



# Legal Studies (LGST) 551

## Introduction to Legislative Drafting (Revision 3)

**Status:** Replaced with new revision, see the [course listing](#)  for the current revision 

**Delivery mode:** [Individualized study online](#) . Delivered via Brightspace.

**Credits:** 3

**Area of study:** Arts

**Prerequisite:** None

**Precluded:** None

**Faculty:** [Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences](#) 

**Notes:** [Open Access Course](#)  (not for credit)

## Overview

LGST 551 focuses on the nature of legislation and on the steps in preparing legislation in common law jurisdictions, using legislative punctuation and grammar, and drafting legislative sentences. You will develop drafting skills and become familiar with approaches to legislative drafting that are typical in common law jurisdictions.

## Outline

This course is composed of several modules each with various sections and subsections as follows:

### *MODULE 1: THE BASICS*

#### **Section 1: What is legislative drafting all about?**

1. Drafting and legislative Counsel
2. Legislative expression

#### **Section 2: What is legislation?**

1. Types of legislation
2. Classification of primary legislation (Bills and Acts)
3. Structure and format of Bills and Acts
4. Conventional arrangement structure of Bills and Acts

#### **Section 3: Why do we draft as we do in parliamentary systems?**

1. Historical development of legislative drafting
2. Theoretical foundations of this form of drafting
3. Principal characteristics of this form of drafting
4. Drafting objectives

### *MODULE 2: WRITING LEGISLATIVE SENTENCES*

#### **Section 1: What do we need to know about grammar?**

1. Why is grammar important for drafting?
2. What grammatical terms do we need to know?
3. What common grammatical mistakes should we watch for?

#### **Section 2: What are the basics of writing legislative sentences?**

1. Starting to write
2. Basic components of legislative sentences
3. Types of legislative sentences

### **Section 3: How do we put together the components of legislative sentences?**

1. Principal Subject
2. Principal Predicate
3. Predicate modifiers

### **Section 4: How do we punctuate and capitalise legislation?**

1. Punctuation
2. Capitalisation

### **Section 5: What can go wrong in legislative expression?**

1. Subjects
2. Verbs
3. Modifiers

## **Learning outcomes**

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- describe the nature of legislative drafting in the parliamentary tradition and how that tradition developed;
- explain the duties and responsibilities of legislative counsel;
- present an overall picture of why legislative texts take the form they do;
- use the correct expressions to describe the main features of English grammar;
- apply the basic principles of legislative syntax and expression for writing legislative sentences;
- comply with standard drafting conventions when punctuating legislative sentences;

- compose simple legislative sentences that are unambiguous and free from common errors of expression;
- convert simple instructions into legislative sentences that are comprehensive and clear;
- apply a range of stylistic devices in composing legislation that will contribute to its effectiveness and clarity.

## Evaluation

Students should be prepared to devote the time necessary to complete the various activities in this course within six months. This includes: reading actively and critically; researching the law and legal principles and recording the results of that research; engaging in self-study exercises; and preparing drafting projects that are appropriate and adequate for their purposes. To help students develop these skills, the course instructor will provide feedback on drafting projects. Students are expected to work diligently and manage their time so as to devote adequate attention to each component of their assessed drafting within the six month course period.

To help students plan their individual study schedules, each activity is weighted proportionately. Your work in this course will be evaluated according to the principles of legislative drafting, including style, research, background/context, and grammar/mechanics.

To receive credit for this course, students will be required to complete the following activities successfully and obtain an overall grade of at least **C- (60%)** .

*Prepare drafting projects interspersed at appropriate points in the course and weighted as follows:*

Activity	Weight	Complete by
Project 1 – Part 1	10%	After Module 1, Section 3
Project 1 – Part 2	15%	After Module 1, Section 3
Project 2 – Part 1	10%	After Module 2, Section 2

Activity	Weight	Complete by
Project 2 – Part 2	10%	After Module 2, Section 2
Project 3	25%	After Module 2, Section 3
Project 4 – Part 1	15%	After Module 2, Section 5
Project 4 – Part 2	15%	After Module 2, Section 5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	

## Materials

The course materials are available on the course website. These materials include study materials, exercises, drafting project instructions, and resource materials with a bibliography and links to useful websites.

## Important links

- › [Program](#) 
- › [Courses](#) 
- › [Fees and Funding](#) 

Athabasca University reserves the right to amend course outlines occasionally and without notice. Courses offered by other delivery modes may vary from their individualized study counterparts.

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*Updated February 6, 2026*

View **previous revision** 

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