

University of Sunderland

Background

Sunderland Law School wanted to develop an innovative LLM integrated with the Legal Practice Course (LPC), which also allowed for the development and assessment of skills within a student law clinic. This offers a 'live client experience'.

The aim was to tailor the LPC to meet local employers' requirements and to develop a vocational programme, which could complement those students already in a period of recognised training (PRT). This would give employers influence on the content of the course and the live client experience in a way in which it enhanced a student's contribution to their organisations.

The challenge

Although many institutions offer a live client experience, this is, customarily, a formative formulaic process, with skills ultimately assessed through simulation (usually to achieve uniformity and standardisation of assessment).

This ignores the reality that standardisation and uniformity is not possible, or even desirable, once students begin their professional training and, further, does not account for the fact that many students now study the LPC alongside or even after their PRT.

The aim was to develop an assessment strategy of the skills elements of the LPC that was fair, accurate, objective and transparent in assessing competency within a live client environment in which no two students' experiences would be identical.

How we helped

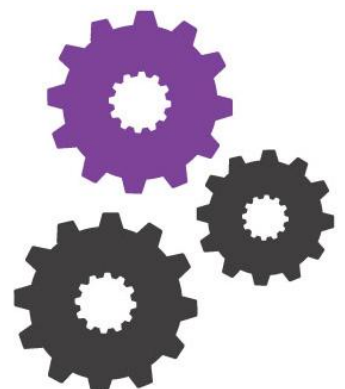
We saw merit in what Sunderland Law School was trying to achieve and how it could benefit LPC students and their employers. We worked with the law school in designing appropriate assessment criteria and marking guides that would allow for an appropriate and robust consideration of whether a student had achieved competence. This competence was considered in relation to the skill areas assessed in a live client context, notwithstanding that each student's portfolio would be unique in content.

We intend to continue to work with Sunderland Law School to monitor how effective this assessment strategy is, and to further our own thinking in relation to the development of legal education and training.

Conclusion

Sunderland Law School's LLM LPC starts in September 2016. We look forward to evaluating the course in its first annual monitoring report to see what can be learned from this approach to vocational training.

This exercise shows how keen we are to support innovation in education and training where there is a clear focus on enhancing quality and meeting the needs of a rapidly evolving profession.



The University of Law – an Articled Route to Qualification

Background

The Articled Route to Qualification concept was developed by the University of Law to address the growing profile of, and demand for, ‘on-the-job’ training schemes across many employment sectors, including law and legal services. At the same time, the government was developing its Trailblazer initiative to promote legal and other apprenticeships, so that they became a credible and valid route to qualification and ranking equally with more established routes.

The University of Law wanted to create a route to qualification, combining formal and on-the-job training, in advance of the government’s apprenticeship initiative.

Students would combine study with the practical application of law in the workplace, leading to qualification as a solicitor shortly after completion of the Legal Practice Course (LPC).

Challenge

The key elements of the university’s proposed scheme were as follows:



In this model, participants undergo the period of recognised training (PRT) at the same time as completing the LLB part time. In addition, they complete their LPC.

Previous regulations would not have allowed this as the PRT could only have been commenced upon completion of the LPC.

How we helped

Following changes to the Training Regulations (effective from 1 July 2014), we made the university aware of the relaxation in the rules, in particular that which allowed the *recognised training* element

to be undertaken during a period of study. That meant it was now possible to combine the academic and vocational stages. This satisfies the requirement for work-based learning and the Professional Skills Course (PSC), all within a six-year period.

We also informed the university that no further formal approval was required to enable participants to satisfy the requirements of becoming a solicitor.

Results

Students enrol on the part-time LL.B and study three modules each year in accordance with the validated programme. Students then commence their *recognised training* by virtue of working in practice with one of the participating client firms of the University in year 3.

Given that the PRT will be combined with academic and vocational study on a part-time basis, it is proposed that the PRT will span four years.

In year 5, following completion of the LL.B, students embark on the part-time 18 months LPC. Following completion of the part-time LLM/LPC in year 6, students then undertake the PSC.

This proposal utilises the University's existing LL.B and LPC programmes without amendment and the *recognised training* is undertaken alongside part-time study.

Conclusion

This enabled the launch of a viable 'on-the-job' training scheme significantly in advance of the apprenticeships proposed by the government under the Trailblazer initiative.

The University of Law will continue to offer this route to qualification alongside, but separate from, its Level 7 Solicitor Apprenticeship under the Trailblazer Scheme.



University of Cumbria: Making a case for a digital lawyering curriculum

Background

As delivering legal services online continues to evolve, the Legal Education and Training Review (LETR) recommended that law schools look at how law graduates' attributes are developed to reflect this technology-led approach.

Examples of technological services in the legal system already include:

- Online dispute resolution.
- Use of technology in courts.
- HM Online Court.
- [Ministry of Justice's Virtual Court pilot](#).

The challenge

There is a growing need for law students to become more digitally skilled and exposed to the emerging technological trends and challenges in legal practice. In order to competently represent clients, it is important they are aware of the benefits and risks associated with the digitally delivered services.

Law schools also need to modernise their legal education curriculum; making sure it reflects students needs. The University of Cumbria challenge was to find the best way to embed these new ways of working into the graduate law curriculum.

How they rose to the challenge

The University of Cumbria launched a [Virtual Law Clinic](#) (VLC) which made significant use of technology in clinical legal education. By embedding practical digital proficiency, they provided students with a realistic experience of what is like to provide online legal services and bridges the gap between the trends in practice and education.

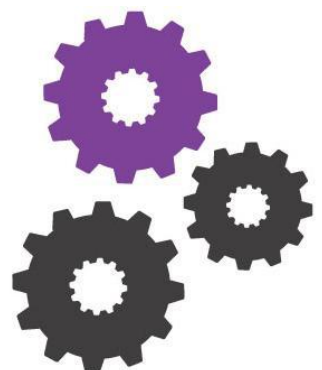
The experience and learning gained from the VLC helped students to build the holistic skillset and competencies needed to be 'the digitally proficient new lawyer'. These included:

- How you establish a lawyer-client relationship online.
- Working with online practice management systems, undertaking negotiations, time management and archiving for reflection
- How to handle data safely.
- Being aware of how professional conduct rules work within an online law clinic.

Conclusion

Later research found that the VLC allowed students to gain the important skills, knowledge and aptitude necessary to represent a client to the high standards needed in a digital environment.

They gained technical understanding in key areas such as data protection, confidentiality, IT security and safe handling of information, whilst building trustworthy relationships with clients and other stakeholders online.



Kaplan Altior: PSC Live Online delivery

Background

Online learning continues to gather pace and there is a challenge in the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) Professional Skills Course (PSC) Outcomes for it to “be a dynamic course capable of developing to match the changing and diverse needs of the profession”. Kaplan Altior therefore considered the question of how to deliver the face-to-face requirements of the PSC (1) in a more innovative and flexible format.

The challenge

Kaplan Altior was keen to investigate with the SRA if a ‘Live Online’ (LOL) delivery method could be introduced to replicate and enhance the current face-to-face training already being delivered to PSC delegates. Harnessing the technology currently used in other parts of its business, Kaplan Altior proposed to the SRA a new LOL delivery format as an alternative to face-to-face training.

LOL training offers delegates the benefits of the traditional classroom, but with the flexibility of an online environment. The live sessions are fully interactive and delivered live by Kaplan Altior expert tutors. To ensure consistent quality of delivery with face-to-face courses, delegates follow the same materials and contact hours as current PSC classroom-based courses.

LOL delivery is broken down into 2-3 hour sessions and is scheduled at various times of the day or days of the week to provide delegates with complete flexibility over their learning. Activities are built into the LOL sessions to ensure everyone takes part and the tutor is on hand throughout the session to respond to delegate questions in the same way as they would be via face-to-face delivery. All that delegates need to participate in the course is access to a computer with audio capabilities and an internet connection.

LOL sessions are not part of the assessment process, these remain genuine, face-to-face exercises.

How we helped

Kaplan Altior scoped modules/topics within the PSC framework that would be well suited to LOL delivery and presented this proposal to the SRA. Kaplan Altior was delighted that the SRA was fully supportive of this new approach to delivery, which was approved for PSC training.

This approach has already proven successful in use in other courses. Those that have taken part in these other sessions have said:

The course fits around my work responsibilities better than the class course. You don't lose the classroom experience at all!

Karen Molden - Kaplan LOL student

“Doing the course online means I can work either from home or my work office. This makes it so much easier to study as I don't have the stress of getting to class on time; all I have to do is open my laptop and I'm ready for the lecture.”

“The advantage of studying online is there are no distractions, when being in a classroom filled with other students I find it difficult to keep my concentration... By doing the course

online I can really engage with my work and ensure my surroundings are quiet to help me focus on the lecture. "

Hannah Clarke - Kaplan LOL student

"I found Live Online very useful, especially due to access to past recordings which can be paused or fast forwarded."

Dan Powell - Kaplan LOL student

Conclusion

Kaplan Altior's LOL delivery will enable the PSC course to be delivered in a dynamic way, providing greater flexibility to law firms and trainees without diluting the quality of instruction a trainee receives. LOL brings about the following benefits over and above those already received from face to face training.

- Flexibility to attend at non-traditional times (fitting in with busy trainee lifestyles)
- Ability to combine LOL and face-to-face delivery to complete overall qualification
- Ability to revisit sessions/material
- Savings in travel time/cost
- Some students might find it easier to ask questions
- Additional/constant support
- Greater consistency when students are spread far and wide
- Bite-size delivery/easier to digest
- Ability to access learning across different platforms eg mobile devices, tablets.

For further information about Kaplan Altior's LOL courses, contact Jody Tranter:

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- (1) The SRA Training Regulations 2014 state that a certain proportion of PSC training has to be delivered face to face

