

BIRMINGHAM LAW SOCIETY RESPONSE TO SURVEY OF THE QUALITY OF THE ACADEMIC STAGE OF TRAINING

The Education and Training Committee of Birmingham Law Society has produced the following response to the survey of the quality of the academic stage of training. However, we would have preferred more time to obtain views from more practitioners and supervisors of trainees within our region and hope we have the opportunity to feed into the training stage amendments more fully in the future.

1. We believe that the Qualifying Law Degree does not prepare trainees for practice as we believe it is not totally intended to give practical context but substantive law context. However, the Qualifying Law Degree and the Legal Practice Course together prepare trainees for practice although, as detailed below, certain areas could be improved.
2. The six compulsory subjects studied on the Qualifying Law Degree are adequately or well taught. However, we feel that European Union Law is not taught to the same extent as some of the other subjects, and yet it permeates a number of disciplines in practice. Therefore, this area could be further developed.

In relation to Public Law including Constitutional Law, Administrative Law and Human Rights we are of the view that Public Law could be taught to a lesser extent compared to Constitutional Law where there may be gaps in students' knowledge. Also, it may be that Criminal Law plays a lesser role in practice today than historically, and, perhaps, this need not be taught as a full compulsory module. This would enable time to be freed up for the areas mentioned in 3. below.

3. Should any additional subjects be added to the list? Company Law and/or Civil Procedure and Evidence may be considered important areas to include. It may be that Civil Procedure and Evidence is more important to current practice than Criminal Law which is now a smaller area in practice than in previous years.
4. It is difficult to assess how much trainees transfer the skills learnt from the academic stage of training into practice as the skills acquired during the academic stage are further developed on the LPC. It is the LPC which tends to be highlighted or the major course before entering practice, therefore, it is impossible to separate the two stages and assess whether the base skills are adequately acquired during the academic stage. It is essential to have both stages to prepare trainees for practice.
5. As regards the calibre of students coming into practice, in our view, generally the trainees are well prepared and have very good skills for the initial stages of practice. Trainees have very good or good research skills and oral skills. The standard of grammar and spelling is not always of a

high standard, however, this cannot be totally the responsibility of the academic or vocational stage as students are not being taught to a satisfactory level before entering university. It would be beneficial for standards to be improved. Also, the trainees need to be trained to write short, concise business letters, this should be focused upon in the LPC. Finally, their drafting skills could be improved.

6. An additional skill which should be added to the list supplied for the academic stage of training is the ability to assimilate large amounts of legal information.