

Oslo, 2 October 2018

Subject: Position of the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights (NCHR) on the elective courses process

Introduction

This document contains the position of NCHR concerning the process of reduction of elective courses; it provides a list of electives that will be continued, the position of NCHR regarding the process of reduction and its effects, proposal for two new courses, and contains a clarification regarding the course JUS5912 - Legal Writing and Oral Advocacy in International Law.

Elective courses at the Centre

The Norwegian Centre for Human Rights has a quota of three courses, as part of the elective courses reduction framework. Currently, the academic staff at the Centre are responsible for three courses, namely:

1. Maja Janmyr, Utlendingsrett, JUS5120/JUR1120
2. Gentian Zyberi, International Humanitarian Law (The Law of Armed Conflict) JUS5730/JUR1730
3. Maria Lundberg, International Human Rights Law: Institutions and Procedures, JUS5710/JUR1710

All three courses have a rather high attendance number (way above 50) and will be continued.

The NCHR position

Given the existing framework and the current situation, the reduction of elective courses at the Faculty does not immediately affect the teaching at the Centre, or the Master Program on the Theory and Practice of Human Rights. There are no elective courses led by our academic staff or which are essential for the Master program that would need to be discontinued.

However, we would like to highlight some difficulties with the current reduction of elective JUS-coded courses. Being assigned a quota of three courses imposes a limitation on the Centre, which negatively affects the possibility for our academic staff to develop new courses on relevant areas on law and social sciences. The difficulties with integration of social sciences into our law courses, given the multi-disciplinary nature of the academic staff at the Centre, and the reduced number of courses would negatively affect the ability of some of our staff to fulfil their teaching duties.



Postadresse:
Postboks 6706
St. Olavs plass 5
0130 OSLO Norge

Besøksadresse:
Cort Adelers gate 30
0254 OSLO Norge

Tlf.: 228 42001
Faks: 228 42002
E-post: info@nchr.uio.no
www.jus.uio.no/smr

New courses

The Centre suggests the adoption of two new courses, namely Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Peris Jones), and Philosophy of Human Rights (Jakob Elster). These courses address very important areas of knowledge that are relevant to law students and students with other backgrounds, including our human rights Master program; they will combine social sciences, legal, and philosophical approaches. At the same time, the establishment of these courses will further help in addressing the fulfillment of teaching duties.

Cross-Faculty coordination and cooperation

The working group on elective courses had foreseen the possibility for difficulties in the process, given that there are several courses which while nominally relevant to a specific area of law which falls under the purview of one department, are led by staff that is currently located in another department. This means making hard choices concerning the electives that will be continued. While cross-department cooperation is desirable and might increase the quality of our courses, the quotas might negatively affect such cooperation. NCHR supports such cooperation and would like to explore possibilities for our staff to contribute to some of the human rights' focused courses at the Faculty, depending on the teaching and research interests of our staff and existing courses. At the same time, NCHR needs to have the possibility to develop a teaching portfolio which serves the needs of the students at the Faculty of Law and allows our academic staff to fulfil their teaching duties. Finally, it would have been desirable to have had a report from the Faculty working group on internationalization, as an additional benchmark to be used in the process of reduction of elective courses and eventually reorganization of the teaching curriculum at our Faculty.

Explanation regarding the course Legal Writing and Oral Advocacy in International Law, JUS5912

This course is not included in the list of courses, which go into the selection of electives. JUS5912 is a skills learning course, aimed at getting the students to develop their legal and oral advocacy skills in international law, learn more about international legal proceedings, especially those before the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court, and prepare them for potential moot courts they can participate in representing our Faculty. As course leader, I have put significant efforts and hours in improving the course over the last three years. Currently, I am considering preparing a textbook for this course, since there are no good textbooks covering international legal practice, given that most are nationally focused. JUS5912 fits well with continuous efforts at the Law Faculty to improve and increase skills-based learning.

This course has already been taken out of the general assessment of electives, being related to the moot court course (JUS5041 – Prosedyrekonkurranser; and, JUS5040 – Moot Court). As such, the course does not affect IOR's allocated number of elective courses. Finally, by way of clarification, as course leader, I have not agreed to the course being discontinued.

Kind regards,

Gentian Zyberi

Head of Department, Norwegian Centre for Human Rights