

## **Report on Series of LLM Advanced Research Methodology Special Sessions on 'Legal Research' by Prof. Dr. K. I. Vibhute at Symbiosis Law School, Pune**

Symbiosis Law School (SLS), Pune, organized a series of Advanced Research Methodology sessions focused on 'Legal Research' for its LLM students from April 2024 to July 2024. These sessions, led by Prof. Dr. K. I. Vibhute, Distinguished Professor at SLS Pune, aimed to equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge to conduct high-quality, academic legal research. The sessions were highly beneficial and saw active participation from over 70 students across various specializations, providing them with the tools to approach legal research in a methodical, rigorous, and impactful manner.

### **Objective of the Sessions**

The main objective of these sessions was to help LLM students understand the nuances of legal research and develop the ability to apply various research methodologies to real-world legal problems. Prof. Dr. Vibhute, with his vast academic expertise and experience in legal scholarship, sought to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the research process, from topic selection to data collection, analysis, and presentation of findings. The sessions aimed to:

1. Familiarize students with different research methodologies in law.
2. Guide students on how to select, refine, and narrow down a research topic.
3. Teach students the art of conducting effective literature reviews.
4. Explore methods for legal analysis and argumentation.
5. Train students to organize and structure their research in a coherent and systematic manner.

By the end of the series, students were expected to be equipped with advanced research skills that would enhance their dissertation work, legal writing, and future professional endeavors.

### **Structure of the Sessions**

The series was structured into several key sessions, each addressing critical aspects of legal research. The format consisted of both theoretical discussions and practical, hands-on training, allowing students to apply the concepts discussed during the sessions. The following is a summary of the primary focus areas covered during the sessions:

#### **1. Introduction to Legal Research and its Importance**

The first session introduced the students to the fundamental concepts of legal research. Prof. Dr. Vibhute emphasized the importance of legal research in the broader context of law and society. He discussed the distinction between different types of legal research, including doctrinal, non-doctrinal, empirical, and comparative research, and highlighted the advantages and disadvantages of each approach. He stressed that legal research is not only about the theoretical understanding of laws but also involves practical problem-solving that can have real-world implications.

Prof. Dr. Vibhute also outlined the ethical principles involved in legal research, emphasizing the importance of integrity, objectivity, and transparency. Students were encouraged to

approach legal research with a critical and inquisitive mindset, aiming to contribute meaningfully to the field of law.

## **2. Identifying and Refining Research Topics**

One of the most important aspects of legal research is selecting a suitable and manageable research topic. In this session, Prof. Dr. Vibhute guided students on how to select research topics that are not only interesting but also relevant and feasible. He explained the process of narrowing down broad topics into specific research questions that could be effectively explored within the constraints of an LLM dissertation.

Students were introduced to the concept of research gaps — areas where there is a lack of comprehensive research or where existing research is outdated or insufficient. Prof. Dr. Vibhute encouraged students to look for these gaps, as they provide an opportunity to make original contributions to the field. He also provided examples of how students could refine their topics based on current legal issues, ongoing debates, and emerging legal challenges.

## **3. Literature Review and Data Collection**

A critical part of any legal research project is the literature review. Prof. Dr. Vibhute provided students with a detailed guide on how to conduct an effective literature review. He emphasized that the literature review is not just about summarizing existing research but is an integral part of the research process that helps to build the foundation for new knowledge.

He introduced students to various legal databases, such as Westlaw, LexisNexis, and JSTOR, and taught them how to navigate these platforms to find relevant academic articles, books, case law, statutes, and legal commentaries. Students were also taught how to critically analyze sources, assess their relevance, and identify any biases or gaps in the literature.

In addition to literature review techniques, Prof. Dr. Vibhute covered data collection methods, particularly for empirical and non-doctrinal research. He explained different methods of data collection, such as surveys, interviews, field observations, and case studies, and discussed how these methods can be applied in the context of legal research.

## **4. Legal Analysis and Argumentation**

Legal analysis is central to legal research, and Prof. Dr. Vibhute devoted a significant portion of the sessions to teaching students how to analyze legal texts and arguments effectively. He explained how to approach statutes, case law, and legal principles from a critical perspective, helping students to understand not just the letter of the law but its underlying principles and implications.

He demonstrated how to construct logical and coherent arguments, providing students with tools for evaluating different legal positions. This session was interactive, with students given opportunities to practice analyzing case law and statutes, using legal reasoning to support or challenge arguments. Prof. Dr. Vibhute emphasized that strong legal research is built on clear and well-reasoned arguments, grounded in solid legal authority.

## **5. Structuring and Writing the Dissertation**

Once students had gathered sufficient data and completed their legal analysis, they needed to present their research in a clear, organized, and academically rigorous manner. In this session, Prof. Dr. Vibhute discussed the essential elements of a well-structured dissertation, including the introduction, literature review, research methodology, analysis of findings, and conclusion.

Prof. Dr. Vibhute explained how to organize a dissertation to ensure clarity and logical flow. He advised students on how to write a compelling introduction that clearly outlines the research problem and objectives. He also provided guidance on how to structure the body of the dissertation, with each chapter addressing a specific aspect of the research question. Throughout this process, students were encouraged to maintain a critical and analytical approach, ensuring that each chapter contributes to answering the central research question.

## **6. Referencing, Citations, and Avoiding Plagiarism**

A session on proper referencing, citations, and plagiarism prevention was included to emphasize the importance of academic integrity in legal research. Prof. Dr. Vibhute taught students how to properly cite legal texts, case law, statutes, and secondary sources in accordance with legal citation styles such as Bluebook, OSCOLA, and others. He emphasized the need to accurately attribute sources to avoid plagiarism and ensure the credibility of their work.

Students were also introduced to citation management tools like Zotero and EndNote, which can help streamline the process of managing references and creating bibliographies.

## **7. Presentation and Defense of the Dissertation**

The final session of the series focused on how to effectively present and defend an LLM dissertation. Prof. Dr. Vibhute provided tips on how to communicate research findings clearly and confidently, particularly in a viva or oral defense. He discussed strategies for answering difficult questions from examiners and how to engage in constructive academic debate regarding their research.

## **Conclusion**

The series of Advanced Research Methodology sessions on 'Legal Research' led by Prof. Dr. K. I. Vibhute was an invaluable learning experience for LLM students at Symbiosis Law School, Pune. The sessions equipped students with the necessary research skills to approach their dissertation projects methodically, ensuring their work was grounded in legal scholarship and contributed meaningfully to the field. Prof. Dr. Vibhute's expertise in legal research and his guidance throughout the sessions helped students refine their research topics, improve their analytical skills, and master the intricacies of academic writing. The series provided a strong foundation for students to produce high-quality dissertations and prepare for their future careers in law.