

PEDAGOGICAL CHARTER

(VERSION SUBMITTED FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION
BY THE NOVA SCHOOL OF LAW COMMUNITY
FROM APRIL - MAY 2025)

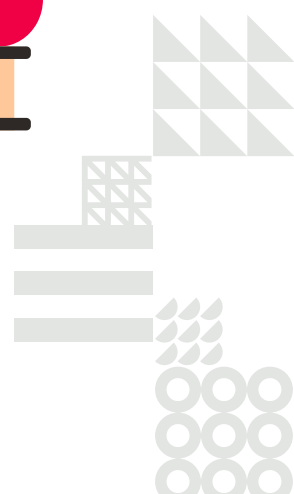




PEDAGOGICAL PILLARS OF NOVA SCHOOL OF LAW

NOVA School of Law stands for:

Empathy
Knowledge
Excellence
Pluralism
Transdisciplinarity
Openness
Boldness



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PEDAGOGICALLY, WE ARE...

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NOVA School of Law is a law school building its legacy based on academic excellence and committed to the mission of training jurists with technical, ethical, and human skills who are deeply committed to the development of society and the strengthening of human rights.

NOVA School of Law is founded on a philosophy of closeness between students and professors, fostering an academic community where students, professors, staff, and alumni actively participate and play a decisive role in shaping our pedagogy.

NOVA School of Law values pedagogical and curricular innovation while maintaining academic rigour. It continuously adapts to contemporary challenges and the incorporation of new methodologies and learning technologies underpin who we are and what we aspire to be.

NOVA School of Law promotes cultural, intellectual, and methodological diversity, developing a mindset open to social, economic, environmental, and technological changes. This approach aims to produce and shape competent, rigorous, inclusive, and globally minded jurists.

Being part of the NOVA School of Law Community involves choosing to be responsible for creating paths of transformation while building and developing robust legal knowledge.

Being part of the NOVA School of Law Community also means choosing to commit to acquiring the humanistic and legal skills to achieve more and better outcomes.





LEARNING & TEACHING

LEARNING AND TEACHING MODEL

The model for learning and teaching law in the contemporary world must be truly transformative, requiring a shift beyond the mere transmission and acquisition of dogmatic knowledge.

We alter the focus from the memorisation of rules and strictly jurisprudential and academic debates through a critical, interactive and transdisciplinary pedagogy.

At NOVA School of Law, legal education fosters the development of analytical skills, the ability to craft sound arguments and engage in reflective thinking. This enables students to independently tackle the complex and ever-changing challenges of a global technological society.

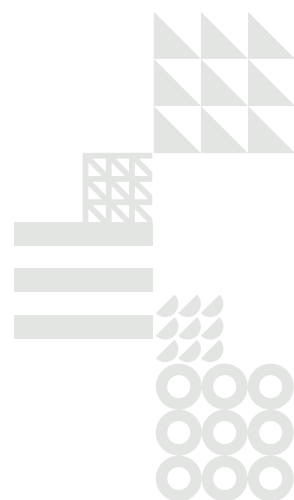
We adopt a student-centred pedagogical approach, placing the student at the heart of the educational process and emphasising the need for active learning and constant pedagogical innovation.

Students are trained to be agents of social change, aware of the increasing ethical issues that permeate legal practice.

Students and teachers share the mission of building sound rigorous knowledge and skills through dialogue and an active partnership relation.

Teachers are committed to learning, research and pedagogical innovation.

We have adopted a modular and flexible curriculum, which allows students to make curricular choices that reflect their interests and areas of specialisation and which serves as a suitable framework for educating 21st-century lawyers.





DOMINANT CHARACTERISTICS OF OUR LEARNING AND TEACHING PATH

HUMANE LAWYERS

- Humanistic, not merely technical, training and action, along with civic education, active citizenship, and personal and cultural enrichment.
- Development of “inclusive capacity”.

LEARNING

Risk-taking and trial and error as integral parts of the individual knowledge creation process.

Flexible and proactive learning processes, guided by:

- Scientific rigour,
- Practice-oriented approach,
- Learning of dogmatic analysis, and
- Contextualized transdisciplinary legal research.

Learning processes based on activities and content capable of developing:

- Critical thinking,
- Autonomy, and
- Creativity in problem-solving.

Global Perspective:

- Familiarity with different legal systems,
- Awareness of global political-legal sources, and
- Understanding movements, procedures, and dynamics of powers and individuals and their legal implications.

TEACHING

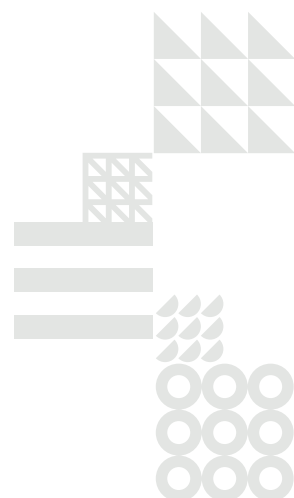
Justice as the cornerstone of society, with a commitment to excellence, ethical principles and human rights.

Fostering legal resilience, in dialogue with economic, social, cultural, technological and environmental realities.

Teaching - Learning - Research triangular link:

- triad leading to student and teacher empowerment;
 - exposure to a plurality of viewpoints;
- dynamic of mutual support between junior and senior researchers;
- involvement with practical and real-life scenarios.

Use of new technologies, both within and outside the classroom.



PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS AND STUDENTS: A RELATIONSHIP OF SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

The close relationship between students and teachers is a core value that is emphasised and valued, with increasing mentorship of all students being encouraged throughout their academic path.

Shared responsibility dynamizes the learning and teaching model, particularly in terms of:

- structuring classes as effective theoretical-practical sessions, a stimulating model of teaching that must be protected;
- supporting students in developing study and research habits that foster intellectual autonomy;
- enhancing the responsibility and autonomy of students, who should take charge of their own learning process, both inside and outside the classroom, including preparing independently for classes in advance;
- implementing assessment and feedback mechanisms to continually improve learning and teaching methods.

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

Teachers enjoy autonomy in defining the teaching methods they choose to achieve teaching and learning goals, always in accordance with the regulations and considering the Pedagogical Charter.

Teaching is ideologically impartial, objective and efficient in time management, while not oblivious to the inherent mission of public university education.

The scope of curricular unit programmes is compatible with their actual teaching load and allows for in-depth study of their main topics, covering both theoretical and practical aspects.

Repetition or gaps in content across different curricular units are addressed by consensus among the teachers.

Methods that enable students to see the gradual development of competences within the overall framework of their training are encouraged.

It is important to offer specific complementary extracurricular training, particularly in soft skills, such as conflict resolution training, communication skills, leadership and ethics.

CLASSES AND THEIR ORGANISATION

Classes are the ideal place to create and develop a solid mastery of knowledge, a good understanding of subjects and training in argumentation.

Classes are organised using the Socratic method, which enhances the relationship of shared responsibility between students and instructors.

Classes are characterised by an atmosphere of mutual respect, recognising the plurality of legal viewpoints and the freedom to express them without fear.

It is essential to find ways to motivate students to attend and participate in classes throughout the semester, regardless of whether instructors opt for supplementary assessment elements.

Breaking up large classes into smaller ones can create the conditions for more interactive classes, which are more conducive to discussing practical problems and bringing everyone closer together. Given this, any discrepancies in programme content, teaching methods and assessment methods need to be reduced.

Timetables are designed, whenever possible, to avoid excessive workloads and scattered schedules to ensure the maximum amount of time available for study.

PUBLIC SPEAKING AS THE FOUNDATION OF LEARNING

The development of public speaking skills, understood as the ability to exchange ideas and argue in public, is one of the teaching aims in our law school.

Spoken expression may be encouraged through daily participation in classes, brief oral presentations, debates, moot courts or other similar initiatives, but must not lead to replacement of teaching by student presentations.



USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES (INCLUDING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TOOLS)

Recognising the importance and challenges of incorporating new technologies into learning, teaching and research, such as digital platforms, artificial intelligence (AI) tools and other interactive resources:

- enriches the learning experience
- provides first-hand experience of risks, limitations and the need to use these consciously and ethically
- acknowledges the mastery of such technologies as being part and parcel of the gamut of skills that are essential in the labour market.

We support an ethical commitment in the use of digital platforms, AI tools and other interactive resources, namely by assuming the duty to recognise and identify the use of content generated by/through AI tools.

When using of AI tools, we value the logic of using them as research assistants, rather than replacing the user's work and accountability.

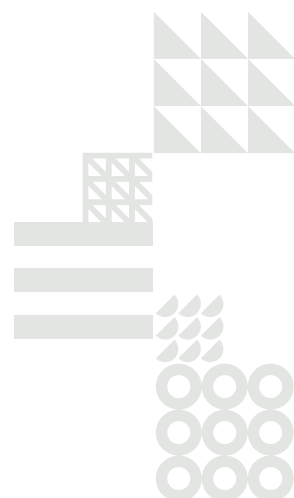
We foster a commitment to education for the ethical and conscious use of technology and the content it generates, especially content that addresses digital ethics, scientific integrity, and the challenges of using advanced technologies in the legal profession.

RELEVANCE OF THE STARTING YEAR OF STUDY CYCLES

FIRST YEAR OF THE BACHELOR'S DEGREE

Laying the foundations for legal studies:

- The first year of study is a priority target in terms of pedagogical quality and teaching and assessment methods, and should be taught by teachers of the highest quality, experience and scientific merit;
- How we welcome students is essential for their successful integration, with a focus on introducing core pedagogical principles early on;



- The creation of smaller classes is an essential aspect when designing the distribution of teaching schedules and timetables;
- It is essential to encourage class attendance and to emphasise the importance of oral participation throughout the semester, fostering the acceptance of risk taking and trial and error as an integral part of the individual process of creating knowledge; Special emphasis is placed on raising awareness of shared responsibility in the learning process, particularly valuing independent preparation of topics prior to class discussions.

FIRST YEAR OF THE MASTER'S DEGREE

Protecting and fostering continuous learning:

- The first year of the Master's degree serves as the cornerstone for deepening legal training;
- How we welcome students is essential for their successful integration, ensuring clear communication of the main guidelines for the training in the second cycle programme;
- The training provided in the second cycle has a twofold purpose: strengthening students' legal knowledge, critical thinking and practical skills necessary for legal practice, while also laying the foundations of a possible career in scientific research, developing the mechanisms and providing the tools necessary to prepare for and carry this out;
- Promotion of the link between Master's-level work and ongoing research projects in the various Knowledge Centres, as well as partnerships with external institutions for internships;
- Special emphasis is placed on raising awareness of shared responsibility in the learning process, particularly valuing independent preparation of topics prior to class discussions.

FIRST YEAR OF PHD STUDIES

Promoting rigour, excellence and innovation in advanced legal training:

- The 1st year of the PhD in Law at NOVA is the foundation for innovation, rigour and excellence, ensuring that classes, seminars and research activities are led by lecturers and/or researchers of recognised scientific merit;
- The pedagogy during the taught stage of the PhD in Law is structured to cultivate autonomous and independent researchers, with the programme encouraging the clear definition of research objectives in line with contemporary challenges, the pillars of existing Knowledge Centres, autonomous management of tasks and proactive problem-solving, by fostering a logic of shared responsibility;

• The taught programme includes advanced training in areas that complement legal research, such as:

- Academic writing and scientific publication, duly accounting for the international dimension of research;
- Innovative scientific communication, including oral presentations and the public defence of ideas;
- Mastery of technological tools for legal analysis and data management;
- Development of multidisciplinary methodologies and ethical thinking.

ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING

Assessment is an essential aspect of the learning process.

It must be carried out with the utmost fairness and rigour, serving both as an indicator of students' progress in acquiring knowledge and skills throughout their studies, and the importance of grades in the various curricular units as well as the final average of students impacting their access to the job market.

Assessment is based on the principles of rigour, evaluative freedom, mutual respect between teachers and students, transparency, equity and impartiality.

PRINCIPLE OF RIGOUR

Assessment methods are demanding and involve the meticulous, objective application of assessment criteria that contribute to creating jurists with sound knowledge and skills, capable of showing and applying these fairly and effectively.

In the assessment processes, the grade awarded is representative of the extent to which the student shows:

- mastery of the contents of a curricular unit;
- critical thinking, independent reasoning and the ability to present clear, well-founded arguments;
- the capacity to devise creative solutions in areas where legislative gaps exist.

Assessment is an opportunity for cooperative dialogue, providing appropriate feedback on learning for each of the students assessed.

Feedback on learning takes place during the semester and after the final assessment.

Rigorous assessment is incompatible with uncritical reproduction of content and, in open book exams, the option of merely transcribing texts that are available for consultation.

PRINCIPLE OF EVALUATIVE FREEDOM

Evaluative freedom, inseparable from teaching freedom, implies the autonomy of teachers to specify the assessment methods they consider most appropriate, in compliance with the Assessment Regulations and the principles outlined in the Pedagogical Charter.

When the operational conditions of a course allow it, the adoption of continuous assessment practices during the semester is encouraged. These serve as both a learning method and an assessment system.

Teachers may decide to use open-book exams, provided they respect the principle of rigour and equality between students, i.e. between those who have the financial means to purchase certain works and those who do not.

PRINCIPLE OF TRANSPARENCY

Clarity and predictability are required in defining the assessment periods, assessment methods and assessment criteria, as well as in their application.

Assessment methods, criteria and periods are specified and shared at the beginning of each semester, and remain unchanged unless in strict compliance with the Assessment Regulations and Pedagogical Charter.

Appropriate means will be used to ensure intelligibility regarding the specific reasons for assigning particular grades to written tests and assignments. These may include annotations on texts by the assessor, correction classes to explain the exam grade or sharing assessment parameters.



THE PRINCIPLE OF MUTUAL RESPECT BETWEEN TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

Students shall be treated with respect and fairness, with their physical and moral integrity safeguarded.

Teachers shall be treated with respect and fairness, with their physical and moral integrity safeguarded.

PRINCIPLE OF FAIRNESS BETWEEN STUDENTS

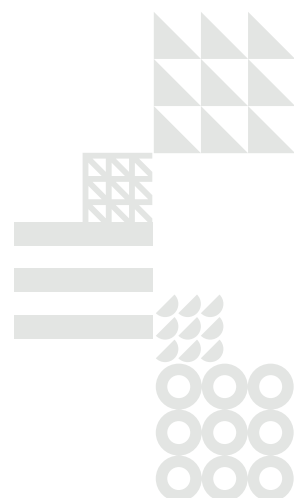
Measures are taken to ensure equity at all stages of the assessment process.

Where more than one assessor is involved in the same test or exam, consistent marking criteria are used by all assessors.

PRINCIPLE OF IMPARTIALITY

Both the impartiality of the assessor and the reasonable confidence of students in that impartiality are maintained when specifying and applying assessment criteria.

Anonymity of those being assessed is an essential guarantee of the impartiality of assessors in the marking of examinations. Additionally, technical conditions may also be implemented so that anonymity in written tests can also be introduced into continuous assessment where possible and at the teacher's discretion.





SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

Class attendance in itself is not assessed, but a student-centred learning model encourages student presence and participation in class.

Streamlining the assessment process is essential, especially to ensure that teachers can fulfil other important responsibilities, such as management roles, tasks laid down by the Deanship, scientific research activities, updating content and supervising dissertations.

LEARNING INFRASTRUCTURE

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The learning infrastructure is designed to support rigorous, high-quality education. It values the diverse elements of a learning environment capable of fostering academic success and the well-being of students.

There is a concern to integrate people with disabilities, and to ensure that the learning infrastructure is inclusive.

Community integration is part of the campus model and life takes place therein.

Specifically, the aim is to develop a meeting place open to both the local and global community.

Openness means not only inviting interaction within spaces but also designing and implementing partnerships with the private and social sectors, facilitating collaborations, exchange programmes, internships, research projects and networking opportunities, etc.

There is a commitment to integrating environmental concerns, implementing sustainable practices in campus life, where green spaces are respected and used responsibly, providing a harmonious environment conducive to learning.





LEARNING SUPPORT SPACES

The School's facilities aim to create and stimulate an open and inclusive environment. The spaces are adaptable to the different elements involved in the learning process, be it teaching, conferences, seminars, research, group work or other collaborative activities. Their architecture and organisation are designed to support innovative pedagogical practices.

CLASSROOMS

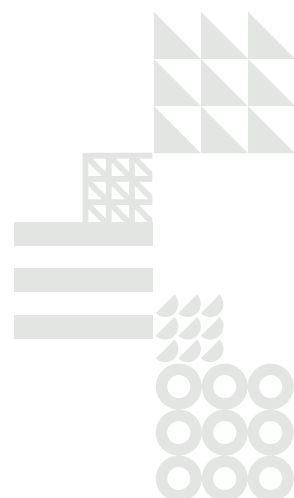
- Designed to strengthen the logic of dialogue and the Socratic method rather than theoretical explanation;
- Equipped with up-to-date audiovisual equipment to enable the exploration of methodologies based on digital tools and the development of activities in digital and hybrid formats.

DEDICATED STUDY SPACES, open all year round:

- Some spaces are dedicated to individual study, ensuring a quiet environment conducive to concentration;
- Other are designed for collaborative work, allowing dialogue and collaborative work.

LIBRARY AND ARCHIVE

- NOVA School of Law has a dual-purpose library, functioning as a physical space and a digital space, both duly curated and freely accessible to members of the NOVA School of Law community;
- The library maintains current collections of the most important journals in each of the fields taught, as well as manuals, monographs and other reference materials regularly updated to ensure access to the latest advances in the various fields of knowledge;
- The library acknowledges the importance of legal research skills and offers specialised training sessions and assistance with specific bibliographical searches upon request;
- It disseminates new methods for researching and analysing legal data.





SPACES FOR THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY TO THRIVE

- Dedicated spaces exist for student well-being and social interaction, which are essential for developing the academic community. These include rest, eating and socialising areas, including private comfortable spaces for nursing mothers and, more generally, spaces that accommodate students with special educational needs;
- Facilities for academic associations and student support services are also essential. These include psychological counselling services, support for special needs students, and mental health support, offered in collaboration with the University's Social Action Services.

OFFICE SPACES

- We recognise the importance of administrative staff in the functioning of academic life and, consequently, in establishing a pedagogical environment conducive to learning;
- We prioritise safe harmonious areas to ensure effective attendance and interaction, which fulfil administrative support functions.

LEARNING SUPPORT EQUIPMENT

Full functionality and cybersecurity requirements shall be promoted, ensuring measures to protect user data and privacy.

The information technology infrastructure must offer complete high-speed Wi-Fi network coverage across all campus areas to support the use of mobile devices and digital tools. It must also provide helpdesks for troubleshooting and technical assistance in accessing and using technological resources.

We would stress the importance of the availability of relevant hardware and software, and the human resources needed to ensure their effective use, including in unforeseen situations.

Access to online communication platforms is vital for building a learning community.



Alongside institutional email, which is the preferred communication method, it is necessary to provide a variety of technological tools critical for the training of lawyers nowadays:

- Teaching support platforms;
- Learning Management Systems;
- Premium versions of artificial intelligence platforms offering broader functionality and enhanced data protection;
- Dissemination of and training in remote access tools; and
- A variety of solutions providing access to portable electrical sockets, establishing fast battery recharging areas and/or battery lending facilities.



INTERNATIONALISATION

Internationalisation is understood as a process with pedagogical implications, representing a continuous effort to open up to the outside world and integrate a global perspective into learning, teaching and research.

Internationalisation is valued as a key differentiating factor:

- In the curriculum: an international and globally oriented curriculum results in the offering of Master's degrees, curricular units, training programmes and research projects with an international focus;
- In faculty composition: a diverse faculty, including international members with comparative global expertise. Welcoming visiting faculty able to share and contribute multiple cultural and legal perspectives;
- In the skills acquired: academic mobility, ongoing training in English, and constant exposure to global subjects allow for broader learning experiences in different legal and cultural contexts, as well as fostering more robust research and argumentation skills;
- In research: collaborating with international institutions in joint research projects, organising academic events and developing research networks;
- In human flourishing: enhancing academic enrichment through the promotion of a culture of exchange and a multicultural mentality more prone to inclusion. Students are seen as global citizens whose cultural and educational growth is prioritised;
- At the institutional level: adjusting institutionally to current times to compete internationally and introduce globally recognized forms of pedagogy.

Internationalisation will be developed collaboratively, cherishing the different individuals, skills and cultures that make up the NOVA School of Law community.



NOVA SCHOOL OF LAW COMMUNITY AT THE CENTRE OF PEDAGOGY

POSITIVE PEDAGOGY

The NOVA School of Law community is made up of students, faculty, staff and alumni, all committed to fostering an environment that embodies diversity, inclusion and non-discrimination.

Inclusion and gender equality are fundamental to creating a fruitful learning environment. These principles should be actively considered when setting up bodies, internal committees, juries, panels and/or institutional events that actively contribute to learning and to the implementation of pedagogical methods.

Regular analysis of existing and emerging barriers to greater inclusion and diversity in learning will be conducted in line with the Diversity, Inclusion and Non-Discrimination Policy. It is important that these are clearly identified and prioritised by the Head of Diversity, Inclusion and Non-Discrimination in order to find a feasible solution and/or improvement.

PROMOTION OF MENTAL HEALTH

The mental health of members of the NOVA School of Law community shall be a priority and be seen as contributing to maintaining an educational environment that promotes well-being.

Pedagogical decisions should consider the impact on the mental health of students and teachers, recognising the value of learning and teaching methods that foster empathy and social connection.

The implementation of pedagogical strategies recognising the importance of mental health in learning processes and in managing academic careers is encouraged. This includes running workshops on managing academic stress and initiatives promoting a balance between personal and academic life.



PROACTIVE AND COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

We value a culture of support and collaboration, with dialogue being seen as a means to position ideas and find solutions:

- The Pedagogical Council serves as the primary forum for dialogue between teachers and students on an equal footing. It is the privileged space for designing, rethinking and implementing pedagogical policies and solutions, in line with the regulations;
- Students are encouraged to cooperate and learn together;
- Dialogue between teachers is encouraged to avoid overlaps or gaps in content, as well as coordinating assessment dates at their discretion;
- Staff work alongside students and teachers to implement the most streamlined procedures possible for the learning and teaching process;
- We encourage the organisation of activities that promote and strengthen the sense of belonging to the community (such as informal meetings, workshops and practical training).

Implementation

Instructors and students alike play a crucial role in implementing and ensuring the application of the Pedagogical Charter.

The Teaching and Learning Committee is the primary body that, due to its composition, represents the most appropriate body for interpreting and ensuring compliance with the Pedagogical Charter: conselho.pedagogico@novalaw.unl.pt



Thank You

