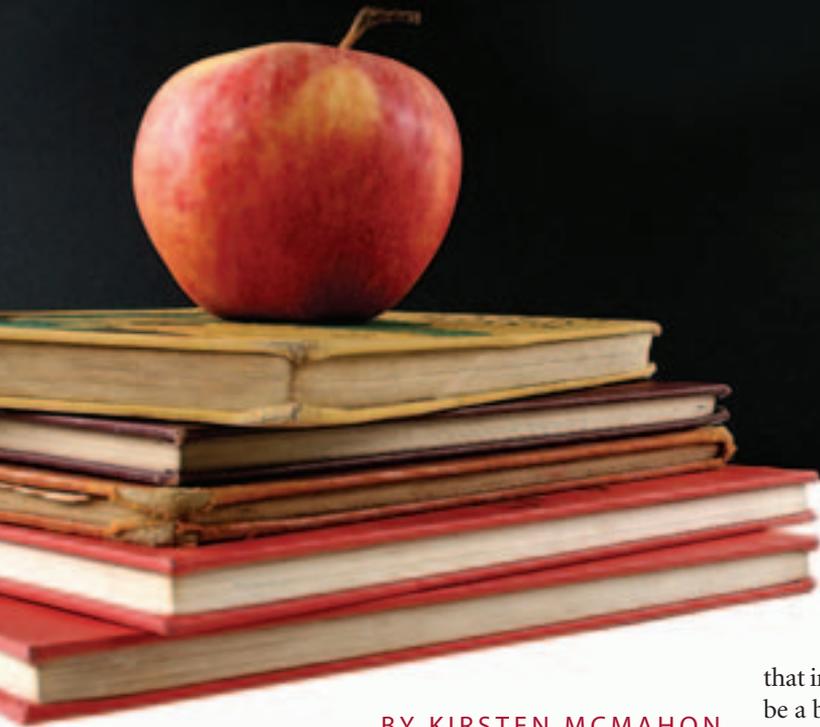


GRADING THE LAW SCHOOLS



Students give high marks to their alma maters

BY KIRSTEN MCMAHON

One thing is clear when looking over the results of *Canadian Lawyer's* annual Law School Survey: the nation's future lawyers are fortunate to have such a top-notch collection of schools to choose from.

Even if the choice is made for them — where they are only accepted to one school or have to attend a school in their community — recent grads have few complaints about their legal education in Canada. In fact, not one school on the list scored lower than a B average.

But if you dig a little deeper you'll find that just as the legal profession has changed over the last decade, so too do the schools. Just because theory and black-letter law and grading curves were the norm doesn't mean things have to remain static.

Canadian Lawyer mailed out thousands of surveys to associates who were called to the bar between 2002-2006 and of the 500-plus who responded, things are good but could be improved. While most agree the role of law school is to train a student to think like a lawyer that doesn't mean clinic programs, team projects, and other more practical skills are not welcome.

Combining an LLB with the skills learned in the bar admission course and during articling goes some way in preparing

lawyers for the practice of law, but respondents say law schools could go further.

The biggest complaint, however, continues to be the cost of legal education in this country and how that impacts where a lawyer will practise. Not everyone wants to be a big city lawyer and bar associations and law societies have been noting the sky is falling when it comes to younger lawyers not practising in small towns to replace aging baby boomers.

"I didn't realize entering law school that so many people would struggle to find jobs and how little an associate is paid in Atlantic Canada," says one respondent. "We are left with huge debt. It's an ongoing struggle."

"The impact of the cost affects everything in my career," another says. "The level of debt I'm carrying affects every decision I make in my career."

Another respondent noted that the "new" cost of law school has made general practice in a mid-sized or small city unattractive financially.

Many also felt that a career in a large firm was played up in law school and the bar admissions course at the expense of informing students about solo or small firm life. On the flip side, respondents from schools outside Ontario felt that they were overlooked during the on-campus interview process for work at larger national firms.

Law school can't be all things to all people, and each school has its own strengths and weaknesses, which are highlighted in the report cards for each school surveyed. Schools missing from this year's survey did not garner enough responses to be meaningful.

1. UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Curriculum:	A-
Faculty:	A-
Professors:	A
Testing:	B+
Facilities:	B+
Practice Relevance:	A-
Recommendation:	100%
Final Grade:	A-

Notes:

There's no denying that U of T's rich history, close ties and proximity to Bay Street, internationally recognized faculty, and high rates of employment make it a brand unto itself. But its never one to rest on its laurels and reputation.

Despite being criticized for its highly competitive student body (which respondents say is true) that doesn't mean there isn't collegiality and interaction between students.

Although tuition is the highest in the country, it has a robust financial aid program, and with a new dean, Mayo Moran, the school seems to be less-focused on touting itself south of the border as the "Harvard of the North."

Although a top school for the large firms to cherry pick the future corporate lawyers of Canada, the school has a focus on human rights and pro bono, through its five legal clinics, Pro Bono Students Canada, International Human Rights Program, Law In Action Within Schools, and the Women's Human Rights Resources.

"I enjoyed the academic environment, the friends made, and living in Toronto," says one grad. "I enjoyed volunteering at Downtown Legal Services, the poverty legal clinic."

2. UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK

Curriculum:	A-
Faculty:	A
Professors:	A+
Testing:	B+
Facilities:	B
Practice Relevance:	B
Recommendation:	100%
Final Grade:	A-

Notes:

"Canada's great small law school" is how the school describes itself, and

former students overwhelmingly agree.

UNB's greatest asset is its small size (80 students are admitted each year and the total student body is about 230). With about 20 full-time instructors (who were given the highest mark out of all of the schools), professors have the ability to get to know students on an individual basis.

While the course offerings may not be as extensive as at other larger schools, respondents say the required core courses prepared them for the practise of law.

"UNB was a great experience," says one respondent. "The class size and competence of professors can't be better elsewhere. Tuition was very low and you got to know everyone there." Another grad enjoyed close proximity to the community. "Being in Fredericton allowed law students to have access to top-level lawyers, judges, and politicians."

3. MCGILL UNIVERSITY

Curriculum:	A-
Faculty:	A-
Professors:	A
Testing:	B+
Facilities:	B
Practice Relevance:	A-
Recommendation:	100%
Final Grade:	A-

Notes:

McGill's transsystemic approach means that students are exposed to the interaction between legal traditions, in a dynamic setting where the common law and the civil law are taught and studied both in English and in French.

It doesn't hurt that its located in a cosmopolitan and culturally diverse city with lots to see and do. Plus, it's probably one of the most affordable schools in terms of tuition (\$3,040 for residents of Quebec and just under \$6,000 for those from other provinces) and living costs in Montreal are quite low.

McGill's professors garnered top marks with professors Roderick A. Macdonald and Michael Milde, and former dean of law Stephen Toope mentioned by many respondents as some of those who stood out.

"It dares to be smart," says one grad. "It has a sense of purpose and vision which permeates through the curriculum design, the faculty, and the class cohort resulting from the unique admissions policy."

4. UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

Curriculum:	A-
Faculty:	A-
Professors:	A
Testing:	B+
Facilities:	B+
Practice Relevance:	B
Recommendation:	100%
Final Grade:	A-

Notes:

There's no doubt the breath-taking vistas of Victoria are a huge advantage to attending U Vic, as well as the laid-back and slightly left-of-centre attitudes of fellow students, faculty, and the community at large. But it's not all kayaking and golfing at U Vic.

The school was lauded for its Law Co-op Program, which accepts 35 students each year, and The Law Centre — headed up by much-praised Professor Glenn Gallins — a legal clinic that provides clinical and legal experience for students.

"Clinical experience is a must, to teach client skills and managing expectations," says one recent grad.

5. OSGOODE HALL LAW SCHOOL

Curriculum:	A-
Faculty:	A-
Professors:	A+
Testing:	B
Facilities:	B+
Practice Relevance:	B+
Recommendation:	100%
Final Grade:	A-

Notes:

Many respondents to the survey in general bemoaned the lack of hands-on learning at their school. This was not the case at Osgoode where there are myriad ways to contribute and learn beyond the classroom and earn academic credit at the same time.

The school's business law workshop,

business clinic, innocence project, Community and Legal Aid Services Program, intensive programs in criminal law, aboriginal lands, resources and governments, poverty law at Parkdale Community Legal Services, mooted programs, and the Osgoode Hall Law Journal are just some of the ways students can get involved.

Top marks go to the school's esteemed faculty, including Kent McNeil, John D. McCamus, and Marilyn L. Pilkington, who were mentioned over and over again by respondents as being top-notch professors.

"It was a challenging program and I learned an immense amount," says one grad. "I also met some wonderful people."

6. QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY

Curriculum:	A-
Faculty:	A-
Professors:	A
Testing:	B
Facilities:	B+
Practice Relevance:	B
Recommendation:	100%
Final Grade:	A-

Notes:

Queen's is lauded for its LLB/MBA combined program, the civil law/common law joint degree, and the correctional law project, which deals with inmate appeals against conviction and sentence for inmates of the nine federal penitentiaries in the Kingston area

Approaching its 50-year anniversary, Queen's university-town atmosphere with its sense of community and collegiality among students and faculty scored high with grads. Professors Stan Corbett, David Mullan, Arthur Cockfield, and Howard Knopf were ranked as some of the faculty's best and brightest.

"Queen's has an excellent community and many opportunities to get involved," says one grad. "I enjoyed the people that I met, both students and faculty," says another. "Those individuals will be a part of my life for a very long time. Queen's provides a community, not just a law school."

7. UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO

Curriculum:	B+
Faculty:	A-
Professors:	A
Testing:	B+
Facilities:	B
Practice Relevance:	B
Recommendation:	100%
Final Grade:	B+

Notes:

As the business of law becomes increasingly global, exposure to another legal system is of tremendous importance. The international exchange program at Western has partnerships with law schools in the United States, Australia, New Zealand, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Singapore, India, Hong Kong, and Quebec. Approximately one in five Western Law students participate in an exchange program during law school.

Despite those long London winters, students appreciated the university town's booming social scene and collegial atmosphere.

"I enjoyed the people and the size of the law school," says one recent grad. "The school's and the students' sense of pride and collegiality makes it a positive environment in which to study law."

8. UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR

Curriculum:	B+
Faculty:	A-
Professors:	A
Testing:	B-
Facilities:	B
Practice Relevance:	B
Recommendation:	100%
Final Grade:	B+

Notes:

The faculty of law at Windsor was praised by former students for its constant innovation, especially in the area of ADR and mediation. Besides operating two poverty law clinics, Windsor is the home of the first Canadian law school-based mediation program — the University of

Windsor Mediation Service — and the integrated LLB/JD degree program, offered in conjunction with the University of Detroit Mercy.

"Windsor is a leader in ADR techniques and study," says one former student. "This was a welcome compliment to more traditional processes of legal problem resolution."

9. DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

Curriculum:	B+
Faculty:	A-
Professors:	A
Testing:	C+
Facilities:	B+
Practice Relevance:	B-
Recommendation:	100%
Final Grade:	B+

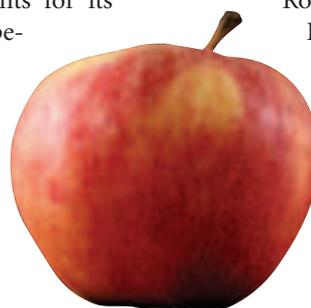
Notes:

Recent grads note Dalhousie's wide range of optional classes, along with its offerings in the marine and environmental law area. That includes a special emphasis on law of the sea, with about a dozen classes in maritime and environmental law related areas. As well, there is the school's Law and Technology Institute, where students have the opportunity to conduct advanced research under the supervision of faculty on information technology law issues.

Dalhousie Legal Aid Service, through its community law office in downtown Halifax, provides a legal-aid service for low-income clients in the Halifax-Dartmouth area where students, lawyers, and paralegals conduct cases for individual clients and also work in areas of community development, preventive law, and law reform.

Professors were given top marks at Dal, with professors Jennifer Llewellyn, Ronald Murphy, and Richard Devlin getting mentions from respondents.

"I enjoyed many of the people and many of the professors," says one grad. "Dalhousie attracted many bright, interesting students from across Canada."



10. UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

Curriculum:	A-
Faculty:	A-
Professors:	A
Testing:	C+
Facilities:	B
Practice Relevance:	B-
Recommendation:	100%
Final Grade:	B+

Notes:

Former students are proud of the law school's advocacy program, which progressively builds upon skills learned in each year of law school. In first year, all students prepare and present an oral motion. In second year, students prepare and present a trial and then take the matter on to appeal. In the appeal, the students must write an appeal factum and then present oral argument before a panel consisting of a lawyer, an articling student, and a third-year student.

In third year, students build upon these skills through a number of optional courses, which include advanced advocacy and the intensive courses in administrative law, family law, or criminal law.

"The hands-on litigation was life-changing as it pertained to my career path," says one recent grad.

11. UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

Curriculum:	B+
Faculty:	B+
Professors:	A
Testing:	B
Facilities:	B-
Practice Relevance:	B-
Recommendation:	100%
Final Grade:	B+

Notes:

With its wealth of joint-program offerings (LLL/LLB, LLB/MBA, LLB/JD) and its course offerings in both English and French, Ottawa truly is Canada's university.

Former grads give the school high marks for its focus on hot areas of law such as e-commerce,



intellectual property, and other areas of law and technology, plus the establishment of the Canadian Internet Policy and Public Interest Clinic, where upper-year law students work on projects and cases involving the intersection of law, technology, and the public interest.

Its close proximity to Parliament and the Supreme Court of Canada makes it easy for the school to bring in experts, experienced senior counsel, and judges for lectures.

"I enjoyed the diversity — both in law school and in Ottawa," says one respondent. "Our school had access to many speakers and hosted many conferences due to being in the capital city, and this alone was very appealing."

12. UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Curriculum:	B-
Faculty:	A-
Professors:	A-
Testing:	B-
Facilities:	B
Practice Relevance:	B-
Recommendation:	100%
Final Grade:	B+

Notes:

Small class sizes and the faculty's focus on energy, environment, and natural resources along with skills training make U of C a great place to be a student, say former grads.

Things can only get better with a recent \$500,000 donation to the faculty of law from Fraser Milner Casgrain LLP to develop the Energy, Environment, and Natural Resources Law Program — the first of its kind in Canada.

A strategic plan to renovate, increase admissions and faculty numbers, will make U of C one to watch in the upcoming years as a booming energy centre.

"I enjoyed the people the most — both the students and the faculty," says one former student. "The smaller size gives you access to great programs. Mooting and debating fosters the collegial atmosphere among students, staff, faculty, and the community."

13. UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Curriculum:	B+
Faculty:	B+
Professors:	A-
Testing:	B
Facilities:	C
Practice Relevance:	B-
Recommendation:	91%
Final Grade:	B+

Notes:

Although this school has been graded poorly in the past for its facilities, the recent announcement of a \$1-million gift from Farris Vaughn Wills & Murphy LLP should go some way in replacing the current building with a new structure on the site.

Professors were given top-notch marks for being knowledgeable, insightful, and challenging. Dr. Gwen Brodsky, Professors Joost Bloom — "who knew I loved contract law?" says one respondent — Robert Diebolt, Joel Bakan, and the late Stephan Salzberg were all given shout-outs for their love of the law and their ability to convey it.

"I enjoyed the dialogue and exchange of ideas with professors and fellow students," says one former student.

14. UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Curriculum:	B
Faculty:	B
Professors:	A-
Testing:	C+
Facilities:	B-
Practice Relevance:	B
Recommendation:	88%
Final Grade:	B

Notes:

The oldest university law school in Western Canada, the University of Saskatchewan's College of Law was given top marks for its outstanding faculty. Professors Ronald C. C. Cuming, R.E. Fritz, Rob Flannigan, Ken Cooper-Stephenson, and Marie-Ann Bowden were mentioned over and over again as being engaging, passionate, and challenging.

The smaller atmosphere allows for high social interaction and activities, as well as easy access to professors.

"It offered a curriculum which gave me knowledge of the law, but more importantly, taught me how to find answers to legal questions," says one former student. 