

Osgoode Hall Law School

Strategic Plan 2021–2025



The Foundations of the Plan



Our vision

The rich, innovative and accessible legal education Osgoode provides will empower our graduates to pursue flexible and challenging futures, to be leaders in the legal profession and to serve the cause of justice and the public good. Our faculty will continue to excel in producing foundational, socially engaged and world-leading academic scholarship.



Our mission

By fostering excellence in legal education and scholarly research, Osgoode responds to the priorities of our times. Embracing diversity and committed to justice and reconciliation, we are technologically attuned, locally invested yet internationally conscious, and sensitive to the needs of the many constituencies we serve.



Our values

Justice. Knowledge. Equity. Diversity.
Integrity. Innovation.

Our Planning Framework

Key focus areas

Broad thematic territories where we will focus our efforts



Strategic goals

Major objectives we have identified for the next four years



Priority initiatives

Specific actions we will take to achieve our goals



Success indicators

Measures of progress that we embed into our initiatives

How we developed this plan

The extensive consultations that shaped this plan began in February 2020. Despite the disruption of the coronavirus pandemic, our strategic advisory committee, aided by a facilitator, considered the feedback provided by key stakeholder groups, including JD students, graduate students, faculty, alumni and staff. In addition, we conducted surveys with JD students, faculty members and alumni. The result is a strategic plan that we believe reflects the needs – and advances the goals – of the entire Osgoode community.

Key Focus Area 1

Anticipating Society-Level Crisis

Drawing on well-established science and what we learned during the coronavirus pandemic, we will focus on the role of 21st-century law in addressing society-level crisis at the global level, with special attention to the existential threat of climate disruption. Through our research efforts and the education of qualified lawyers, we will provide leadership in planning the responses to future crises.

Anticipating Society-Level Crisis

Strategic goals

1. Develop a report that assesses the impacts of the global pandemic on the Osgoode community and identifies opportunities to retain practices that supported the law school's mission as we faced the challenges of COVID-19.
2. Elevate the climate crisis as a significant, cross-disciplinary priority in our future planning and allocation of resources.
3. Build awareness of the potential for society-level crisis, and of the need for effective adaptation and mitigation strategies, into the Osgoode curriculum and the education and skills development of our students.

Priority initiatives

1. Incorporate high-quality remote teaching components into the JD program, leveraging the lessons of the pandemic to enhance our responsiveness to future crises.
2. Develop a climate action plan for Osgoode, assessing our ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions – with the aim of achieving carbon-neutrality – as well as the future impacts of climate disruption on the law school.
3. Incorporate crisis planning and disaster response into our curriculum, focusing on the role of 21st-century law and the legal system in responding to and mitigating these developments.
4. Identify and promote career paths for Osgoode students that reflect the shift to a carbon-neutral economy and society.
5. Expand scholarship, knowledge mobilization, relationship-building and partnerships with outside organizations and communities as we intensify our focus on crisis-related issues.

Key Focus Area 2

Law in Local and Global Contexts

In all of Osgoode's activities, including scholarship, teaching and community building, balance local and global perspectives on the law, exploring the complex interactions between the two domains.

Law in Local and Global Contexts

Strategic goals

1. Produce graduates who are well prepared to navigate transnational, international and global forces and their growing interconnection with local legal practice, regulatory evolution and policy development.
2. Provide more in-program opportunities for international students.
3. Diversify and enrich the law school's communications with alumni and other stakeholders, as well as with students' home communities.
4. Provide support for international research collaborations through reinvigorated faculty exchanges and other academic relationships.

Priority initiatives

1. Review existing curriculum and programs that have an international or transnational focus, taking advantage of our faculty's breadth and depth of expertise in relevant areas of research.
2. Continue leveraging technology-enabled strategies to educate international students in OPD LLM degree programs, and to increase our engagement of international instructors.
3. Refresh Osgoode's web presence to attract high-calibre JD and graduate applicants, and to elevate the research profiles of graduate students and faculty.
4. Continue our initiative, in conjunction with the Black Law Students Association, to raise awareness of the advantages of a legal education, focusing on high schools local to York University.
5. Develop a plan to address the challenges of access to law school for applicants with precarious immigration status.

Key Focus Area 3

Rigorous Academic Scholarship

Sustain and enhance an intellectually vital culture of original scholarship at Osgoode, acknowledging the importance of evidence, innovation, relationships and support as foundations for academic inquiry, knowledge sharing and engaged debate.

Rigorous Academic Scholarship

Strategic goals

1. Expand Osgoode's breadth of scholarly expertise and capacity for published research, ensuring a critical mass of active scholars in key areas of legal scholarship.
2. Find new ways to recognize and celebrate faculty members' research productivity and publications.
3. Maintain the integral role of a well-resourced law library in supporting Osgoode's scholarly mission, providing open access to physical and digital collections and other educational materials.

Priority initiatives

1. Create opportunities for Osgoode faculty to dedicate more focused attention to scholarly research by fairly allocating teaching and service loads, maintaining transparent standards for research support and increasing assistance to faculty members applying for research grants.
2. Improve the ability of faculty, including those working with research-stream graduate students, to engage in scholarly research by:
 - enabling the Research Office to offer timely, substantive planning for grant and award applications, as well as assistance with grant writing and project development
 - providing continued support – and more opportunities – for faculty to exchange insights with colleagues on research experience, best practices and outcomes.
3. Strengthen academic mentorship of Osgoode's PhD students and enhance their research profiles and output.

Key Focus Area 4

Advancing Reconciliation and Justice

Take a leadership role in furthering reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, advancing justice for marginalized communities and addressing the broader challenges of systemic injustice.

Advancing Reconciliation and Justice

Strategic goals

1. Assess current efforts in Indigenization and decolonization with a view to reinforcing those initiatives that are working well and considering lessons learned for other contexts.
2. Broaden diversity among Osgoode's tenure-stream faculty.
3. Maintain our commitment to diversity in the JD and graduate programs, including racialized and Indigenous students and those with disabilities, as well as students from challenging socioeconomic circumstances.
4. Consider how the law school's curriculum can effectively direct attention to various forms of injustice, including socioeconomic injustice.

Priority initiatives

1. Complete the design of the KGN Transition (from the Anishinaabe phrase *kendaasiwin gichi naakinegewin*), a support program for newly admitted Indigenous students.
2. Consider the establishment of an Indigenous Law Institute and investigate funding possibilities for this initiative.
3. Develop an Elder-in-Residence program at Osgoode.
4. Expand the focus on lawyering and racism, including anti-Black racism, in the first-year curriculum.
5. Develop a framework to ensure the law school receives ongoing advice on equity initiatives.

Key Focus Area 5

Student Access and Success

Remove barriers to success and ensure students have the supports and resources they need to excel at Osgoode.

Student Access and Success

Strategic goals

1. Provide students with financial and other assistance aimed at removing socioeconomic status as a barrier to legal education.
2. Foster a culture of inclusion in which every student at Osgoode feels welcome.
3. Promote more diversified legal career opportunities and raise students' awareness of post-graduation options.

Priority initiatives

1. Collect and analyze data on:
 - student experience and success in law school
 - barriers experienced by disadvantaged students
 - students' professional experiences in their early post-graduation years.
2. Explore the feasibility of introducing a part-time JD program at Osgoode.
3. Direct fundraising efforts toward student financial aid.
4. Review and ensure compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).
5. Assess and reinforce mental health supports for Osgoode students.

Key Focus Area 6

Innovative and Engaged Legal Education

Develop an integrated vision of lawyering – scholarly, experiential and practical – through dynamic curriculum development that responds to current and potential future social challenges.

Innovative and Engaged Legal Education

Strategic goals

1. Further integrate evidence-based teaching and learning practices in scholarly, experiential and practical legal education.
2. Foster technical capabilities and critical reflection among law students, practitioners and academics regarding the use of technology in the legal profession.
3. Advance more flexible and inclusive modes of delivery for legal education.
4. Develop an array of curricular offerings addressing the practice needs of new lawyers.

Priority initiatives

1. Develop a vision and policy for remote learning that is well integrated with in-person educational approaches.
2. Reassess the Osgoode streams system, giving particular consideration to a law-and-technology specialization in the JD program.
3. Integrate technological literacy and related critical perspectives across the JD curriculum, focusing initially on areas such as criminal procedure, tax, labour and employment, immigration and intellectual property law.
4. Create a series of minicourses focused on developing professional skills, including business fundamentals, leadership, project management, data analytics, anti-oppression training and French for lawyers.
5. Evaluate the current array of experiential learning programs, including identifying opportunities for new programs where there are gaps.
6. Complete first-year JD curriculum reform.
7. Develop policies that promote more flexible and innovative modes of evaluation, grading and pedagogical practice.
8. Expand the reach of the current Osgoode Simulated Client Initiative.

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