Commercial law 1A - CML111S

Vacation School - 2017
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Unit 1 - What is law

- System of rules
- Governing human relations in a community
- Recognised by a legal system
- Enforced by courts of law
Basic legal Concepts

Juristic Act

- An Act
- Intended to have legal consequences
- May be Unilateral (1 Party, i.e. will)
- Or bilateral or multilateral
Basic legal Concepts - legal subjects

Juristic Act

Natural persons

- Persons/entities Recognised as holders of rights and subject to duties
- Create in terms of Act of parliament
- Companies, close corporations, banks, etc.
- Voluntary association
- Special enactment of parliament i.e. UNAM
Basic legal Concepts

- **Legal Capacity** – capacity to be bearer of rights and duties.
- **Obligation**
  - bond between legal subjects (render performance)
  - **Contract** – agreement between 2 or more people with intention creating obligations
  - **Delict** – unlawful act/omission that causes harm to person/property/or legal personality
  - **Unjustified enrichment** – gaining something or obtaining an asset without legal ground
Crime - Unlawful conduct for which wrongdoer can be punished by the state.

Execution of property - right to proceed to attach the debtors property and sell it in execution in order to satisfy the judgment debt
# Unit 2 - The Administration of Justice

## Criminal proceedings
- **Criminal law**
- State acting on behalf of community
- State will prosecute
- Prove beyond reasonable doubt

## Civil proceedings
- Civil dispute
- Between individuals/entities
- Effects them only
- No proof punishment
- Proof on a balance of probability
Namibian Court System

- Chapter 9 of constitution (article 78) provides that judicial power vests in judiciary

- Consists of supreme, high and lower courts
Jurisdiction

- Supreme court
- High Court
- Lower Courts: Magistrate Courts & Regional Courts
High Court

- Consists of Judge President & Judges
- Hear and adjudicate all civil disputes and criminal prosecutions
- Hear cases involving interpretation, implementation and upholding constitution
- Divorce proceedings
- Mental capacity applications
- Sequestration & liquidation applications
- Validity or interpretation of will
**Lower Courts**

- Presided over by magistrates
- **Criminal and civil jurisdiction**
- **Magistrate courts**
  - Cannot hear certain cases i.e. divorce
  - Illiquid claims > N$ 25 000
  - Liquid claims > N$ 100 000
  - No rape, murder or treason cases
  - Criminal cases - maximum of 5 years imprisonment or fine of N$ 20 000.
Lower Courts

- Regional Courts
  - Can try murder and rape but no treason
  - Can impose jail term of N$ 20 000
  - Fine of N$ 100 000
Rules of natural Justice

- Audi alterem Partem - listen to the other side.
- Nemo judex in sua causa - no one may act as a judge in his or her own case.
### Officers of the Court

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legal practitioners</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conveyancers</td>
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<td>Notaries Public</td>
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<td>Advocates</td>
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<th>Other Court officials</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sheriff</td>
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<td>Messenger of the court</td>
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Unit 3 - Sources and classification of Law

Sources of law

- Common law
- Legislation
- Customary law
- Judgments of court
- Secondary sources i.e. old authorities
  foreign law text books
- International law
### Common law

- Originating source of our law
- Roman Dutch and English law in Southern Africa
- German Law & English law also influenced our law
- Many Common law principle have been replaced by legislation or case law
Legislation

- Most important source of law in Namibia
- Law made by competent authority
- Also known as statutes & Acts of Parliament
- Most important legislation is Act 1 of 1990 - constitution
- Constitution is supreme law of Namibia
Custom

- Rules of conduct that have become binding over the years
- Must be reasonable
- Must have existed for considerable period
- Recognised and observed by community
- Must be certain and clear
Customary law

- Also known as indigenous law
- Passed through generations
- Article 66 of constitution recognises it to extent its not in conflict with the constitution or statutory law and may be repealed or modified by Act of Parliament
Judgements & law Reports

- Judgements - judicial precedents
- Law Reports - selected cases for publications
Doctrine of stare decisis

- Each court bound by its own decision previous decisions unless if it was wrong
- Courts bound by decision of a higher court unless if based of mistake
- Will not apply were legislation was promulgated after previous decision
- Implies hierarchy of courts
- Implies judgments must be reported
Ratio decidendi

- Reason for decision
- Binding force
- Must be followed & is subject of the doctrine of stare decisis
- Statements that fall outside ratio decidendi = obiter dictum
## Classification of Law

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Law</th>
<th>Private Law</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Governs relationship between state and its subjects</strong></td>
<td><strong>Governs relationship between individuals</strong></td>
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</table>
Classification of law

Substantive law
- Determines the content and meaning of different legal rules

Procedural law
- Regulates the enforcement of substantive law
- Deals with how case must be handled when a legal rule is violated
Unit 4 - General Introduction to contracts

Definition of a contract

- Agreement
- Between 2 or more parties
- With serious intention to
- Bringing about an obligation
Requirements of valid contract

- Consensus
- Contractual capacity
- Performance possible
- Performance is lawful
- Formalities complied with
## Valid, Void & Voidable

- **Valid contract** - all 5 requirements of a valid contract met
- **Void** - one of the requirements of a valid contracts is absent
- **Voidable** - all requirements of a valid contracts are present but can be set aside by one of the parties i.e. misrepresentation, duress or undue influence
## Unilateral & Bilateral Contracts

- **Unilateral** - only one party to the contract has duty to perform and the other party a corresponding right.
- **Bilateral** - both parties have duties and corresponding right.
### Unit 5 - Consensus

- Agreement about the same subject or thing
- Reached only if:
  - Parties have serious intention to create legal obligation
  - Content of obligation is common
  - Complete agreement as to persons
  - Parties aware of legal consequences
Requirements of valid offer

- Complete and definite
- Serious intention to be legally bound - adverts no offers unless if it contains a reward
- Directed to an offeree
- Offer must have come to the knowledge of offeree
Falling away of an offer

- Revocation
- Expiry
- Rejection
- Death or legal incapacity of either party before acceptance
Revocation of an offer

- May be withdrawn provided that it not yet been accepted
- Must be communicated to offeree
- In the same manner as the offer was expressed
- Cannot be withdrawn if offeree has already begun to perform
Expiry of offer

- Expires when time limit for acceptance expires
- If no time limit is set offer remains open for a reasonable period
Rejection of an offer

- If rejected offeree cannot later change his/her mind
- Can be reject by express rejection or making a counter offer
- Counter offer: rejection of original offer and offeree becomes offeror
Death or legal incapacity of either party before acceptance

- Offer expires
- Unless if the offeror intended other parties to be substituted for himself/herself or the offeree
Option & Right of preemption

**Option**
- Offer to conclude specific contract
- Additional contract to keep first offer open for specified period
- Option giver is obliged to sell

**Right of preemption**
- Right obtained when concluding a contract with another in terms of which the grantor, in the event he decided to sell a specific thing must first offer it to the holder of the right of preemption
- Granter of right not obliged to sell
Acceptance of an offer

- Expression of will
- To accept the offer without qualification
- Can be expressly made
- Tacitly
- Spoken or written words
Requirements for a valid acceptance

Must be:

- Unconditional and unequivocal
- In response to an offer
- By the person to whom an offer is made
- Communicated to the offeror in the manner prescribed
- Made while offer still exists
Information theory

- Agreement is reached the moment when and at the place where consensus is reached
- Acceptance by telephone
Expedition theory

- Contract comes into existence at the moment when and where the offeree posts the letter of acceptance
- Contract becomes binding
- Subsequent rejection will be breach of contract
- Can no longer be withdrawn
- Will only apply if offeror authorised acceptance by posts
Electronic Contracts

- No electronic communications law
- Expedition theory will not apply as sender may receive undeliverable message
- Until there is legislation information theory will apply
Factors influencing consensus

- Mistake
- Misrepresentation
- Duress
- Undue Influence
Mistake

- Misunderstanding
- Mistake perception
- Of the identity of the other contracting party
- Which influences decision to contract
# Types of mistakes

- Regarding the performance or the nature of the transaction
- Regarding the qualities or attributes of the agreed subject
- Regarding identity of the person or offeror’s offer reach the wrong person
- Regarding the motive of the contract – not material
# Types of Mistakes

**Contract is void if:**

- Mistake relates to fact or legal rule
- Fact or legal rule is material
- Mistake is reasonable and excusable
Mistaken Party must show

- Mistake relates to a material matter
- Was not due to his own fault
- Was reasonable in the eyes of the law
Misrepresentation

- Unlawful
- Untrue
- Statement about an existing fact or state of affairs
- Made by one party to the other party
- Before or at the time when the contract is entered into
- With the aim of inducing aggrieved to enter into the contract
- Can be by conduct or words or both
- By non disclosure only when there is a duty to speak
Effect of Misrepresentation

- There is consensus
- Consensus is defective
- Aggrieved party can chose to uphold/cancel
- Contract is voidable
- if contract is cancelled aggrieved party can demand restitution.
What Aggrieved party must prove

That misrepresentation:
- There was misrepresentation of fact
- Was material
- By other party
- With intention to induce
- In fact was induced
Kinds of misrepresentation

- Innocent - without intention or negligence
- Negligent - false statement of fact made negligently (failure to take reasonable steps)
- Fraudulent/ intentional - knew statement was untrue or did not honestly believe in the truth of the statement or recklessly made the statement
Duress

- Unlawful threat
- of harm or injury by one party
- Which causes the other party
- to conclude contract
Duress - Requirements

- force or threat of force
- Threat must be unlawful
- Force directed against life, freedom, person or property
- Harm must be imminent
- Fear must be reasonable (objective)
- Threat must come from contracting party
Undue influence

- Improper
- Unfair conduct
- That persuades
- The other party
- To conclude the contract
Undue influence - requirements

- Party must have exercised undue influence over victim
- Exercised undue influence in unscrupulous manner
- Pressure weakened powers of resistance
- Contract to the detriment of the aggrieved party
Unit 8 - Contractual Capacity

- Capacity to be bearer of rights and duties
- Perform juristic acts

Categories:
- No contractual capacity
- Limited contractual capacity - need assistance
- Full contractual capacity - can perform themselves
## Persons with no contractual capacity

1. *Infans* - have not reached 7 years
2. Insane persons - not realising consequences of their acts (contract is void). If restitution is not possible a claim can be based on unjustified enrichment
3. Intoxicated persons (contract is void)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persons with limited contractual capacity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can perform certain juristic acts but need assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Pupillis</td>
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<td>2. Married persons</td>
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<td>3. Unrehabilitated insolvent persons</td>
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<td>4. Prodigals</td>
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<td>5. Legal entities</td>
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Pupillis

- Not yet 21
- Not yet married
- Not declared major by the high court (must be at least 18)
- Not emancipated -
How will the guardian assist the *pupillus*

- Being present when contract is concluded
- Giving approval
- Giving approval retrospectively

**When will minor not need assistance:**
1. Can make deposit at post office
2. If 16 may deposit and withdraw money from bank account
3. If 18 can take out insurance policy
4. If 18 can give consent to medical treatment
### Effect of a minors unassisted contract

- Minor is not bound
- Binding on the other party
- With assistance of guardian or after becoming a major can enforce contract
- Contract limps
- Other party may enforce it on following grounds of ratification, estoppel unjust enrichment.
Wife has capacity to:

1. Register immovable property in her name
2. Act as executor of deceased estate
3. Act as trustee of insolvent estate
4. Bind herself as surety

Section 7 of married persons equality Act - list of acts that require consent
Unrehabilitated insolvent persons

- Someone whose estate has been sequestrated
- After sequestration trustee is appointed to distribute assets amongst creditors
- Contract voidable at instance of master of the high court
- May conclude other contracts i.e. marriage
Prodigals

- Cannot manage their affairs
- Declared prodigal by high court
- Curator appointed to assist prodigal
Objective impossibility – no contract will come into existence and no claim for counter performance

Subjective impossibility – impossibility is relative and does not render contract void
Unit 10 - Legal possibility of performance

- Contracts prohibited by statute
- Contracts contrary to the common law
  1. Contracts contrary to good morals
  2. Contracts contrary to public interest
  ✓ Contracts obstructing the administration of justice
  ✓ Contracts in restraint of trade
Contracts in restrain of trade

- Restrict liberty of one or both parties to engage in one or more specified commercial activities for a specified period and or within a specified geographical area
- Protection of Goodwill
- Trade secrets
Validity of contracts in restrain of trade

- Article 21 (1) (j) of constitution guarantees right to practice profession of their choice
- Law will strive to uphold contract entered into freely
- Conflict between public interest that everyone should partake in trade in business and public interest that contracts must be executed
- Courts regard contractual commitment as stronger of the two
- Valid and enforceable if concluded freely
# Consequences of unlawful Contracts

- Are void
- Cannot claim performance
- Party in possession of the performance is in the stronger position if the parties are equally guilty - par delictum rule (parties must have clean hands)
Contributes to legal certainty
Parties can agree that contract must be in writing and signed by the parties
Non compliance with formalities results in contract that is void
### Contracts where formalities are required

- Sale of land must be in writing
- Suretyship must be in writing
- Credit agreements must be in writing
- Bill of exchange, cheques and promissory notes must be in writing
- Antenuptial contract must be notarially executed
Parol evidence

- When a contract has been reduced to writing
- The written contract is regarded as the exclusive memorial of the transaction
- No evidence may be given in except the document or secondary evidence of its contents
Unit 12 - Terms of a Contract

- Express - written/spoken
- Tacit - not expressed
- Implied terms - incorporated by operation of law

Can be classified as:
- Condition
- Time clause
- Warranty
- Cancellation clause
- Penalty clause
- Entrenchment clause
Essentialia, Naturalia and Incidentalia

- Essentialia – essential to place a contract in a certain category
- Naturalia – automatically incorporated into contract as implied terms unless if parties expressly exclude them i.e. guarantee against latent defects unless if excluded by voetstoots clause
- Incidentalia – specifically agreed upon by the parties over and above required by law
The Condition

- Renders operation and consequences of contract dependent on the occurrence, or non-occurrence of an uncertain future event.
- Suspensive Condition - suspends operation of contract until happening of an uncertain future event.
- Resolutive condition - operative on conclusion of the agreement and has full effect but the continued existence of the contract is dependent on uncertain future event.
The Condition

- **Time clause** - performance is suspended (Suspensive time clause) or terminated (Resolutive time clause) until or by the happening of a certain future event.

- **Suspensive time clause** duty to perform is postponed until a determined or ascertainable moment has arrived.

- **Resolutive time clause** - obligations flowing from contract will have effect only until the arrival of a certain moment or until the expiry of a certain period in time.
Warranty

- Relates to the absence of defects or presence
- Of a good characteristics in the warrantor’s product or services
- Does not include sales talk and puffing
Cancellation clause

- Known as Lex commissoria
- Entitles contracting party to cancel the contract if other party is in breach of contract
- Cancellation can be done without demand
Penalty clause

- Fixed sum of money
- Or other benefit is to be paid or transferred
- To the injured party in the event of breach of contract
Entrenchment clause

- Agreement may be altered only by means of written amendment.
- Variations must be in writing and signed by the parties or their agents.
Unit 13 - Parties to a contract

1. Agency/representation - concludes contract on behalf of another

2. Contracts in favour of third parties
   - known as *stipulatio alteri*
   - One party agrees with another to perform something for the benefit of the third person
   - Intended to enable beneficiary to step in as party to a contract with one of the original contracting parties
   - Third party must first accept benefit before acquiring rights
### Unit 14 Transfer of contractual rights and Obligations

**Cession**
- Transfer of a right by agreement
- Rights can be present or future
- Does not create new obligations
- By agreement
- Cedent divested of his rights
- Certain rights may not be ceded (options to buy on credit)

**Delegation**
- Transfer of a duty
- From one debtor to another
- Opposite of cession
Distinction between Cession & delegation

- 3rd party in place of creditor
- 3rd party in place of creditor
- Transfer of a right
- Change of creditor
- Consent of debtors not needed
- Cessionary in place of cedent

- Debtor delegates duty to perform
- New contract between creditor and 3rd party
- Transfer of duty
- Consent of creditor needed
- New debtor in place of old debtor
Unit 15 - Termination of a Contract

- Performance
- Agreement - release, novation, compromise
- Operation of law - set off, merger, extinct prescription supervening impossibility
Performance

- Must be in the manner specified by the contract or equivalent manner
- Generally by person obliged to perform
- Must be rendered to the creditor
- Must be made at place agreed
- At time - expressed or tacitly determined in contract
Agreement

- Release - creditor releases debtors from contractual obligations
- Novation - replacing existing obligation with a new one which discharges the existing obligation
- Compromise - each party giving up on some or all of his / her previous demands
Set off - 2 debts are discharge/ larger is reduced by the smaller amount

- Parties reciprocally indebted
- Debt must be of a similar nature
- Debt has to be liquidated
- Debt must be due

Merger - concurrence of debtor and creditor in the same person and of the same obligation
Extinctive prescription – passing of time

- **30 years** – debts for mortgage bond, judgment debt, taxation, owed to the state in respect of any share of the profits
- **15 years** – debt owed to the state arising from advance or loan of money
- **6 years** – debt arising from bill of exchange or other negotiable instrument or notarial contract
- **3 years** – any other debt
Operation of law

Supervening impossibility of performance
- Objectively or absolutely impossible
- Vis major (major force)
- Casus fortuitus (inevitable accident)
- Natural forces or human agency
- Beyond control of parties
- Not foreseen
Unit 16 Breach of Contract

- Were debtor/creditor does not perform, performs late or performs in the wrong manner
- Forms of breach of contract
  - Mora debitoris
  - Mora creditoris
  - Defective performance
  - Repudiation
  - Prevention of performance
Mora Debitoris

- Delay in performance - default to perform in time or within reasonable time
- Types - Mora ex re & Mora ex persona

**Mora ex re**
- Failure to perform on stipulated date
- No need for any demand

**Mora ex persona**
- No date of performance was stipulate
- Debtor not automatically in mora
- Creditor must demand performance within reasonable period
Requirements for Mora debitoris

- There must be a delay in performance
- Debt must be claimable (not have prescribed)
- Default to perform must be due to fault of debtor
Mora Creditoris

- Creditor is at fault
- Delaying the debtor's performance without justified cause
- Does not cooperate to make performance possible
Defective Performance

- Performance contrary to contract stipulations
- Takes the following forms:
  - Performance not rendered according to contract
  - Debtor does something not under the agreement
Rescission

- Only used in exceptional circumstances
- Cancellation
- Communicated to other party
- Contract is dissolved
- Innocent party may claim damages
Cancellation on the ground of mora debitoris

- Where such right is provided for in the agreement
- Breach is serious
- Time is of the essence
- Where the creditor made time of the essence by means of notice of rescission
Cancellation on the grounds of mora creditoris

- Debtor may cancel contract under same circumstances as creditor may cancel
- Debtor is entitled to the ordinary remedies for breach of contract
Damages

- Claimed whether contract is upheld or cancelled
- Only patrimonial / pecuniary (no damages for pain and suffering)
- Purpose is to put creditor in position he/she would have been if the debtor performed according to contract
- Requirements:
  - breach of contract
  - Loss suffered
  - Reasonably foreseeable
  - Factual causation
  - Duty to mitigate
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Repudiation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Debtor indicates that he/she rejects contractual obligations</td>
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<td>Expressly/tacitly</td>
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<td>Must be clear intention to repudiate</td>
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<td>Prevention of Performance</td>
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<td>Debtor released from his obligations where performance becomes impossible</td>
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<tr>
<td>Where debtor intentionally/negligently prevents performance by making it possible</td>
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<td>Must be an absolute impossibility</td>
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1. Specific Performance - where a court order compels performance

Takes the form of:
- Order to do something
- Restore something
- An interdict to refrain from doing something
- Order to pay money instead of performance

Will not be ordered where
- Performance is impossible
- Will cause disproportionate loss
- Difficult for court to supervise
- Damages will adequately compensate the plaintiff
Specific performance - where a court order compels performance
- An order to do something
- Restore something
- Interdict to refrain
- Order for the payment of money instead of performance
- Courts have discretion to refuse it
Specific performance will not be ordered if:

- Performance becomes impossible
- Will cause disproportionate loss
- Difficult for court to supervise
- Award of damages will be adequate compensation
Rescission (cancellation)

- Specific remedy
- A creditor may use in exceptional cases
- Takes effect from time it is communicated
- Notice to cancel may be given in writing or orally
- Contract is dissolved
- Parties must restore anything received
- Innocent party may claim damages
Cancellation on the grounds of Mora debitoris

- Where breach is serious
- Where time is of the essence
- Where creditor made time of the essence by means of a notice
Cancellation on grounds of mora creditoris

- Debtor may cancel in same circumstances as creditor
- Debtor is also entitled to ordinary remedies
Cancellation and defective performance

- Creditor has right to cancel
- If contract has cancellation clause
- Even if defect is trivial
- If no cancellation clause creditor can cancel if performance is serious and creditor cannot be expected to abide by the contract
**Damages**

- Purpose is to put creditor in position he would have been if debtor performed

- Requirements
  - Must be breach of contract
  - Loss was suffered
  - Causation between breach and damages
  - Damages was reasonably foreseeable or agreed to
  - Reasonable steps take to mitigate damages
Penalty stipulation

- In proof and calculation of damages
- To avoid difficulty of calculation parties may agree on penalty clause
Thank you