

Plymouth University

Legal Practice Course (LPC) profile September 2011

Please note: The information contained in this profile is supplied by Plymouth University; it is the provider's responsibility to keep this information up-to-date.

Introduction from the SRA

The SRA's requirements allow providers considerable freedom to design and focus their courses to meet the needs of particular student cohorts and particular types of legal practice. Providers have a corresponding responsibility to provide clear and useful information to those making choices about where to study and which particular course to follow. To enable potential students to make informed choices, the SRA requires all providers to supply a standard set of information about their provision.

General information

Plymouth University is a higher education corporation established as such in 1993 with a teaching history that dates from 1862. Student numbers are in excess of 30,000 taught by some 3,000 staff; the University is recognised to be one of the UK's most prominent and dynamic HE institutions with an outstanding reputation in teaching and learning and four HEA/HEFCE funded Centres of Excellence in Teaching and Learning. The University has considerable experience of delivering professional accredited courses in law and in other professional subject areas, notably in accountancy, architecture, engineering and in medicine, and has considerable experience of delivering taught courses at both undergraduate and at postgraduate levels. Law has been taught at the university for over 20 years and the current programmes include both undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

The LPC is delivered by academic staff within the Law School. Plymouth University has been authorised and validated to run the LPC since July 2006 following the transfer of the LPC which was previously run at the University of Exeter (from 1994). The majority of the course team transferred to Plymouth University in July 2006. Further appointments to the academic staff were made at this time.

The LPC is taught in Plymouth on campus in the Business School building (Cookworthy Building) in central Plymouth.

The University has recently embarked on a programme of campus development with major refurbishment of existing campus buildings and boasts one of the most modern and attractive city centre university campuses in the UK.

Types of LPC

Plymouth University runs Stage 1 (full time), Stage 2 (full time) and Stages 1 and 2 combined (full time).

Key features of the different LPC courses

In keeping with the University's strategy for learning and teaching, one central objective for the LPC is to enable students to become independent and rational thinkers with employment and life skills such that they are able to meet the demands of life in legal practice. Teaching

is delivered by a mix of podcasts and other IT resources, lectures and workshop or small group sessions in a model designed to support flexibility of learning and to remove, where desirable and possible, the barriers of time and distance. Attendance for lectures and small group sessions is monitored because a high value is placed on student contact with our professionally qualified and experienced academic staff.

The experience of legal practitioners in the SW has informed the content of the course. Mentoring by work placement with our extensive links with local solicitor firms and other related organisations forms an integral aspect of the course. The aims of the mentoring scheme are to assist students to experience practice, to develop a deeper understanding of the practical application of the subjects taught, and to enable students without training contracts to form links and networks of value to them in the progression of their legal careers.

Maximum number of students in the different types of teaching and learning sessions.

There will be a maximum of 15 students in small group sessions, with a minimum of 6 students in such groups. In large group sessions/lectures the whole cohort will be taught (a maximum of 80 students).

Maximum number of students it will recruit onto each course

The current validation is for 80 students.

Entry requirements

The course is open to any person who has satisfied the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) of successful completion of the academic stage of training under regulations in force from time to time and who has enrolled as a student member of the SRA. Such a person will normally be a graduate holding a qualifying law degree or a non law graduate who has passed the Common Practice Exam/Graduate Diploma in Law. Members or Fellows of the Institute of Legal Executives who have satisfied the SRA of successful completion of the academic stage of training are also eligible to apply for entry to the course.

All applications are considered in accordance with the University's admissions policy for postgraduate taught programmes. The following factors will be taken into account by the University's LPC admissions team when making decisions on individual applications:

1. Academic merit – Normally evidenced by a Qualifying Law Degree of a 2(ii) or above, actual or predicted, or a pass, with an average of 50%, in the Common Professional Examination/Graduate Diploma in Law. Applicants with less than this may be accepted where there is evidence of exceptional difficulties to explain the result on examination;
2. The need to study in the area for strong personal reasons;
3. Evidence of motivation to be a solicitor (which may be provided by, inter alia, prior acquisition of relevant work experience, and/or application for a training contract);
4. As between applicants who are equally qualified in accordance with these factors, the University may give preference to those who are, or who have been students at the University.

Policy on Stages 1 and 2

The University will accept applicants for Stages 1 and 2 combined, and for discrete study of Stage 1 or Stage 2. In addition, applicants with an appropriate background in law or legal practice may apply for any one or more of the Stage 2 electives as part of their individual programme of continuing professional development.

Students enrolled onto Stage 2, who have not undertaken Stage 1 at the Plymouth University, will be entitled to apply for accreditation of prior certificated learning (APCL) of Stage 1 credits. This will enable these students to be awarded the Plymouth University Postgraduate Diploma in Legal Practice on successful completion of Stage 2. Students enrolling on Stage 2 become subject to the LPC assessment regulations on commencement of their studies.

Academic qualification that will be awarded to successful students

Students successfully completing Stages 1 and 2 at the University will be awarded the Post Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice. Students who complete Stage 2 following APCL will also be awarded the Postgraduate Diploma in Legal Practice. Students who successfully complete Stage 1 and who do not continue to study Stage 2 at the University will be awarded the Post Graduate Certificate in Legal Practice on completion of Stage 1.

Learning resources available to support the course, including library and IT provision

As students with Plymouth University, students have access to all of the student IT facilities available across campus, including 24/7/365 access in the library building. There is an IT space with 28 PCs close to the Law area in the library. In addition, LPC students have access to 2 rooms dedicated for postgraduate students on the 5th floor of Cookworthy Building with a total of 28 leased PCs. Technical support is during normal office hours from an enquiry desk located on the same floor and, where appropriate, by central university resources. There is also a cyber café area in the basement of the building which provides a very popular group work space.

30 dedicated laptops are also available for staff and students to use in workshop sessions. This enables students to access up to date materials on-line during workshop sessions.

Photocopying and scanning facilities are provided in Cookworthy and the library as well as other student IT areas across campus. LPC students share b/w printing facilities on the 5th floor of the Cookworthy Building dedicated for postgraduate students only. This is currently provided free but this policy may be revised to help address the universities sustainability requirements. Colour printing/copying is available elsewhere in Cookworthy and across campus using a "follow me" printing service - allowing your work to be collected from any device on campus, and students can send things to print from their own devices too, however this is charged via the Student Card. Prices are kept as low as possible and are competitive across the sector - currently 9p for A4 double sided b/w.

There are further open access computer resources across the campus, in particular in the University library where there is one open access computing area providing approximately 80 PCs on Level 0 and a smaller teaching/IT space with 28 PCs close to the Law area on Level 2 of the Library. The Library is open 24 hours a day, all year round, and this includes access to all computing facilities.

The library is centrally situated on the campus and is approximately 5 minutes' walk from the majority of the teaching accommodation. It is fully accessible to disabled students via Level 0 and Level 1, who can also register for extra help and equipment loans depending on their individual needs with the library's Special Support Service. In addition, a number of practitioner texts are housed close to the teaching rooms where LPC students may gain easy access during sessions and for private study.

The law area within the library itself is housed on Level 2, but is a separate collection kept apart from the main stock sequence consisting of law-related textbooks, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, journals, law reports and legislation etc. There is also a specific Legal

Practice Collection section. Students have access to Lexis Library, to Westlaw and to a number of other legal electronic resources such as I-Law (Insurance and Maritime modules), and Practical Law Company (PLC).

Training for all law students on Lexis and Westlaw, as well as a general introduction to all Library resources, is arranged every year.

Percentage of teaching staff who are qualified as solicitors or barristers

100%

Percentage of teaching staff with higher level teaching qualification

0%. Staff development in teaching and learning is undertaken within the University.

Teaching staff profile

All of the academic staff have considerable LPC teaching experience; a number have been teaching on this programme since 1994. The majority are full time academic members of the School of Law. A small number of the team also hold positions with local firms as consultants. A number of the teaching team have recent experience as external examiners for other LPC providers.

The University has a policy of appointing part-time tutors (legal practitioners) in order to enhance the teaching team and the links with local practitioners and knowledge of current practice.

Fees for 2011/2012 – please contact Plymouth Business School for fees for 2012 onwards
Stage 1 and Stage 2 full-time £8,670 HEU
Stage 1 only full time £7,350
Stage 2 only full time £2,100
Stage 2 module only £700

Pastoral support, including dedicated careers guidance staff

Pastoral support is available from a range of sources, primarily personal tutors (full time members of the LPC academic staff), student counselling service, careers service, chaplaincy, disability assist service unit, health service and learning development support service.

There are also a number of other services available to students at the University including the accommodation office, nursery, sport and recreation services, and the student funding unit.

There are dedicated careers service officers for law who organise the annual career fair, employer presentations, assistance with CVs, and preparation for interviews. Mock interviews are provided as is psychometric testing.

In conjunction with the information and advice available from the careers service members of the course team help students with career plans, particularly in relation to offering an insight into individual firms and specialist areas of work acquired through their own professional experience. Personal tutors also advise on draft CVs and letters to firms and provide references when asked to do so.

The course team has an appointed careers tutor who is responsible for liaising with the careers service and working effectively with the local profession. This person co-ordinates the LPC mentoring and practice experience schemes and works with the law external relations and careers tutor who has a broader role, including coordination of careers activities across all law programmes, developing a subject wide strategy for careers' development and building links with the local profession and other relevant organisations.

The careers tutor is frequently sent details of vacancies for training contracts and paralegal work by a number of firms. These vacancies are regularly emailed to students and posted on the student intranet. The LSC scheme for funded training contracts is also advertised.

A mentoring scheme has been in existence at the University since 2006 and has been successfully developed and expanded as the number of participating firms has increased.

Students studying employment law and practice have the opportunity to take part in the pro bono scheme, the South West Employment Rights Centre (SWERC). This is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee for the provision of free legal advice and representation on employment related matters to the public and students with an emphasis on the socially excluded.

Academic support is provided by the personal tutors who provide support and guidance on personal, academic and careers matters. The personal tutors are assigned a small number of students (normally a maximum of 10). In addition, students are encouraged to seek support and guidance as necessary from subject tutors.

Contact details

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