



The Law Society

## **Joint Academic Stage Board**

Guidance on the determination of learning resources for recognised law programmes

## Introduction

1. In 1999 the Law Society and the General Council of the Bar (the professional bodies) issued a Joint Statement setting out the minimum requirements which have to be complied with before an undergraduate degree is recognised as satisfying the first or academic stage of training for entry into the legal profession. The Statement has been approved by the Lord Chancellor under Schedule 4 of the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990. In addition to defining content, the Statement requires an institution to satisfy “the professional bodies that adequate learning resources are provided to support the course of study”<sup>1</sup>. This reflects provisions in both the Society’s Training Regulations and the Bar’s Consolidated Regulations which enables us to have “regard to the provision of adequate learning resources” when recognising qualifying law degrees.
2. Following a review and consultation last year, we have agreed to work in partnership with institutions in respect of quality assurance of qualifying law degrees. This document, which deals with the complex issue of resources, should be seen in that context. We hope that it will be of assistance when developing and reviewing recognised law programmes. It has been developed to be used as a tool by validation and review panels<sup>2</sup> in order to help them identify whether or not the resources provided for the programme are adequate to satisfy our requirements for a law programme to be a “recognised law programme”. In determining the level of resources to be devoted to any programme for which recognised status is sought, we expect universities to take into account the guidance in this document and any other guidance, which may be issued by us from time to time. It is accepted that recognised law programmes may be delivered on a full-time; part-time or distance learning basis and that the precepts set out in this Statement will need to be addressed in the context of the particular mode of delivery.

## Format

3. In this document the requirements are identified through a series of precepts<sup>3</sup> with which we expect an institution to be able to demonstrate that it is seeking to achieve. The precepts are grouped into four sections dealing with human resources, physical resources, student support and franchise arrangements. Following each precept are a number of questions which a validation or review panel should ask when seeking to determine to what extent the precept has been adhered to. Because the academic stage of training is set at undergraduate degree level, we expect the level of resources to be at the level provided in higher education even where the programme, or part of it, is delivered in a further education institution or in any other institution.
4. This document deals only with resources. It is planned to issue further guidance on other aspects of quality assurance in due course. Further it is only concerned with minimum levels of resources. **We would encourage all universities offering recognised law programmes to be committed to exceeding the precepts set out in this document.**

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 2 (i)

<sup>2</sup> It applies to all panels whether appointed by an institution or the professional bodies or jointly between the two.

<sup>3</sup> Set out in Annex 1

## Definitions

“Academic stage of training” means the initial stage of training for entry into the legal profession in respect of which the Law Society and Bar Council act jointly.

“Collaborative arrangement” shall have the meaning placed upon it by QAA.

“Law school” means the group of academic staff within a institution who are responsible for the teaching of a qualifying law degree.

“Materials” in relation to library provision includes printed sources, microforms, audio-visual works and electronic information sources.

“The professional bodies” means the General Council of the Bar of England and Wales and the Law Society of England and Wales.

“Qualifying law degree” means a course of study which leads to the award of an undergraduate degree and is recognised by the professional bodies as satisfying the academic stage of training.

“QAA” means the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education or its successor.

“Recognised law programme” means an undergraduate law degree, senior status degree, diploma in law or CPE course recognised by the professional bodies as satisfying the academic stage of training.

“Scholarly activity” means an activity undertaken by a teacher, other than the teaching of a course, which is undertaken to enhance and develop the competence of the teacher.

“Teachers” and “teaching staff” means persons employed by the institution on a full-time or fractional contract and includes postgraduate students who undertake teaching duties.

“Institution” means a higher education institution which has degree awarding powers conferred by the Privy Council or which provides a law programme which is recognised by the professional bodies as satisfying the requirements of the Academic Stage of training.

## The basic requirement

**An institution should provide sufficient resources for any recognised law programme for which they are responsible, either directly or indirectly<sup>4</sup>, to enable students enrolled upon the programme to gain the knowledge and acquire the skills set out in Schedules One and Two of the Joint Statement and the QAA Law Subject Benchmark.**

In determining whether this basic requirement has been met, we will take into account, inter alia:

- Guidance etc published by us and by responsible bodies with an interest in higher education and undergraduate/post-graduate law programmes such as QAA, SLS and BILETA;
- National standards set for higher education, for example, in respect of teaching staff contact hours;
- The outcomes of the institution's own procedures in respect of its corporate or business plan and its own validation processes. For new providers, in determining the weight to be placed upon an institution's own process, we will place considerable emphasis on the involvement of external specialist advisers in both the planning and validation procedures.

## The specific precepts

### Section One - Human Resources

#### Staffing - Teachers

**1. The institution should ensure that its law school has sufficient appropriately qualified members of the teaching staff to meet the needs of the recognised law programme.**

When seeking to determine whether this precept has been achieved, the following questions should be asked:

- What is the total number of teaching staff which the institution devotes to its recognised law programme(s)? How many are full-time, fractional appointments and hourly paid?
- What is the past and anticipated weekly teaching load of individual staff teaching on the recognised law programme? Does the weekly teaching load fall within the current norms in national contracts for staff employed in higher education?
- In determining the number of teaching staff to be devoted to the law programme, a panel should seek the following information:
  - i. The number of formative and summative assessments.
  - ii. The number of subjects an individual member of staff is expected to teach.
  - iii. The extent of personal tutoring and other required guidance.
  - iv. The extent to which the need for staff teaching at or above undergraduate level to update their legal knowledge and to engage in scholarly activity has been recognised.

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<sup>4</sup> e.g Through a franchise arrangement with any other institution or college.

- v. The extent to which the need for at least some of those teaching on senior status degrees and graduate conversions courses to have had appropriate experience of teaching students who already hold a degree in another subject.
  - vi. The additional support required by part-time and hourly paid staff.
  - vii. Are the current teaching staff appropriately qualified to teach and assess on an honours degree programme or postgraduate programme?
- In the case of a new programme, the following additional questions should be asked:
    - i. What is the planned initial intake and the planned total enrolment when the recognised programme is fully operational?
    - ii. What is the total number of teaching staff which the institution proposes to devote to the programme when it is fully operational?
    - iii. What provisions have been made to recruit staff? Is there a suitable timetable for the recruitment of new staff?
    - iv. What teaching methods are proposed for the programme? Is the proposed number of appropriately qualified staff sufficient?

### **Continuing Staff Development**

#### **2. All members of the teaching staff should have adequate opportunities to engage in appropriate on-going staff development, including research and scholarly activities.**

When seeking to determine whether this precept has been achieved, the following questions should be asked:

- What is the institution's policy on staff development? What are its priorities? How is the policy implemented and its implementation monitored?
- What resources are made available to support these activities? How are the resources distributed?
- What part does the course team play in identifying and responding to staff development needs?
- Does staff development activity contain a suitable balance between pedagogy and the advancement of legal knowledge?
- To what extent are staff on fractional appointments and hourly paid covered by the institution's staff development policy?
- What training is provided to teaching staff in matters relating to teaching and learning?
- What role do research and scholarly activities have in supporting the recognised law programmes?
- Are adequate resources available to support staff development?

## Staffing – Support Staff

### **3. The institution should provide adequate clerical administrative and technical support for its recognised law programmes including adequate support for its teaching methods.**

When seeking to determine whether this precept has been achieved, the following questions should be asked:

- How is clerical, administrative, library and technical support allocated to the programme?
- What role is currently played or envisaged for clerical and administrative staff in the recruitment and assessment procedures?
- What clerical and administrative support is provided to course leaders, admissions tutors, year and subject leaders?
- What demands are made on library and technical staff by the current or proposed teaching methods?
- To what extent have resource requirements for the library and technical staff been considered in the on-going development of the programme?

## Section Two - Physical Resources

### Library and Information Technology Provision

#### **4. In planning and developing its law library and information technology provision, an institution offering a recognised law programme(s) is expected to take into account the current version of “A library for the modern law school: A statement of standards for university law provision in the United Kingdom” (‘The Statement’), a copy of which can be downloaded from the website of the Society of Scholars – [www.legalscholars.ac.uk](http://www.legalscholars.ac.uk).**

When seeking to ensure whether this precept has been achieved, the following questions should be asked:

- Who has formal responsibility for the management of the law library? Does that person participate fully in the development of the law library’s policy?
- What provision has been made for reviewing periodically the adequacy, currency and appropriateness of the law library provision? What steps are taken to ensure that out-of-date materials are not readily available to students without clear guidance?
- How are the resource requirements for new teaching identified and provided for?
- Does the law library provide the minimum materials set out in paragraph 4.3 of the Statement (2003 Revision) or the corresponding paragraph in any subsequent revision of the Statement? If not, what strategy has been adopted to seek to achieve these minimum levels?
- What is the balance between electronic information sources and printed sources?
- What is the policy in respect of multiple copies?
- Is there sufficient seating provided for the expected number of users of the law library in close proximity to the law collection?
- Has adequate equipment been made available to access, use and copy all information in whatever formats represented in the law collection?

- What action is taken to ensure that students have the necessary expertise and experience to access material?
- In the case of new law schools:
  - i. Is there a plan to develop the collection etc to comply with the guidance in the Statement? How is that to be funded?
  - ii. Are there appropriate back-runs of older issues of serials? If not, how will the needs of students be met?

**5. The institution should ensure that those responsible for the law library etc participate in the BIALL/SLS Annual Academic Law Library Survey undertaken under the auspices of the Society of Legal Scholars.**

When seeking to determine whether this precept has been achieved, the following questions should be asked:

- Do the library staff participate in the annual survey? If not why not?

**6. The institution should ensure that adequate library and information technology provision is available to all students studying on recognised law programmes whether full-time, part-time or distance learning.**

When seeking to determine whether this precept has been complied with, the following questions should be asked:

- Do the Law Library opening hours meet the needs of users?
- Are enquiry desks staffed for adequate periods of time during the week to ensure that the different needs of students are met?
- Is the law stock placed on loan periods to suit the study needs of all students on recognised programmes? Are book loan services available for adequate periods of time during the week? Are special provisions made to meet the needs of part-time students?
- Can users access electronic resources from outside the institution campus? Are there adequate licensing agreements in institutions covered by collaborative arrangements?

**Teaching and Related Accommodation**

**7. The institution should make available to the law school sufficient physical accommodation to enable students to achieve the outcomes of its recognised law programmes**

When seeking to determine whether this precept has been achieved, the following questions should be asked:

- What teaching rooms are made available to students on the programmes? Are they sufficient to permit reasonable schedule of classes? To what extent do the

rooms made available permit the use of the teaching activities necessary for the achievement of the learning outcomes of the programme?

- What teaching aids are available in various types of teaching rooms?
- Do any parts of the programme require special accommodation and, if so, will it be available?
- Is there adequate accommodation available to enable all teaching staff to provide academic and pastoral guidance to students on the recognised law programme(s)?

## **Section Three - Student Support**

### **Student Contact Hours**

**8. The institution should provide students on a recognised law programme with sufficient formal tuition to enable them to gain the knowledge and acquire the skills set out in Schedule One and Two of the Joint Statement and the QAA Law Subject Benchmark.**

When seeking to determine whether this precept has been achieved the following questions should be asked:

- What is the number of contact hours on the course for each level of study?
- What teaching and learning methods are to be deployed to enable the student to achieve the learning outcomes of the programme?
- How are the needs of students on different modes of attendance met?
- How much instruction and on going training will students receive in research methods? Is this sufficient to satisfy the requirements of the Joint Statement?

### **Careers Advice**

**9. The institution should ensure all students enrolled upon a recognised law programme can access a careers advisory service able to provide students enrolled upon a recognised law programme with full information about prospects and other relevant matters in respect of careers in the legal profession.**

When seeking to determine whether this precept has been complied with, the following questions should be asked:

- Is there a person within the institution's careers advisory service with specific responsibility for students on recognised law programme?
- Is there a member of the law school with specific responsibility for advising students on careers in the legal profession?
- Does the institution and its law school participate in the Law Careers Advice Network?
- What links does the institution and law school have with the legal profession both nationally and locally? How do these links assist in informing its law students?

## Section Four – Collaborative Arrangements

**10. An awarding institution should ensure that, where any part of its recognised law programme is taught at another institution under a collaborative arrangement the responsibilities for resources are clearly defined in the agreement between the two institutions.**

When seeking to determine whether this precept has been complied with, the following questions should be asked:

- What are the terms of arrangement between the institution and the other institution?
- What provision is made in the agreement in respect of the provision of resources? Are the respective responsibilities of the two institutions clearly defined?
- How is the equivalence of the students' teaching and learning experience between the two institutions assured?
- How does the institution monitor the level of resources provided by the other institution? Do the resources available to the programme ensure that all students have an equivalent experience wherever they are based?
- Do the students have convenient and reliable access to a law library which satisfies the requirements of the library standards referred to above?

## Annex 1

### The basic requirement

Institutions should provide sufficient resources for any recognised law programme for which they are responsible, either directly or indirectly<sup>5</sup>, to enable students enrolled upon the programme to gain the knowledge and acquire the skills set out in Schedules One and Two of the Joint Statement and the QAA Law Subject Benchmark.

### The precepts

1. The institution should ensure that its law school has sufficient appropriately qualified members of the teaching staff to meet the needs of the recognised law programme.
2. The institution should provide adequate clerical administrative and technical support for its recognised law programmes, including adequate support for its teaching methods.
3. All members of the teaching staff should have the opportunity to engage in appropriate staff development including research and scholarly activities.
4. The institution should make available to the law school sufficient physical accommodation to enable students to achieve the outcomes of its recognised law programmes
5. In planning and developing its law library and information technology provision, a institution offering qualifying law degree(s) is expected to take into account the current version of "A library for the modern law school: A statement of standards for university law provision in the United Kingdom".
6. The institution should ensure that those responsible for the law library etc participate in the BIALL/SLS Academic Law Library Survey undertaken under the auspices of the Society of Legal Scholars.
7. The institution should ensure that adequate library and information technology provision is available to all students studying on recognised law programmes whether full-time, part-time or distance learning.
8. The institution should provide students on a recognised law programme with sufficient formal tuition to enable them to gain the knowledge and acquire the skills set out in Schedule One and Two of the Joint Statement and the QAA Law Subject Benchmark. A significant part of the formal tuition should be provided in small group sessions.
9. The institution should ensure that its careers advisory service is able to provide students enrolled upon a recognised law programme with full information about prospects and other relevant matters in respect of careers in the legal profession.
10. An awarding institution should ensure that, where any part of its recognised law programme is taught at another institution under a collaborative arrangement, the

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<sup>5</sup> e.g Through a collaborative arrangement with any other institution or college.

level of resources available to support the programme satisfies the minimum levels set out in this Guidance and the responsibilities for resources are clearly defined in the agreement between the two institutions.

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