Case law (often referred to as common law) interprets statutes, statutory instruments and European law in practice.

**How do I find a case which has been reported?**
Only about 1% of cases heard in any year are reported. It is only if a point of law is decided that a case is reported, therefore legally routine cases will not appear in any of the reporting services, no matter how sensational the media coverage. View this video for more information; Incorporated Council of Law Reporters: *Making legal history*

**Do you have a citation for the case?**
This will tell you exactly where to look for it. Some citations are specific to particular publishers. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ghaidan v Mendoza</th>
<th>[2004]*</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>All ER</th>
<th>411</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parties to the case</td>
<td>Year case reported</td>
<td>Volume case reported in*</td>
<td>Publication case reported in</td>
<td>Case or page number (if in doubt try both)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*only used if more than one volume a year produced. Square brackets should be used around the year of the report where this is essential to find the reference because the series is published in several volumes each year. Where this is not the case because the report has only a volume number, the brackets should be round.

Since 2001, vendor/medium neutral citations (also known as universal case citations) have come into use. These can include specific paragraph numbers (usually shown in square brackets) instead of page numbers. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parties to case</td>
<td>Year of decision</td>
<td>Jurisdiction/Court</td>
<td>Case number</td>
<td>Division</td>
<td>Paragraph</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*In some instances these fields are reversed.

**Which citation should I use?**
You should always give the neutral citation for a case if available, followed by the first available of the following in this order of precedence:
2. Official Law reports
3. Weekly Law Reports
4. All England Law Reports
5. Specialist Law reports

Why? View this video for more information: Incorporated Council of Law Reporters: *A Tale of Two Citations*
Finding the case

The University Library provides access to two industry standard databases for your primary legal sources. These are updated on a daily basis, so if you want to provide accurate and up to date evidence in your essays, now is the ideal time to learn to use Lexis Library and Westlaw. You will have opportunities over the course of your studies to obtain certification in the use of these databases. They will both be indispensable in all your independent research. There are, however, a variety of ways of finding a case many of which are shown in the Incorporated Institute of Law video: Find that Case!

If you are studying Family Law you also need to be aware of Family Law Online This single practice area collection includes a number of updated reference sources, some books, Family Law Reports, a news service and the journals: Child and Family Law Quarterly, Family Law, and International Family Law. Note that if you require a pdf version of an article, which reflects original pagination of the journal and makes referencing easier, you need to click on the link to create one.

Bibliographies
In text and in footnote citations, the “title” of a case or the party names are always printed in italics. If the footnote details are transferred to a Case List in the Bibliography, italicisation should be removed. All other details of the case are then shown, but the pinpoint reference to the precise paragraph will be omitted.

Items in blue and underlined on these pages are hyperlinked & are available as direct links in the Getting Started with Law Reading list available from the Law and Criminology page in the My Subject section of the library website.

You may need help with interpreting the abbreviations for the report publications. You will gradually recognise these for yourself, but initially you can find further help by consulting the reading list Getting started with Law available from the Law subject page of the library website, or using the Cardiff Index to Legal Abbreviations

You may also need help if you are doing a comparative study – particularly if you are looking at jurisdictions outside of the UK. In case of any difficulty please check with our enquiry team or contact Linda Jones (linda.jones@port.ac.uk), the Law Librarian or Sharon Bittner (sharon.bittner@port.ac.uk), the Assistant Faculty Librarian for Law. Additional contact details are available on the Law subject page of the library website.