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Planning Your Tax Study

Sydney Law School



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Sydney Law School is an international leader in tax education. The Sydney Tax Program offers a comprehensive range of study options, with sophisticated coursework electives, opportunities for guided research projects and special programs tailored for domestic and international participants. Units are taught either throughout the semester or over shorter periods in intensive format.

Our participants come from diverse backgrounds – from Australia and overseas, recent graduates and established practitioners, from professional firms, industry and government. And our participants have diverse goals – some will work in tax practice in Australia, some will work overseas, some will work in commercial, corporate law or general legal practice, some will work for government, some will work in industry. So the Tax Program is deliberately designed to allow participants a great deal of flexibility about which units to study, the order in which they are taken and the rate of progress through your degree.

The purpose of this brochure is to give you some ideas about how to plan your study with us – what units to choose, what order to enrol in, and how to pace your progress. The brochure has a few suggestions but we know the ultimate touchstone is to choose a program that furthers your career goals.



Some Options and Combinations

If you see your future as a specialist in Australian income tax, perhaps working in a legal or accounting firm, or working in government or the private sector, there are many available elective units that will give you both breadth of tax knowledge and real depth of understanding.

Where to start?

If you have had limited exposure to the detail of Australian tax law so far in your studies or in your career, we usually recommend that you start your study with **Introduction to Australian Business Tax [LAWS 6825]**. This unit is designed to equip candidates with the necessary knowledge and skills to achieve their full potential in the specialised tax units. Candidates with existing exposure to current tax issues are eligible to enrol in Introduction to Australian Business Tax to reinforce their existing knowledge and skills, and many do.

And then...?

It will probably make sense to include in your degree the core Australian income tax units: **Taxation of Business and Investment Income A [LAWS 6840]**, **Taxation of Business and Investment Income B [LAWS 6841]**, **Corporate Tax [LAWS 6030]**, **Taxation of Partnerships and Trusts [LAWS 6118]** and **Australian International Tax [LAWS 6209]**. Another key area to grasp is the **Law of Tax Administration [LAWS 6112]**. Participants with recent study of Australian tax law or career experience in tax will usually start with a selection of these units.

The rest?

As to the rest of your study, you can

select other units to achieve different goals: to broaden your tax knowledge and skills by expanding into other areas of tax [GST and indirect taxes, for example], to expand your horizons by looking at tax issues through the lens of other countries' experiences [comparative tax units].

The rest?

Not everyone wants to be a specialist; not everyone wants to specialise in tax; not everyone who ends up a specialist correctly predicted their field when they started out. Maybe that's you: not planning to specialise, or planning to specialise in corporate, environmental, family, trade or some other kind of law, or just not sure how the future will develop. The Sydney Tax Program also offers a suite of tax units for those who want skills and knowledge in tax to complement other studies.

Tax units for the rest...

Several units in the Sydney Tax Program are well suited to those who want to appreciate the tax dimensions of commercial life, but who don't expect to become the specialist tax adviser. These participants will often choose **Introduction to Australian Business Tax [LAWS 6825]**, **GST Principles [LAWS 6214 and 6891]**, **Capital Gains Tax, Taxation of Partnerships and Trusts [LAWS 6118]** or **Corporate Tax [LAWS 6030]** as part of their degree.

A specialist in Australia's international tax rules

One of the strengths of the Sydney Tax Program is the extensive range of international tax units – from Australia's own international tax rules, to the law of international tax treaties, and even the international tax laws of major trading economies such as the US, UK and China. If you see your future as a specialist in international tax located in Sydney, New York, London, Hong Kong or somewhere else, and working on cross-border deals and structures, then the Sydney Tax Program can help you achieve your goals.

This service also gives you access to University-owned housing, including the newly built self-catered accommodation, which is very close to the main campus.



Some options and combinations

Where to start?

To become an international tax specialist, it is necessary to start with a good foundation in Australian domestic tax. This means that you might decide to start your study with [Introduction to Australian Business Tax \[LAWS 6825\]](#) and [Corporate Tax \[LAWS 6030\]](#). Again, you could miss this step if you already have exposure to the detail of Australian tax law from study or your career.

And then...

Once you have got a firm grounding in Australian domestic tax law, it is then possible to focus on international tax. Australian International Tax is a core unit and participants will usually start their international tax program here.

The rest

As to the rest of your study, you can select other units to deepen your knowledge of international tax. Obvious choices would include the units on the more detailed Australian international tax law: the units on [CFCs \[LAWS 6129\]](#), [Tax Treaties \[LAWS 6177\]](#) and [Transfer Pricing in International Taxation \[LAWS 6123\]](#). Many participants add one or more units from the selection we regularly offer, taught by our visiting international tax faculty, on the international tax laws of the US, UK, China and other countries. Some participants also decide to enrol in comparative tax units – to expand their understanding of Australian tax law by looking at these same tax issues seen through the eyes of other countries.

The world of indirect taxes

Indirect taxes are important to industry and commerce and require the same care and attention from specialist indirect tax advisers. If you see your future as a specialist in indirect tax, the Sydney Tax Program's extensive range of indirect tax units is open to you.

A suite of indirect tax units

Participants who choose to focus their study in indirect taxes enrol in our [GST units \[LAWS 6214 and 6891\]](#), [International import / export law \[LAWS 6037\]](#), [carbon trading and taxation \[LAWS 6936\]](#). The [comparative VAT unit \[LAWS 6814\]](#) can expand your understanding of Australian tax law by contrasting our approaches with those of other countries. And [Law of Tax Administration \[LAWS 6112\]](#) will help you understand how this tax works in practice.

Supplementing other goals

Students who specialise in indirect taxes will often choose to supplement their studies with other units focussing on basic principles of income tax or cross-border trade and investment law.

Perspectives on the world

Many international participants in the Sydney Tax Program join the Sydney Tax Program to get a better understanding of their own country's tax regime – they want to see how things are done in other countries, take that knowledge home and see if those experiences are useful in a different location and context. Other participants come to study with us with an interest in the study of tax but no firm plan about working as a tax specialist in Australia or elsewhere. The range of comparative and international tax units is designed for you.

A different perspective

The comparative tax units – [Comparative Income Tax \[LAWS 6170\]](#), [Comparative Corporate Taxation \[LAWS 6153\]](#), [Comparative International Taxation \[LAWS 6128\]](#) and [Comparative VAT \[LAWS 6184\]](#), [Tax Laws of Asia and the Pacific](#), [International import / export law \[LAWS 6037\]](#) and [Public Policy \[LAWS 6257\]](#) – allow participants to explore the basic building blocks of any national tax system and to see how those parts are designed and combined.



Some real world examples

Many participants then add units on the international tax laws of a particular country, such as Australia, the US, UK, China and other countries – [Introduction to Australian Business Tax \[LAWS 6825\]](#), [UK international Tax \[LAWS 6109\]](#), [US International Tax](#) or [Chinese International Tax \[LAWS 6091\]](#).

Or maybe...

To complement these units, how about some units focussing on cross border trade and investment, transfer pricing or asset protection?

Perspectives on the world

There can be more to life than tax

The suggestions above don't exhaust your study possibilities.

Remember that Sydney Law School's postgraduate program offers a wide range of units every year covering the full spectrum of law – commercial, corporate, environmental, international and family to name just a few – and the rules of the M Tax and M Int'l Tax degrees allow you to select up to 2 units from the 'non-tax' postgraduate curriculum. Many participants enrol in units such as [Law of Asset Protection \[LAWS 6953\]](#) or [Doing Business in Emerging Markets \[LAWS 6945\]](#) and government officials will often choose [Public Policy \[LAWS 6257\]](#).

Going your own way

Not every topic that deserves studying has its own unit so sometimes participants decide to undertake an independent research project – to get to the bottom of that burning issue by a structured program of reading and writing. A research project can be equivalent to one or two units in your

Thinking about the total package

Once you have selected your units, the next thing to think about is the order. The Sydney Tax Program has very few rules about pre-requisites but it is worth thinking about the sequencing of your units so that you come to a unit with the assumed background, and with the best chance of getting the most benefit from your study.

For example, if you plan to enrol in [Introduction to Australian Business Tax \[LAWS 6825\]](#), it makes sense to do it as early as possible. That's why we offer it early and in each semester in case you decide to start mid-year.

Secondly, there are a few advanced units which build on assumed knowledge:

Try to enrol in	If you also plan to enrol in...
Corporate Tax	Taxation of Corporate Groups Taxation of Corporate Finance Taxation of M&A
Australian International Taxation	Taxation of CFCs Tax Treaties
Tax Treaties	Tax Treaties Special Issues

It is not necessary that the foundation units are completed by the time you enrol in the advanced units – we know that this is not always possible for participants completing their degree in a single academic year. It will usually be sufficient if you are enrolled in both units at the same time. The point is to resist the temptation to dive into the advanced units unless you are confident you have a firm grounding, gained either from completing the foundation unit or from your own specialised work in practice.

Note also that it is not necessary to enrol in [Taxation of Business and Investment Income A \[LAWS 6840\]](#) if you decide to enrol in [Taxation of Business and Investment Income B \[LAWS 6841\]](#) – they address discrete topics and do not build on one another. And finally, remember there are many units for which there is no pre-requisite – for these, you can just jump straight in.

Further Information

The need for speed

The last issue is pace. How many units is a reasonable load? Two units per year seems to be the standard rate of progress for candidates who are employed full-time. Three units per year is feasible, especially if one is taken in intensive mode. Taking four or more units per year is recommended only for students who are effectively studying full-time.

Still unsure?

Remember the Tax Program Co-ordinator can help you with questions about planning your studies, and the postgraduate team can help you with manage the administrative paperwork and procedures.

Contact us

Phone: 1800 SYD UNI (1800 793 864) (in Australia)
and +61 2 8627 1444 (outside Australia)

Website:

<http://sydney.edu.au/study.html>

Domestic applicants (Australian or New Zealand citizens or permanent residents of Australia)

Email via online enquiry: <http://sydney.edu.au/ask-domestic>

International applicants (Citizens of any country other than Australia and New Zealand, and not permanent residents of Australia)

Email via online enquiry: <http://sydney.edu.au/ask-international>



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