

ELEMENT 2: THE ENGLISH LEGAL SYSTEM AND STUDYING LAW

The English Legal System

Please read the following chapters from this light but informative book to help you to understand the structure and mechanisms of English law. Ignore the various activities and exam questions dotted around the book – these are not relevant to the Oxford Law course.

Jacqueline Martin, *The English Legal System* (8th edn, 2016, Hodder Education): chs 1,2,3 and 7 (chs 4, 5 and 6 are also worth reading in outline if you have the book).

Don't worry about taking detailed notes, as you'll not be directly examined on this material. However, the book does provide essential information about English law on which the rest of your study of the subject will be built, so you may still find it helpful to make brief notes as you read. Once you've read these chapters, try writing brief answers to the following questions:

- a) What are the various sources of English law?
- b) What is the doctrine of precedent?
- c) Why is it important to understand the hierarchy of English courts when reading court decisions?
- d) What is statutory interpretation, and what are some of the guiding principles for the process of statutory interpretation?

The point of this exercise is to think about these basic issues before you arrive.

If you've studied A-Level Law, you may well be already quite familiar with this material. But please still do this exercise, so that it's fresh in your mind in October.

Studying Law

In addition to the above readings, please read the following chapters, which talk about how you might set about studying law, how to look up research materials, and such like. Though don't treat them as necessarily definitive – everyone develops their own approach, with experience.

Glanville Williams, *Learning the Law* (17th edn, 2020, Sweet and Maxwell, edited by Smith): chs 3 (The Mechanism of Scholarship), 4 (Methods of Study), and 5 (Technical Terms).