

## Branches of law

by Jamie Keddie

**Level:** Upper-intermediate to advanced.

**Time:** 60 to 90 minutes (depending on discussion time).

**Objectives:** To equip students with the knowledge and language to discuss the different branches of law in England and Wales, and to compare these to the legal system in their own countries; to be a 'needs analysis' for lawyers.

**Materials:** Copies of Worksheets 1, 2 and 3 for each student.

### Procedure

1 Tell students to imagine that they are a law student at the University of Cambridge, England. Ask what law-related subjects they would expect to see on their timetable. Make a list on the board and retain any vocabulary that arises.

2 Give out Worksheet 1 and allow students to see what subjects are studied by students of a B.A (Bachelor of Arts) in Law at Cambridge University. Alternatively, direct students to the Cambridge University website and ask them to find the list of subjects themselves. Encourage the students to discuss which subjects an undergraduate law student would study at university in their own country.

<http://www.law.cam.ac.uk/courses/ba/subjects.php>

3 Put students into pairs/small groups. Have students correlate the subjects with the definitions.

4 Allow students to leave their groups/partners and compare answers with other individuals before going over the answers with them.

*Answers: h, p, j, d, s, c, r, g, n, e, o, i, q, b, a, l, m, f, k*

(NB: This phase may result in discussion while students attempt to identify the equivalent branches in their own countries if applicable. Again, retain any vocabulary that arises.)

5 Have students decide which branches of law are most relevant to them and their work. They mark the branches with the following code:

Very relevant	1
Quite / sometimes relevant	2
Irrelevant	3

(NB: This stage can be very useful for needs analysis and therefore future lesson planning).

6 Dictate and drill pronunciation of the following words:

Civil	Criminal	Custody
Evidence	European	Illegal
Legal	Penal	Private
Public	Union	

7 Give out Worksheet 2 (Cloze). Students use the words from step 6 to fill in the blanks.

8 **Taboo / back to the board**

Individuals have to describe the branches of law to the rest of the class (or small groups) while those listening have to guess which branch is being spoken about.

### Next day follow up

1 Give students Worksheet 3 (Vocabulary follow-up).

2 Ask students how many branches of law they can recall from memory in teams / pairs / as individuals.

3 Elicit definitions to recall key vocabulary.

4 As a class, discuss the difference between:

Civil / Criminal law  
Private / Public law  
Commercial / Company law  
Jurisprudence / History of law  
International law / Conflict of laws

*Key:*

1. *Linking words:*

a. Law      c. Legal      e. European  
b. Criminal      d. Rights      f. Civil

2. *Collocations:*

a. Child custody      e. Intellectual property  
b. Trade unions      f. Multinational corporations  
c. Illegal act      g. Public/private international law  
d. Penal system

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### Definitions

- |                       |   |                          |
|-----------------------|---|--------------------------|
| a. Civil law          | h. Family law                             | n. Labour law            |
| b. Constitutional law | i. Legal history                          | o. Intellectual property |
| c. Criminal law       | j. Sentencing & the penal system          | p. Company law           |
| d. Law of tort        | k. Criminal procedure & criminal evidence | q. Conflict of laws      |
| e. Law of contract    | l. European Union law                     | r. Comparative law       |
| f. Land law           | m. Commercial law                         | s. Jurisprudence         |
| g. International law  |   |                          |

Match the branches of law from Handout 1 to the definitions below. The first one is done for you.

- h The branch of law relating to family matters and domestic relations. It deals with areas such as marriage and divorce, child custody, child/spousal abuse, adoption and alimony.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (US: corporate or corporations law). An area of law which concerns the creation and regulation of businesses organized as companies or corporations. It also deals with topics such as shareholders, directors and management, responsibilities and mergers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The study of the prosecution (punishment) of offenders (individuals who have committed illegal acts against other individuals or the state).
- \_\_\_\_\_ The area of law which deals with civil wrongs which are independent of contract, such as negligence, defective products and libel. It deals with liability (i.e. who has committed the wrong) and the damages (money) that are paid to the person or people who have suffered as a result.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The theory and philosophy of law; the consideration of themes such as natural law and theories of justice.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Also known as penal law, this branch is distinguished from civil law. It relates to illegal acts committed against individuals and the state.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The study of the differences and similarities between different legal systems (i.e. the law systems of different countries).

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- \_\_\_\_\_ This term is actually short for public international law (distinguished from private international law). It is the body of law that regulates the international activities of states, international organizations and multinational corporations. This branch of law covers areas such as territory, treaties and human rights.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ The area of law relating to the employment of workers. It encompasses issues such as contracts, conditions of work, trade unions, discrimination, redundancy and wrongful dismissal. This branch is sometimes called industrial law.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ The branch of civil law that relates to legally binding agreements.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ A branch of law which deals with issues such as copyright, patents, trademarks and the registration, ownership and protection of intangible but potentially lucrative ideas.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ Usually, the study of the origins of a particular legal system (for example the British legal system) and the constantly changing institutions, principles and ideas relating to it.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ Also called private international law or international private law. This is the branch of law that covers private international disputes in which it is often unclear who has jurisdiction (legal authority), where a trial should be held (the venue) and whose laws should be applied in order to reach a judgement.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ The study of the foundational laws that determine a state's constitution. This branch of law deals with the legal relationships between the various bodies of a government and also their relationship with the individual.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ This branch of law is distinguished from criminal law. It refers to the area of law that deals with relations between private individuals (for example wills, contractual disputes and torts such as negligence and libel).
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ The study of the objectives and implementation of the system of internal laws between member states from the European continent. This subject also examines the relevant institutions such as the European Council and the European Parliament.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ (Also called business law). This is not a distinct branch of law in the English legal system. It is a general term which includes various aspects of different branches of law such as the law of contract and of property, which are relevant to business and commerce.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ The area of law that deals with ownership of property.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ The area of law which regulates the way in which legal proceedings are conducted in criminal cases. It deals with issues such as police powers (interrogation of suspects, decision to prosecute, etc.), confessions, criminal rights, criminal trials, the function of judge and jury, witnesses, verdicts and appeals.

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**Fill in the missing words**Family law

The branch of law relating to family matters and domestic relations. It deals with areas such as marriage and divorce, child \_\_\_\_\_ (1), child/spousal abuse, adoption and alimony.

Sentencing and the penal system

The study of the prosecution (punishment) of offenders (individuals who have committed \_\_\_\_\_ (2) acts against other individuals or the state).

Law of tort

The area of law which deals with \_\_\_\_\_ (3) wrongs which are independent of contract, such as negligence, defective products and libel. It deals with liability (i.e. who has committed the wrong) and the damages (money) that are paid to the person or people who have suffered as a result.

Criminal law

Also known as \_\_\_\_\_ (4) law, this branch is distinguished from civil law. It relates to illegal acts committed against individuals and the state.

Comparative law

The study of the differences and similarities between different \_\_\_\_\_ (5) systems (i.e. the law systems of different countries).

Civil law

This branch of law is distinguished from \_\_\_\_\_ (6) law. It refers to the area of law that deals with relations between private individuals (for example wills, contractual disputes and torts such as negligence and libel).

International law

This term is actually short for \_\_\_\_\_ (7) international law (distinguished from private international law). It is the body of law that regulates the international activities of states, international organizations and multinational corporations. This branch of law covers areas such as territory, treaties and human rights.

Labour law

The area of law relating to the employment of workers. It encompasses issues such as contracts, conditions of work, trade \_\_\_\_\_ (8), discrimination, redundancy and wrongful dismissal. This branch is sometimes called industrial law.

Conflict of laws

Also called \_\_\_\_\_ (9) international law. This is the branch of law that covers private international disputes in which it is often unclear who has jurisdiction (legal authority), where a trial should be held (the venue) and whose laws should be applied in order to reach a judgement.

**Branches of law**  
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The study of the objectives and implementation of the system of internal laws between member states from the European continent. This subject also examines the relevant institutions such as the European Council and the \_\_\_\_\_(10) Parliament.

Criminal procedure and criminal \_\_\_\_\_(11)

The area of law which regulates the way in which legal proceedings are conducted in criminal cases. It deals with issues such as police powers (interrogation of suspects, decision to prosecute, etc), confessions, criminal rights, criminal trials, the function of judge and jury, witnesses, verdicts and appeals.

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**Vocabulary follow-up**

1. Can you remember the linking words?

a. Land  
Family  
European Union  
Commercial  
Labour  
Comparative  
Company } law

b. \_\_\_\_\_ { law  
procedure  
evidence  
case  
trial

c. \_\_\_\_\_ { history  
system  
proceedings

d. Human  
Criminal } \_\_\_\_\_

e. \_\_\_\_\_ { Council  
Parliament

f. \_\_\_\_\_ { law  
wrongs

2. Match the collocations.

- |                   |   |                   |
|-------------------|---|-------------------|
| a. Child          | → | act               |
| b. Trade          |   | property          |
| c. Illegal        |   | system            |
| d. Penal          |   | custody           |
| e. Intellectual   |   | international law |
| f. Multinational  |   | unions            |
| g. Public/private |   | corporations      |