LSC LEGAL SERVICES COUNCIL
ADMISSIONS COMMITTEE

LACC
LAW ADMISSIONS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

NATIONAL PLT CONSULTATION CONFERENCE DISCUSSION PAPERS

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These Discussion Papers have been prepared by Working Groups for the purpose of facilitating discussion at the National PLT Consultation Conference.

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INTRODUCTORY PAPER

The Discussion Papers have been prepared by Working Groups for the purposes of informing and facilitating discussion at the National PLT Consultation Conference.

Background

Practical legal training (**PLT**) is the bridge between academic study of the law and legal practice. High-quality legal education and training is essential for the effective operation of the justice system and to protect consumers of legal services.

The current model of PLT is set out in the PLT Competency Standards for Entry-Level Lawyers (**PLT Competency Standards**) which "describe the observable performance in several key areas relating to legal practice, required of entry-level lawyers at the point of admission to the legal profession." This is part of a broader admissions framework developed by the Law Admissions Consultative Committee (**LACC**) and adopted in each state and territory through statutory rules, practice notes or other means.[1]

A background paper setting out a brief history of legal training in Australia is attached (**Annexure A**).

Review of PLT

The requirements for PLT have not been reviewed and updated for some time and do not align with contemporary expectations of lawyers who are ready to begin their legal careers.

In March 2025, the Admissions Committee and the LACC resolved to undertake a review of PLT.

The review's objectives are to:

- undertake a national review of PLT, particularly incorporating issues of cost and quality, and
- develop and consult on proposals to amend Uniform Law and national regulatory framework to the extent necessary to give effect to the review's recommendations.

As part of this review, the Committees undertook a national survey of graduates and supervisors in all Australian jurisdictions, other than New South Wales where a local survey had already been undertaken, to ask about their experience with PLT.

The survey findings, available on the Legal Services Council's website,[2] showed overall dissatisfaction with PLT. Over half of the graduate respondents to the survey reported being dissatisfied with their overall experience of PLT. The greatest single area of dissatisfaction was the value for money of PLT. Supervisors expressed mixed but generally negative reviews.

In April 2026, the Admissions Committee and the LACC published a national Consultation Paper on options for reform to PLT, based on the proposals for reform developed by the Legal Profession Admission Board in New South Wales.[3]

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[1] This includes the PLT Competency Standards for Entry-Level Lawyers, Uniform Standards for PLT Courses and Providers, Standards for PLT Workplace Experience and Guiding Principles for Integrating Academic and PLT Courses.

[2] Urbis, National Practical Legal Training Research Survey Research Report (March 2026).

[3] Admissions Committee and LACC, Consultation Paper: Review of Practical Legal Training (April 2026).

Those proposals would

- require university law courses to teach and assess identified practical skills and knowledge
- establish a shorter PLT program that focuses on identified practical skills and knowledge, to be completed prior to admission
- impose a requirement for 15 days of workplace experience, to be completed prior to admission
- implement new structured and assessed post-admission legal training (referred to as PALT) to be undertaken by early-career lawyers in the first two years of practice (which will focus on specific areas of legal practice)
- improve the supervision framework for early-career lawyers.

Submissions made to the national consultation are available on the Legal Services Council's website.[4] The feedback received generally acknowledged that there is a need to review and update the PLT requirements. However, significant questions and concerns were raised about aspects of the reform proposals.

In particular, the feedback highlighted the following areas for further consideration

- how practical skills can be mapped across both law courses and PLT to ensure that there is a clear staged approach to skills development
- how law schools will be able to integrate practical legal skills in law courses, including teaching and assessment, and whether they have suitably qualified teaching staff.
- equity considerations around in-person delivery of PLT, particularly for students based in regional and remote areas as well as people living with disability, carer's responsibilities or other obligations.
- cost of PLT, noting that shorter PLT courses may not be eligible for FEE-HELP, which will require PLT students to pay the fees for their PLT course out-of-pocket.
- how the proposal for PALT will be administered
- whether a proposed implementation date of 2028 is realistic – in particular, universities have indicated that around 18 months are required to substantially change curriculum.

In recognition of the range of views expressed through the process so far and the need for further consultation, the Committees announced that a National PLT Consultation Conference will be held in early November 2026.

National PLT Consultation Conference

The Conference brings together stakeholders from the legal profession, law students, law schools, PLT providers, admitting authorities and regulators to discuss and collaborate on options for reform.

The agenda for the two days has been designed around a series of workshops focused on:

- practical capability mapping across the spectrum of legal education
- practice area competencies
- law courses
- pre-admission practical legal training
- enhanced post-admission training
- supervision of early-career lawyers
- a framework for identifying and evaluating PLT reform models.

To support discussion at the Conference, the Committees established six Working Groups made up of representatives from across the sector, including universities, PLT providers, the

[4] Available at https://legalservicescouncil.org.au/consultations/current-consultations.html#Consultation2.

legal profession, regulators, and law students. A list of Working Group members is attached (**Annexure B**).

The Working Groups each considered key policy issues and reform options to prepare the following Conference Discussion Papers.

	Discussion Paper	Content
1.	Practical Capability Mapping Across the Spectrum of Legal Education	• Proposes a framework for the development of practical and professional capabilities of new lawyers across law school, PLT and supervised legal practice. • The levels of required capability identified in the proposed framework are intended to inform curriculum across the legal education continuum.
2.	Practice Area Competencies	• Examines whether current PLT 'practice area' content should be retained or modified in light of the proposed Capability Framework. • Includes examination of both mandatory practice areas and elective practice areas.
3.	Law Courses	• Examines how practical skills should be embedded into the law school curriculum, including consideration of delivery mode and assessment.
4.	Pre-Admission Practical Legal Training	• Examines aspects of the PLT course, including: o Duration and nature of the qualification o Assessment o Delivery mode o Quality assurance o Workplace experience.
5.	Enhanced Post-Admission Training	• Sets out options for enhanced post-admission legal training and general principles for post-admission training.
6.	Supervision of Early-Career Lawyers	• Sets out options for regulatory and administrative reform to strengthen supervision during supervised legal practice.
7.	A Framework for Identifying and Evaluating PLT Reform Models	• Provides a proposed framework for identifying, comparing and evaluating possible models for reform of PLT and the broader legal education continuum. • Includes guiding principles, key variables, illustrative example models and criteria by which those models might be evaluated.

Guiding principles

In considering each of the areas set out above, and the options for reform, Conference attendees are invited to bear in mind the guiding principles set out in the proposed Framework for Identifying and Evaluating PLT Reform Models (**Discussion Paper 7**). These are:

1. Maintain a focus on practice-readiness at the point of admission
2. Treat legal education as a continuum
3. Recognise the public purpose of legal education and professional formation
4. Promote accessibility, equity and inclusion

5. Ensure proportionality and sustainability
6. Recognise the importance of maintaining a nationally consistent approach
7. Support accreditation and ongoing quality assurance
8. Ensure sufficient flexibility.

Participating in the Conference

Each Discussion Paper identifies questions for discussion at the Conference. Given the limited time available at the Conference, the questions focus on issues and recommendations identified by the Working Groups.

Conference facilitators will guide attendees through these questions in table-based discussions.

Each table will have an allocated person to assist attendees to work through the questions and record key comments and responses in a provided worksheet. There will also be a series of plenary discussions during which tables will be invited to report back to the broader group on their views and ideas.

Seating at the Conference will be allocated to ensure that, where possible, each table includes perspectives from across the sector.

Conference outputs and next steps

Discussion at the Conference may reveal areas of general consensus regarding options tor reform, as well as areas for further consideration by the Admissions Committee and the LACC.

Following the Conference, the Committees will consider the feedback received and undertake further work to finalise the preferred options. This may include further targeted consultation with some stakeholders.

The Committees are aiming to make a decision about which reform options to pursue in February 2027. Following that decision, the Committees will commence work on drafting the necessary regulatory changes (for example, the PLT Competency Standards).

The Committees are targeting implementation of reforms in 2029. However, the Committees have not foreclosed the possibility of an earlier partial implementation of reforms (where possible).

Annexures

Annexure A	Brief history of legal training in Australia
Annexure B	Membership of Working Groups

A Brief History of Legal Training in Australia

9 September 2026[1]

This high-level history of legal training in Australia begins with a survey of the origins of practical legal training in the Inns of Court and Chancery in medieval England, the emergence of the articled clerkship model in England and Australia, and the beginnings of common law education in the English universities. It then traces how that model was brought to the Australian colonies and evolved alongside the early Australian universities, including in relation to the inclusion of women. Finally, it details the transition from articled clerkships towards the modern practical legal training model, including how that model has developed into its present state.

1. The Inns of Court and Chancery in England

Institutional training in the common law was undertaken in England from at least the 14th century through the Inns of Court and Chancery, known at one time as the "Third University of England".[2] The Inns functioned akin to colleges, providing students with hostel-style lodging and tuition.[3] Tuition in the Inns included both theoretical study of the common law in the form of lectures, readings and debates, as well as vocational exercises such as mooting (which at the time comprised exercises in pleading as opposed to submissions).[4] In addition to matters of a legal nature, the Inns exposed students to the arts and other intellectual endeavours.[5]

The members of the Inns of Court consisted of students, graduates and "practisers" of the law, whereas membership of the Inns of Chancery mainly consisted of officers, solicitors, attorneys[6] and clerks, as well as students from universities and grammar schools.[7] There existed a structured system of progression within the Inns.[8]

While the universities of Oxford and Cambridge taught law at this time, they did so only in the fields of canon law and civil law.[9] Professor Baker has suggested that this may have been the case because the common law was not universal in application, was unwritten local custom

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[1] Prepared by Rainer Gaunt and Justice J K Kirk.
[2] Sir John Baker, 'The Third University of England' in *Collected Papers on English Legal History* (Cambridge University Press, 2013) 143, 148.
[3] Ibid 158.
[4] Baker, 'The Third University of England' (n 2) 158-163; Sir John Baker, 'Legal Education in London 1250-1850' in *Collected Papers on English Legal History* (Cambridge University Press, 2013) 270, 275-7.
[5] Ralph Michael Stein, 'The Path of Legal Education from Edward I to Langdell: A History of Insular Reaction' (1981) 57 *Chicago Kent Law Review* 429, 432-3.
[6] Historically attorneys attended to tasks such as managing suits for absent clients, taking out writs and instructing counsel. The original solicitors were attorneys or barristers who undertook the function of "soliciting causes", in the sense that they would help clients to properly select jurisdiction, provide general advice and instruct barristers or attorneys. Over time solicitors became a separate stream of the profession, carrying out similar functions to attorneys, however solicitors practised in the courts of equity and attorneys in the common law courts. See John Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History* (Butterworths LexisNexis, 4th ed., 2002) 156-157; 163. Section 87 of the *Judicature Act 1873* (UK) fused the streams but retained the name "solicitor".
[7] *Report of the Committee on Legal Education* (March 1971) ('Ormrod Report') 4.
[8] Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History* (n 6) 161.
[9] *Tertiary Education in Australia: Report of the Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education in Australia to the Australian Universities Commission* (Volume II, 1964) ('Martin Report') 51; Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History* (n 6) 155, 170.

beneath academic notice, and was largely procedural.[10] This left the Inns of Court and Chancery as the sole institutional option for practical instruction in English law.

2. Emergence of articled clerkships and the common law in universities

The educational routines of the Inns collapsed in the 17th century in the context of the English Civil War. Various contributing factors have been postulated including a breakdown of the traditional disciplines, a lack of willingness of experienced practitioners to teach and the rise of the printing press providing greater availability of books for self-directed study.[11] Law students were left to learn independently without institutional support or instruction. While the notion of a clerkship had existed earlier, it appears to have become more regularised around this time, as students sought to apprentice to experienced practitioners in lieu of instruction in the Inns.[12]

During this period, there was widespread criticism of the professions of solicitors and attorneys on the basis that almost anybody was being admitted, and in any case many practised without even seeking admission.[13] In response, the *Attorneys and Solicitors Act 1728* was enacted. It prohibited persons from acting as a solicitor or attorney unless they were admitted, and to be eligible for admission there was established a requirement to have served as a clerk for five years**.** The notion of an articled clerkship was thereby formalised and imposed by statute as a condition of practice for the first time.

In or shortly before 1739 the Society of Gentleman Practisers in the Courts of Law and Equity was founded.[14] It was a voluntary organisation of solicitors and attorneys which stood independently from external authority. Its activities appear to have been directed towards bettering the integrity of the professions of attorneys and solicitors. From 1742 it began taking steps to "discover and discountenance" any "attorneys or solicitors who had been or should be surreptitiously admitted", and was successful in securing the removal of a number of persons from the roll.[15] In these respects, the Society of Gentleman Practisers was something of a precursor to a modern law society.

In the mid-18th century institutional instruction in the common law commenced at the universities. In 1753 Sir William Blackstone began lecturing on the laws of England at Oxford, a first for an English university. The lectures were received with great interest. In 1756 Blackstone was appointed the first Vinerian Professor of English Law. Cambridge followed suit in 1800 with the establishment of the Downing professorial chair of the Laws of England.[16] In 1826 the first modern university law school appeared in England in the form of University College, London.[17]

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[10] Baker, 'Legal Education in London 1250-1850' (n 4) 273.
[11] Julian Disney et al, *Lawyers* (The Law Book Company Limited, 2nd ed, 1986) 15-16 quoting William Holdsworth, *A History of English Law Volume VI* (1966); Baker, 'Legal Education in London 1250-1850' (n 4) 279-280; David Barker, *A History of Australian Legal Education* (Federation Press, 2017) 13-14; Ormrod Report (n 7) 4.
[12] Baker, 'Legal Education in London 1250-1850' (n 4) 282-284; Ormrod Report (n 7) 4.; Disney (n 11) 21.
[13] Harry Kirk, *Portrait of a Profession* (Oyez Publishing, 1976) 72.
[14] Robert Robson, *The Attorney in Eighteenth Century England* (Cambridge University Press, 1959) 20.
[15] Ibid 22-23; note also Kirk (n 13) 73-75.
[16] David Wills, 'Cambridge Law – then & now', *University of Cambridge* (Web Page) <https://www.ba.law.cam.ac.uk/cambridge-law-then-now>.
[17] Ormrod Report (n 7) 5.

Notwithstanding the growth of university education in the common law at this time, it was not considered that universities were places where professional training should be carried on.[18]

3. Admission requirements in early NSW and Victoria

In 1788 the colony of NSW was established, however it did not receive judges until 1810. It was originally left to convicts who had previously been attorneys to advise the Governor and assist the courts.[19] In 1825 rules were established in the colony for entry into the profession. Those rules were derived from the *Attorneys and Solicitors Act 1728*, requiring service of five years as an articled clerk to a qualified practitioner in NSW, Great Britain or Ireland before admission.[20]

In 1834 the profession in NSW was divided formally into barristers and attorneys (solicitors).[21] The admission requirements for attorneys continued to prescribe completion of an articled clerkship.[22] The Supreme Court's rules also provided for the Master of the Supreme Court and two barristers to act as examiners of the fitness and capacity of prospective attorneys, and a certificate from the examiners was required for admission.[23] The admission requirements for barristers were provided for in the *Barristers Admission Act 1848*, which established a Barristers Admission Board empowered to "make and promulgate rules for the examination of candidates in the Ancient Classics both Greek and Latin in Mathematics in Law and in such other branches of knowledge as they shall deem meet".

Until Victoria was established as a separate colony from NSW in 1851 its lawyers were subject to the same restrictions on admission as were in place in NSW.[24] In 1853 it issued its own rules for admission which emulated the articled clerkship model and imposed examination requirements for both barristers and attorneys.[25] Examination requirements for attorneys in NSW do not appear to have been formalised until the the promulgation of the "Rules of the Supreme Court Relating to The Admission of Attorneys" on 21 December 1877. Rule 9 of those rules established a Board of Examiners consisting of two barristers and four solicitors to be appointed annually by the Court, and all examinations in law were to be held by the Board. That Board came to be known as the Solicitors Admission Board.[26]

The University of Sydney was incorporated in 1850, followed closely by the University of Melbourne in 1853.[27] Melbourne's law school was established in 1857, far earlier than Sydney's in 1890.[28] Faculties of law were also established at the University of Adelaide in

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[18] Martin Report (n 9) 51; see also David Derham, 'An Overview of Legal Education in Australia' (1976) 50 *The Australian Law Journal* 577, 580.
[19] Barker (n 11) 28; Disney (n 11) 28; for an engaging discussion of this period, see Simon Smith, *Barristers Solicitors Pettifoggers* (Maverick Publications, 2014), ch 1.
[20] Linda Martin, 'From Apprenticeship to Law School: A Social History of Legal Education in Nineteenth Century New South Wales' (1986) 9(2) *UNSW Law Journal* 111, 114.
[21] As an aside, in NSW the terminology of "solicitor" encompassed solicitors, attorneys and proctors by at least 1898 – see eg s 3 of the *Legal Practitioners Act 1898* (NSW).
[22] Martin (n 20) 115.
[23] see eg r 12 of the *Supreme Court Rules 1840*, accessible at <https://collection.sl.nsw.gov.au/record/74VvgWXNErZg/2R685l2GPGGzP>.
[24] Barker (n 11) 34.
[25] Rules and Regulations for admission to practise as Barristers, and as Attorneys, Solicitors, and Proctors, in the Supreme Court of the Colony of Victoria, of persons not previously admitted as Barristers or Advocates, or as Attorneys, Solicitors, or Writers to the Signet in the Superior Courts of Westminster, Dublin and Edinburgh 1853 (accessible at <https://gazette.slv.vic.gov.au/view.cgi?year=1853&class=general&page_num=573&state=V&classNum=G25&id=>).
[26] Martin (n 20) 130.
[27] *University of Sydney Act 1850* (NSW); *An Act to Incorporate and Endow the University of Melbourne 1853* (Vic).
[28] Barker (n 11) 36; Martin (n 20) 140.

1882, at the University of Tasmania in 1892, the University of Western Australia in 1927 and at the University of Queensland in 1936.[29]

Notwithstanding the lack of a law school, lectures on jurisprudence were delivered at the University of Sydney by John Hargrave in the late 1850s through the 1860s.[30] There was a deliberate decision not to extend the lectures to matters of professional practice, including because Hargrave harboured major doubts about the propriety of situating professional courses in a university.[31] The lectures struggled to attract attendance.[32]

In 1846, in England, the House of Commons established a Select Committee on Legal Education which found, as later summarised in a speech by Sir Roger Ormrod:[33]

> the interesting fact that there was no legal education in England at all! Literally none! The Regius professors of law at Cambridge and at Oxford both gave evidence and said that in fact they did no teaching because there were no students to teach.

That would indicate that at around this time there was a common issue in attracting law students to universities in England as well as in NSW. One of the reasons identified by the Committee was the lack of any serious examinations of proficiency before one was admitted to practice, and consequently one of the Committee's recommendations was the institution of a much stricter system of qualifying examinations.[34] The Committee also made these observations about some of the deficiencies in the system of articled clerkship:[35]

> Indeed, it is a general complaint on the part of articled clerks themselves that very little attention is paid by the solicitor to the direction of their studies; in fact, it can scarcely be expected from solicitors in any degree of practice; their time is so much occupied with the duties of their profession that they can scarcely take up the points which are requisite for looking after their education. There is no prescribed course of occupation during the day … it very much depends upon the articled clerk himself; he is left almost entirely to his own discretion; and therefore, unless he qualifies himself for that purpose, nothing will be put into his hands beyond what any person could do, namely, copying.

In 1857 the *Sydney University Graduates Act 1857* was passed. It provided that graduates of the Bachelor or Master of Arts (there was still no provision for the conferral of law degrees) were exempted from any examination, other than law, either before or after entering into articles of clerkship or before admission to the bar. Such graduates were moreover subject to a reduced period of articled clerkship of three years instead of five. These privileges were extended to graduates of certain other universities in 1859 by the *Graduates of Other Universities Act 1859*. Similar developments occurred in Victoria through amendments to its admission rules in the 1860s and 1870s.[36]

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[29] Disney (n 11) 254.
[30] Martin (n 20) 127; Barker (n 11) 30-33.
[31] Martin (n 20) 127
[32] Barker (n 11) 31; Martin (n 20) 126.
[33] Roger Ormrod, 'The Reform of Legal Education' (1971) 5 *The Law Teacher* 77, 78.
[34] Ormrod Report (n 7) 5-7. Former Dean of the Sydney University Law School, John Mackinolty, made similar observations in relation to the delay between the constitution of the University and the opening of the law school: John Mackinolty, 'Before the Beginning 1850-1890' in John Mackinolty and Judy Mackinolty (eds), *A Century Down Town* (Sydney University Law School, 1991) 14.
[35] Quoted in the Ormrod Report (n 7) 6.
[36] Richard Harrison, 'The Legal Profession in Colonial Victoria' (2014) 13 *Provenance: The Journal of Public Record Office Victoria* 59, 63.

4. Steps toward the inclusion of women

In the early 20th century steps were taken towards the inclusion of women in the profession. In 1902 Ada Evans became the first female student to graduate from the University of Sydney Law School. While she possessed a law degree, her gender prevented her from legally being admitted to practice.[37] Such prohibition was challenged in England in *Bebb v Law Society* [1914] 1 Ch 286. Ms Bebb, a distinguished Oxford student, notified the Law Society that she intended to present herself at its preliminary examination with a view to becoming bound by articles of clerkship and ultimately being admitted as a solicitor. The Law Society informed her she would not be admitted to the examination as women could not be admitted as solicitors. Ms Bebb sought a declaration that she was a "person" within the meaning of the *Solicitors Act 1843* (UK) and could therefore be admitted. Relevantly, that Act included a provision to the effect that words importing the masculine gender shall extend to a female. At first instance and on appeal it was found that there existed a disability at common law for women to become attorneys or solicitors, and such disability was not clearly displaced by the Act. The WA Supreme Court had come to a similar decision a decade earlier in *In Re Edith Haynes* (1904) 6 WALR 209.

In Victoria these matters had been addressed as early as 1903 by the *Legal Profession Practice Act 1903* (Vic). The Act was known colloquially as the "Flos Greig Enabling Bill", the namesake of which, Flos Greig, was in 1903 the first woman in Victoria to graduate LLB, coming second in her year. [38] She was an advocate for the rights of women to be admitted to practice and, following her completion of articles, in 1905 became the first woman to enter the legal profession in Australia.[39]

In NSW women were not permitted to be admitted until the enactment of the *Women's Legal Status Act 1918* (NSW), subsequent to which in 1924 Marie Byles became the first woman admitted as a solicitor, and Sybil Morrison became the first female barrister.[40] Byles faced difficulties in obtaining articles, such that she was required to pay double the usual premium paid by her male colleagues.[41] She also could not find employment for some six months after graduation until she was assisted by the Dean of the Law School, John Peden, who advocated for her at the law firm Henry Davis.[42] The discrimination Byles faced in obtaining articles and, subsequently, employment, was experienced by women who followed her.[43]

5. The problems with articled clerkships

Other than the preliminary steps taken towards the inclusion of women, the system of admission and legal training appears to have been without significant reform in the early 20th century. That was so notwithstanding many other prevailing issues with the system, including those identified a half-century earlier by the 1846 Select Committee, referred to above.

The difficulties faced by the pioneer female lawyers were illustrative of one of the issues inherent in the articled clerkship model. Its nature tended to privilege those with family and personal connections and risked excluding or overlooking candidates due to biases held by

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[37] Judy Mackinolty, 'Learned Practitioners' in John Mackinolty and Judy Mackinolty (eds), *A Century Down Town* (Sydney University Law School, 1991) 57, 60.
[38] Ruth Campbell and J. Barton Jack, 'Grata Flos Matilda Greig (1880-1958)' (Web Page, Australian Dictionary of Biography) <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/greig-grata-flos-matilda-7049/text11103>.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Mackinolty (n 37) 60.
[41] Joan O'Brien, 'A History of Women in the Legal Profession in New South Wales' (Thesis, Sydney University, 1986) 24.
[42] Ibid; Mackinolty (n 37) 60.
[43] O'Brien (n 41) 20-30.

masters, whether based upon gender, race, class or other lines.[44] For example, of his experience as an articled clerk in 1927-1932, Myer Rosenblum wrote:[45]

> Obtaining articles was very difficult, especially if you had not the connections such as the right school, or recommendations from powerfully connected businessmen. One of my applications was successful in that I was asked to come for an interview.
>
> After my particulars were found to be satisfactory, I was then informed that the firm was prepared to give me articles on payment of a premium of £400. I was told that the clerk in the early years would be of little use, and the premium would be required to make up the wage paid to him and the time taken for giving him instruction and allowing him time off for attendance at the University. I declined the position, explaining that I was a Scholarship University Law Student and that sort of money was not available.
>
> However, our next door neighbour was a master plumber and he knew a solicitor who would employ me as an articled clerk without a premium at the 'colossal' salary of £1 per week ...

Rosenblum ultimately clerked in three different offices. After recounting his experience in each, he wrote:[46]

> Summing up I can say that at all those three offices I received courtesy and help and was surrounded with good natured people but I was taught very very little.
>
> The root of this trouble was that the master solicitors were very, very, busy, working for long hours, and no time to teach. If they could have had the time to teach, I doubt if they knew how to teach articled clerks.

Rosenblum was not alone in his struggle to pay the premiums. Even the likes of Sir Garfield Barwick and Sir John Kerr had difficulties in that regard, obtaining articles only with the assistance of, as with Marie Byles, John Peden.[47]

In 1961 the Menzies federal government appointed Leslie Martin to chair a "Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education in Australia" tasked, including in relation to legal education, "to consider the pattern of tertiary education in relation to the needs and resources of Australia and to make recommendations to the Australian Universities Commission on the future development of tertiary education".[48] In 1964 that Committee published the first two of three volumes of its report, commonly known as the Martin Report. Relevantly, the following finding was made illustrating the tension between university education and articled clerkships:[49]

> [T]here has been a tendency for tension to develop between the pursuit of professional training requirements and university educational aims. For the lawyer there has been little, other than a traditional apprenticeship system, analogous to the clinical training provided for medical students. Except in certain limited areas and certain specific subjects the demands of apprenticeship training tend to conflict with the proper pursuit of university education.

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[44] See further The Hon. Hament Dhanji, 'Cultural diversity in the law: it is not revolution – but we are going to occupy the buildings' in Judicial Commission of New South Wales, *Handbook for Judicial Officers* (2021) 168; Motseotsile Clement Marumoagae, 'Artificial Barriers that Prevent Underprivileged Law Graduates to Access the Legal Profession' (2021) 1(1) *Turf Law Journal* 1.
[45] Myer Rosenblum, 'The Articled Clerk 1927-1932' in John Mackinolty and Judy Mackinolty (eds), *A Century Down Town* (Sydney University Law School, 1991) 83, 84.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Mackinolty (n 37) 77.
[48] Martin Report (n 9) 3-4.
[49] Ibid 49.

In making that finding, the authors referred to benefits associated with teaching practical skills in a workplace alongside the theory learned in university.[50] A similar notion had been articulated by Sir Victor Windeyer in 1961:[51]

> … I personally incline to think that the weight of advantage is in having practical experience concurrent with the later years of formal instruction. First, this is because what the student learns in class helps him to understand why he does what he does in the office; and his experience in the office helps him to learn what he is taught at the school. Law and practice and procedure are intertwined. A student should learn about one while watching the other.

However, the Martin Report considered that often the students would be subsumed into the work of the office in a manner which risked relegating the status of their education, while also being sent upon low-level tasks and receiving minimal practical instruction.[52] It was not suggested that university law schools pick up all of the slack, but rather take some steps to inculcate skills within their courses, at least to the extent necessary to mitigate criticism that their students "know Section 4 of the Statute of Frauds off by heart but cannot recognize it in the street with a hat and coat on".[53] It continued:[54]

> By shaping their courses towards the inculcation of skills as well as towards the acquisition of knowledge, by providing practical exercises through moot court work and legal aid clinics, law schools can introduce their students to law as the mastery of an art as well as to law as a body of knowledge. The library, the classroom and the moot court room are proper instruments for the pursuit of university aims; but just as universities have tended to shy away from techniques and the mere performance of arts, whether pictorial, dramatic or musical, and to concentrate upon scholarship with respect to them, so it is proper that universities should be more concerned with legal scholarship than with legal practice.
>
> The line between the acquisition of skills and the attainment of knowledge is not a sharp one. Where the living law is concerned the line really does not exist. If it is to be drawn, as for planning purposes perhaps it must, it must be drawn as much by reference to practical considerations of efficiency in the employment of available resources as to any consideration more inherently relevant. When viewed as the pursuit of knowledge and the attainment of high standards of scholarship within a university discipline, even the study of law involves the acquisition of skills as well as of knowledge. That is so because the law, insofar as it is a science, is an applied science. Its rules "live" only in their application. For this and other reasons university law schools, so long at least as their work is thought of at all as education for the legal profession, must be concerned with the inculcation of skills to some extent.

The Committee made several key recommendations. Those included, first, that lawyers have at least three years of university education to provide them with the necessary background intellectual training. Second, that different kinds of law courses be developed to accommodate different needs, including a practice course designed to satisfy requirements for admission to the profession, open to those who have completed three years of university education. Third, that apprenticeship training coupled with part time study be discouraged. Fourth, that a new law school be established in NSW to meet the growing need for qualified legal practitioners.[55]

On the back of the Martin Report, in 1966 the Sydney University Law Society published the results of a survey of law students into the training they had received in the course of articled clerkships (known as the Trew Report, named after the President of the Society at the time of

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[50] Ibid 55.
[51] Sir Victor Windeyer, 'Learning the Law' (1961) 35 *The Australian Law Journal* 102, 112.
[52] Martin Report (n 9) 54-55.
[53] Ibid 56.
[54] Ibid; footnote omitted.
[55] Ibid 49-50.

the survey).[56] The Trew Report reflected much of the findings of the Martin Report. It placed particular emphasis on the financial plight of clerks occasioned by the low wages they were being paid.[57]

At the time, similar inquiries were being undertaken in the UK. On 19 December 1967 Sir Roger Ormrod was appointed to Chair a Committee on Legal Education. The Committee published its report in 1971. It identified much the same issues with the system of articles as had been ventilated in the Martin Report and Trew Report in Australia, including an inability for clerks to pay the premiums demanded by masters, and too few available positions for a growing pool of candidates.[58] The recommendations coming out of the report included the following:[59]

> (1) For the purpose of training for the legal profession, academic and vocation legal education should as far as possible be integrated into a coherent whole …
>
> (4) Legal education should be planned in three stages, namely:—
>
> (i) the academic stage;
>
> (ii) the professional stage, comprising both institutional training and in-training; and
>
> (iii) continuing education or training …
>
> (32) The articles system for solicitors should be replaced by a period of three years' limited practice after qualification …
>
> (33) If the Committee's other recommendations are adopted, the requirements for qualification as a member of the profession will be:—
>
> (i) a law degree (or its equivalent, for those eligible to take the common professional examination; and
>
> (ii) a diploma or certificate obtained after attending a recognised vocational course.
>
> After qualification, the barrister or solicitor will not be able to enter into full practice until he has served his year's pupillage or three years' limited practice.

6. The development of practical legal training courses

The various reports into legal education commissioned in the 1960s were acted upon in Australia in the 1970s, leading to the institution and ascendency of practical legal training over the articled clerkship model.[60]

[56] J. L. Trew, *A Survey of Training Received by Articled Clerks in New South Wales* (Sydney University Law Society, 1966).
[57] Ibid 13.
[58] Ormrod Report (n 7) 16-17.
[59] Ibid 94-99.
[60] David Weisbrot, *Australian Lawyers* (Longman Cheshire, 1989) 148.

The first provider of practical legal training was the Australian National University, which introduced a workshop course as an alternative to articles in 1971.[61]

In Victoria the Leo Cussen Institute was established by statute in 1972.[62] It was the first institute established for the purpose of delivering practical legal training.[63] Following a pilot course in 1974, from 1975 it offered full time courses of six months as an alternative to articles.[64]

Similarly, in Tasmania a six-month legal practice course was offered from 1972, taught at the Tasmanian College of Advanced Education.[65] Rather than being an alternative to articles, it was a pre-requisite to a reduced period of articles to 18 months.[66]

In NSW the College of Law was established in 1972 by the Law Society.[67] On 28 September 1973 there were promulgated in the NSW Gazette amendments to the Solicitors Admission Rules to recognise the pathway to admission through the College and to cease the practice of articled clerkships. It was initially the only State to do away with articles entirely.[68] The first course was offered by the College in 1974.[69]

Of the other States, South Australia followed suit in 1976 and Queensland in 1978.[70] WA did not embrace a PLT pathway to admission until 2010.[71]

In addition to the emergence of standalone PLT institutions, some universities began to incorporate practical clinical education within their undergraduate curriculum in collaboration with community legal centres. The first to do so was Monash, which in 1975 launched a "Professional Practice" unit in association with what was then the Springvale Legal Service, followed by La Trobe in 1978 (although such clinic involved students of legal studies rather than law) and UNSW through the Kingsford Legal Centre in 1981.[72]

The growth of PLT institutions led in the mid-1970s to the establishment of the Australasian Professional Legal Education Council (APLEC – now the Australasian Professional Legal Education Community).[73] A few years later, in 1979, the Legal Admissions Consultative Committee (LACC) was convened for the first time, at the initiative of Sir Laurence Street, for the purpose of obtaining agreement between jurisdictions about the qualifications required of overseas practitioners.[74]

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[61] Barker (n 11) 10.
[62] *Leo Cussen Institute Act 1972* (Vic).
[63] Barker (n 11) 10.
[64] Frank Langley, 'Preparing for the Practice of the Law: Post-graduate Pre-admission Training in Australia' (1985) 3 *Journal of Professional Legal Education* 81, 82; Susan Campbell, *Review of Legal Education Report* (2006) 23.
[65] Stefan Petrow, 'Lawyers', *The Companion to Tasmanian History* (Web page, 2006) <https://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion_to_tasmanian_history/L/Lawyers.htm>.
[66] Langley (n 64) 82.
[67] Barker (n 11) 10.
[68] Langley (n 64) 82.
[69] Keith Donald, 'The History of the College of Law' (1994) 12 *Journal of Professional Legal Education* 91, 93-4.
[70] Langley (n 64) 82.
[71] James McMillan and Rob Lilley, 'Why isn't all Legal Education Practical?' (2025) 3 *Western Australian Law Teachers' Review* 49, 51.
[72] Jeff Giddings, 'Reflecting on 50 years of Australian clinical legal education' (2025) 50(4) *Alternative Law Journal* 241; Ross Hyams, 'From Springvale Legal Service to Monash Law Clinics' in Monash Law Clinics, *Celebrating 50 Years of Increasing Access to Justice* (Annual Report, 2024-25) 9; David Nichols, *From the Roundabout to the Roundhouse* (2006) 11.
[73] 'Our History', *APLEC* (Web Page) <https://aplec.asn.au/about/>.
[74] Sandford Clark, 'Regulating Admissions: Are We There Yet?' (2017) 91 *Australian Law Journal* 907, 908.

The expansion of the PLT course model also prompted a desire for the establishment of uniform principles and standards that could serve as the basis for mutual recognition and guard against the least onerous standards becoming dominant.[75] Accordingly, in 1992 the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General (SCAG) requested that the various professional bodies reach agreement on a common curriculum for the PLT programs being offered.[76] No such agreement was able to be reached. The subsequent events were summarised by Professor Clark in 2017:[77]

> As the professional bodies had not reached agreement on many details, LACC obtained the consent of the Council of Chief Justices to try to forge a consensus. With the assistance of Mr Chris Roper, LACC proposed descriptions of the topics for each of the 12 proposed PLT requirements. These were, however, drafted in broad, indicative terms because it seemed impossible to obtain agreement between admitting authorities on matters of detail and emphasis. In view of this difficulty, SCAG advised the Council of Chief Justices in 1994 that, in its view, it was now a matter for each admitting authority to consider whether to implement the recommendations of LACC. None did. Thus, in 1996, LACC reported to the Council of Chief Justices that "each admitting authority has gone its own way in regard to practical training. The differences are too numerous to summarise in this report." It concluded that uniformity would not be achieved "unless further positive steps are taken".
>
> APLEC moved first. It proposed "a single prescription to regulate the content and learning outcomes of all programs of vocational legal training leading to first admission". It suggested nine fields of training, covering 45 specified competencies, to be achieved by all PLT programs. It thus re-packaged the LACC 12 PLT requirements, without making any significant changes to their content. However, it sought broadly to specify the skills, values and practical abilities which each student should be able to demonstrate upon completion. In 1998 APLEC further decided to specify performance criteria for each element or outcome, in accordance with the National Training Board's National Competency Standards Policy and Guidelines (1992). In 1999, in light of APLEC's proposals, LACC asked stakeholders whether LACC's 12 PLT requirements should be reviewed. The overwhelming response was that the LACC requirements were too ill-defined to help PLT providers design satisfactory programs, devise appropriate assessments, or form judgments about whether students had developed appropriate threshold competence to be admitted. LACC therefore sought to facilitate and assist APLEC in its endeavours to describe each component of PLT in terms of outcomes.

Subsequently LACC and APLEC jointly drafted the national PLT Competency Standards for Entry-level Lawyers. Such standards were endorsed by all admitting authorities, professional bodies and the Council of Chief Justices and were adopted in 2002. [78]

In 2010 LACC sought the assistance of APLEC and other stakeholders to undertake a review of the PLT Competency Standards. The request was made in the context of the further growth of PLT and steps having been taken by all jurisdictions to develop or apply means of accrediting and monitoring PLT courses and the performance of PLT providers. APLEC undertook a review which was completed in 2013, and led to a set of revised Competency Standards which commenced in 2015. [79] LACC has also prepared *Standards of PLT Workplace Experience*, *Guiding Principles for Integrating Academic and PLT Courses,* and

[75] Ibid 912; Sally Kift and Kana Nakano, 'Reimagining the Professional Regulation of Australian Legal Education' (Report, 1 December 2021) 26.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Clark (n 74) 913-914, footnotes omitted.
[78] Ibid.
[79] LACC, *Practical Legal Training Competency Standards for Entry-level Lawyers* (No 224336988.10, October 2017) 1, available at <https://legalservicescouncil.org.au/documents/PLT-competency-standards-for-entry-level-lawyers-Oct-2017.pdf>.

Uniform Standards for PLT Courses and Providers.[80] These standards continue to apply to the delivery of PLT at the present day.

Despite the ubiquity of PLT as an admission pathway in the present day and its acceptance in all States and Territories, models in the nature of workplace experience or articles are still available in a number of jurisdictions. In the Northern Territory, one year of articles is an approved form of practical legal training for admission.[81] Queensland permits admission following a period of "supervised workplace experience" supplemented by at least 90 hours of programmed training.[82] In jurisdictions which have adopted the Legal Profession Uniform Law (NSW, Victoria and WA), a candidate is eligible for admission following at least 12 months of "supervised legal training" under a training plan approved by the local regulatory authority.[83] However, in NSW the LPAB has determined that supervised legal training may not be undertaken.[84] In South Australia, Tasmania and the ACT, admission is permissible only following a course of practical legal training.[85]

[80] LACC, *Standards of PLT Workplace Experience* (No 240769433.09) available at <https://legalservicescouncil.org.au/documents/standards-for-PLT-workplace-experience.pdf>; LACC, *Guiding Principles for Integrating Academic and PLT Courses* (No 247087073.02) available at <https://legalservicescouncil.org.au/documents/Guiding-principles-for-tntegrating-academic-and-PLT-courses-revised-Oct-2017.pdf>; and LACC, *Uniform Standards for PLT Courses and Providers* (No 212001734.09, July 2015 (amended October 2017)) available at <https://legalservicescouncil.org.au/documents/uniform-standards-for-PLT-providers-and-courses-Oct-2017.pdf>.

[81] Legal Profession Admission Rules 2007 (NT) r 5(1)(b)(i).

[82] Supreme Court (Admission) Rules 2004 (Qld) rr 7A and 9O.

[83] Legal Profession Uniform Admission Rules 2015 r 6(2)(b).

[84] LPAB, *Guide for applicants for admission* (23 June 2026) 23, available at <https://lpab.nsw.gov.au/documents/guides-and-facts-sheets/guide_for_applicants_for_admission_version_5.2.pdf>.

[85] Rules of the Legal Practitioners Education and Admission Council 2018 (SA) r 8; Legal Profession (Board of Legal Education) Rules 2021 (Tas) r 7; *Legal Profession Act 2006* (ACT) s 21.

Annexure B – Working Group members

Practical Skills Mapping Working Group (Discussion Paper 1)

Nominating body	Members
Admissions Committee/LACC Co-Chair	• Madeleine Dupuche, La Trobe University
LSC Secretariat Co-Chair	• Stephen Bray, CEO, Legal Services Council
One nominee of Council of Australian Law Deans (**CALD**)	• Professor Natalie Skead, Professor of Law and former Dean of Law, University of Western Australia; Dean, Singapore Judicial College
One nominee of Australasian Professional Legal Education Community (**APLEC**)	• Craig Collins, Deputy Director Education Delivery, Leo Cussen
Four nominees of the Law Council of Australia (**LCA**), including one nominee of the LCA Young Lawyer's Committee	• Diana Newcombe, CEO Law Society of South Australia • Kate Wellington, CEO, Law Society of Western Australia • Thomas Coltrona, Member, Young Lawyers Committee • Peta Stevenson, Partner, Mallesons
One nominee of the Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner (**VLSB+C**)	• Lucy Fraser, Head of Policy, Programs & Education, Victorian Legal Services Board + Commissioner
One nominee of the First Nations Legal Professional Standards Working Party	• Professor Marcelle Burns, Associate Dean Indigenous Leadership and Engagement, Faculty of Law, University of Technology Sydney

Law Courses Working Group (Discussion Paper 3)

Nominating body	Members
Admissions Committee/LACC Co-Chair	• Professor Belinda Bennett, CALD Deputy Chair; Head of School and Dean, School of Law and Justice, University of Newcastle
LSC Secretariat Co-Chair	• Stephen Bray, CEO, Legal Services Council
Three nominees of CALD	• Professor Maree Sainsbury, CALD Vice-Chair Legal Education; Head of School, Canberra Law School, University of Canberra • Professor Andrew Lynch, Dean of Law & Justice, UNSW Sydney • Professor Julian Webb, Professor of Law, Melbourne Law School, University of Melbourne
One nominee of APLEC	• Anneka Ferguson, University of NSW

Nominating body	Members
Two nominees of the LCA	• Dr Pamela Hanrahan, Legal Education Working Group Member and former Chair of the Business Law Section • John Farrell, Executive Policy Lawyer, LCA

Pre-admission Practical Legal Training Working Group (Discussion Paper 4)

Nominating body	Members
Admissions Committee/LACC Co-Chair	• Justice Jeremy Kirk, Supreme Court of NSW
LSC Secretariat Co-Chair	• Stephen Bray, CEO, Legal Services Council
Three nominees of APLEC	• Tiffany Long, Head of Programs and Engagement – Territories, Leo Cussen • Sarah Breusch, Director Legal Centre, University of Newcastle • Professor Vedna Jivan, Professor and Director, PLT Program, UNSW
Three nominees of LCA	• Tania Wolff, President and Chair, Legal Education Working Group, Law Council of Australia • Matt Dunn, CEO, Queensland Law Society • Leonie Campbell, General Manager, Policy, Law Council of Australia
One nominee of the Legal Practitioners Admissions Board of Queensland	• Ms Rebecca Fogerty, Partner, Jasper Fogerty Lawyers
One nominee of the NSW Legal Profession Admission Board	• Wen-Ts'ai Lim, Senior Consultant, Ashurst Perkins Coie
One nominee of the Victorian Legal Admissions Board	• Dr Jeffrey Giddings, Professor of Law, Monash University

Enhanced Post-admission Training Working Group (Discussion Paper 5)

Nominating body	Members
Admissions Committee/LACC Co-Chair	• Rebecca O'Brien, Barrister
LSC Secretariat Co-Chair	• Stephen Bray, CEO, Legal Services Council
One nominee of APLEC	• Ann-Maree David, National Executive Director, College of Law
Two nominees of LCA	• Adam Awty, CEO, Law Institute of Victoria

Nominating body	Members
	• Donna Cooper, General Manager, Policy, Advocacy and Professional Standards, Law Institute of Victoria
One nominee of the Law Society of the Northern Territory	• James McMillian, Legal Practitioner
One nominee of Legal Practice Board, Western Australia (**LPBWA**)	• Dr Brett Davies, Institute of Legal Training
One nominee of VLSB+C	• Kerri-anne Millard, Executive Director, Policy and Outreach, VLSB+C

Supervision of Early-Career Lawyers Working Group (Discussion Paper 6)

Nominating body	Members
Admissions Committee/LACC Co-Chair	• Justice Matthew Howard, Supreme Court of Western Australia
LSC Secretariat Co-Chair	• Stephen Bray, CEO, Legal Services Council
Two nominees of LCA	• Nadya Haddad, Deputy Director, Regulation, Law Society of NSW • John Farrell. Executive Policy Lawyer, LCA
One nominee of LPBWA	• Libby Fulham, Executive Director, LPBWA
One nominee of VLSB+C	• Sarah Lethlean, Head, Regulatory Affairs, VLSB+C
One nominee of National Legal Aid	• Rebecca Lee, Director, Regional Services Division, Legal Aid Western Australia

Possible PLT Reform Models Working Group (Discussion Paper 7)

Nominating body	Members
Admissions Committee/LACC Co-Chair	• Professor Nick James, Executive Dean, Faculty of Law, Bond University; Co-Chair, CALD
LSC Secretariat Co-Chair	• Stephen Bray, CEO, Legal Services Council
One nominee of CALD	• Professor Sally Kift, President, Australian Learning & Teaching Fellows; Vice Chancellor's Strategic Fellow, Victoria University; UNSW Scientia Education Academy Visiting Fellow; Honorary Professor, University of Southern Queensland; Adjunct Professor: JCU and QUT; University Associate, Curtin University

One nominee of APLEC	• Shirley Southgate, Executive Director, Leo Cussen Centre for Law; Chair, APLEC
Three nominees of LCA	• Tania Wolff, LCA President and Chair, Legal Education Working Group • Matt Dunn, CEO, Queensland Law Society • Leonie Campbell, General Manager Policy, LCA

DISCUSSION PAPER 1

PRACTICAL CAPABILITY MAPPING ACROSS THE SPECTRUM OF LEGAL EDUCATION

1. Overview of the policy issue and key policy considerations

Policy issue

Law graduates need to be adequately prepared at the point of admission to start supervised practice in a contemporary legal environment.

The PLT Competency Standards for Entry-Level Lawyers (**PLT Competency Standards**) developed by the Law Admissions Consultative Committee (**LACC**) in partnership with the Australasian Profession Legal Education Community Ltd (**APLEC**) set out the competencies that a student is expected to develop during practical legal training (**PLT**). The competencies include four skill areas, three compulsory practice areas, two elective practice areas and values.

There is an opportunity to update the capabilities required at admission, require the development of some capabilities during the law degree, and further advance some of those capabilities after admission.

To facilitate holistic consideration of capability development, there is a need to consider the capabilities expected of lawyers at the point of admission, identify the stage(s) of the legal education continuum where it is appropriate to acquire those capabilities, and the level to which capabilities should be developed.

Key policy and implementation considerations

- What are the principles that should underpin the capability framework?
- What capabilities do the legal profession, judiciary, educators, legal regulators, consumers of legal services and the broader community expect of a lawyer when they enter supervised practice?
- What is the appropriate distribution of the development of those capabilities across the law course, PLT and supervised legal practice, having regard to whether it is practicable for those capabilities to be developed within the respective learning contexts?

2. Overview of feedback received

Graduate and supervisor views in the 2025 National PLT Research Survey

In 2025, the Legal Service Council's Admissions Committee and the LACC (**Committees**) undertook a survey of early career lawyers and supervisors to hear about their experience with PLT. That survey was distributed in all state and territories other than New South Wales, where a local survey had already been undertaken. The key findings were that only 38% of graduates were satisfied about the compulsory subjects,[1] graduates considered

[1] Urbis, National Practical Legal Training Research Survey Research Report (March 2026), p 32.

that core soft and legal practical skills were lacking,[2] and PLT did not reflect the diverse nature of modern legal practice.[3]

Overview of feedback provided to the 2026 national consultation on reforms to PLT

In response to the national Consultation Paper published by the Committees on options for reform to PLT, stakeholders acknowledge that the PLT Competency Standards require review and modernisation and generally support adding practical skills to law courses. However, there is concern that the skills schedule included in the Consultation Paper (originally developed by the NSW Legal Profession Admission Board)[4] is not fit for purpose because it is too prescriptive and task-based, biased towards private practice or litigation, not evidence-based nor informed by stakeholder consultation, and not underpinned by a framework that maps out the skills that are to be acquired at the different stages of the legal education continuum. Stakeholders suggested various skills for inclusion including Indigenous Cultural Competency, trauma-informed practice, critical thinking and problem solving, collaboration/teamwork, equality and wellbeing and technology capability.

With respect to the proposed incorporation of practical skills into the law degree, stakeholders consider that:

- it is unclear what is to be delivered in a law course and at what stage
- it does not consider the Threshold Learning Outcomes[5]
- there should be deeper engagement with existing pedagogical research on skills development and assessment, the contemporary and future needs of legal practice, and international approaches
- the drafting requires refinement as some skills refer to a level of 'understanding' rather than a practical skill.

3. A new framework for the development of practical and professional capabilities by new lawyers

Excellence in legal education is important to the legal profession, the effective functioning of the legal system, the administration of justice and the community. This commitment is demonstrated through the dedication of legal academics and educators, legal practitioners and the judiciary to teach, mentor, train and supervise New Lawyers so that they effectively apply their knowledge, build their understanding and capabilities, and develop a commitment to the profession and the administration of justice.

The New Lawyer Practical and Professional Capability Framework (**Annexure A**) provides a continuum of capability development across:

1. Law School
2. PLT
3. Supervised Legal Practice (0–2 years post admission).

The term "New Lawyer" captures all stages of legal education including law students, law graduates and newly admitted lawyers through to the end of the mandatory supervision period (**Annexure C**). "Capability" is defined as the cumulative knowledge, skills, behaviours and attributes that enable a New Lawyer to practise law independently and effectively (**Annexure C**).

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[2] Urbis, National Practical Legal Training Research Survey Research Report (March 2026), p 34.
[3] Urbis, National Practical Legal Training Research Survey Research Report (March 2026), p 35.
[4] Admissions Committee and Law Admissions Consultative Committee, Consultation Paper Review of Practical Legal Training (April 2026), Appendix F, p 83-91.
[5] Australian Learning & Teaching Council, Learning and Teaching Academic Standards of Project Bachelor of Laws Learning and Teaching Academic Standards Statement (December 2010).

This is a broad and contemporary framework that is intended to futureproof the capabilities for New Lawyers and equip them to practice in diverse legal environments. The framework focuses on core transferrable capabilities which complement the substantive legal knowledge that students obtain through law courses. This framework does not include the legal knowledge that is currently developed during the law degree through study of the prescribed academic areas of knowledge (i.e. the Priestley 11). Those requirements remain unchanged.

The current context is characterised by a time of rapid change, particularly in the impact of technology, including artificial intelligence (**AI**), on legal practice, processes and systems. As this has changed the nature of legal work and accentuated certain human legal capabilities, New Lawyers need to develop capabilities to be reflective, adaptable and resilient to take advantage of opportunities in emerging processes and systems.

The framework draws on work within Australia (e.g. Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner Early Career Lawyer Capability Framework and the Law Society of NSW Solicitor Capability Framework) and international best practice frameworks and research to ensure it is and remains fit for purpose.

Application

This framework is not proposed to be a regulatory document itself. The framework is intended to inform the amendments that will give effect to the proposed requirements for developing further practical and professional capabilities in law courses, PLT and early practice.

Guiding principles

Based on the feedback to the national Consultation Paper, the capability framework is underpinned by the key considerations outlined below.

a) The framework should identify the capabilities that early-career lawyers are expected to acquire across the legal education continuum

In response to stakeholder feedback that a framework needs to map the capabilities that are to be acquired at the relevant stages of the legal education continuum (law school, PLT and supervised legal practice), this framework intends to provide a holistic framework for early-career lawyer development of practical and professional capabilities.

The intention is to provide a common structure for the capabilities to inform curriculum so that they operate as a seamless continuum across those stages of legal education, rather than each stage operating in silos.

The framework identifies the stages in which capabilities should be introduced, developed and consolidated, as defined below.

Level	Descriptor
Introduced	The New Lawyer encounters the required capability, understands its importance, and begins to practise it in a low-stakes, structured setting
Developed	The New Lawyer demonstrates the capability in more realistic, integrated settings with feedback. The capability is assessed at a level appropriate to a graduate, not a practitioner.
Consolidated	The New Lawyer demonstrates the capability to the standard of a newly admitted lawyer working under supervision in simulated or real practice conditions. The New Lawyer can independently perform straightforward tasks and occasional unfamiliar

Level	Descriptor
	tasks to an acceptable standard, use their own judgment to progress legal matters, and practise safely and ethically at novice level while recognising when support is needed.

The levels are colour graded in the framework to indicate the highest level at which the capability is acquired at each stage of the continuum. For some capabilities, this means that it may be introduced, developed and/or consolidated at one stage. The identification of progression levels for each capability is intended to inform the integration of those capabilities within law course and PLT curriculums, as well as recognising the role of practical and professional capability development during supervised legal practice.

b) The framework should equip early-career lawyers with transferrable capabilities

In response to stakeholder views that some aspects of the current PLT Competency Standards (for example, Trust and Office Accounting and Property Law Practice) have limited or no relevance for graduates, the new framework identifies broader transferrable capabilities that an early-career lawyer is expected to demonstrate in any legal environment.

c) The framework should apply to all practice areas

Stakeholders have raised concerns that the current PLT Competency Standards are skewed towards litigation and private practice, noting that legal practice is increasingly diverse and practice area specific capabilities may not adequately prepare all lawyers.

The framework is intended to identify practical and professional capabilities that should be developed by lawyers, regardless of their practice area. The proposed capabilities are drafted broadly and at a high level, without reference to any specific practice areas.

The absence of practice areas from the framework is not intended to eliminate the teaching of any practice area knowledge or processes. Rather, it is intended to provide educators with the flexibility to design curriculums as they see fit and adapt their curriculums to changing legal environments. Legal capabilities must be taught within context, and the framework is designed to allow educators to choose the appropriate fields of application in which those capabilities are most effectively developed.

If it is considered important that the capabilities are developed within a particular stream or context of legal practice (i.e. disputes and litigation, transactional, advisory and regulatory practice) but the risk of over prescription is too high to appropriately cover all required contexts, the PLT Competency Standards could require graduates develop the capabilities within those focused contexts.

The explanatory document (**Annexure B**) suggests some practice areas in which particular capabilities may be taught. For example, at 2.5 (“Prepares accurate legal documents”), it provides that a student or early career lawyer should have the ability to “Prepare[s] commonly used legal documents across areas such as criminal law, family law, commercial or property practice”. These were selected as they are common practice areas which involve key transferrable capabilities.

It remains an open question as to whether practice area specific knowledge should retained, and if so whether it should be shifted to the post admission stage to enable graduates to undertake specialised training according to their needs and interests during their supervised legal practice period.

d) The framework should not be too prescriptive and task-based

In response to stakeholder feedback that the framework should not be overly prescriptive and task-based to avoid PLT continuing to be a "tick the box" program and further inhibit curriculum innovation, the proposed framework has been drafted at a high level.

The explanatory document (**Annexure B**) provides additional guidance on what is intended to be captured by the capability and the types of legal tasks that may a New Lawyer may be expected to undertake to demonstrate the capabilities.

This approach aims to strike the appropriate balance between having a framework that allows for flexibility and innovation, with some guidance to promote consistency in curriculum design.

e) The framework should capture the changing technological environment in which the legal profession operates to ensure legal capabilities remain relevant

Emerging technologies, including generative AI, are significantly changing the way in which the legal profession works.

In response to stakeholder feedback that the framework should include technological capabilities to ensure early-career lawyers are equipped with the necessary capabilities to engage in technology-assisted legal practice, this framework introduces a new capability of 'Technology & Future Legal Practice', to ensure early-career lawyers can meet the pace of emerging technologies.

4. Discussion questions for the Conference

a) Does the Capability Framework at Annexure A cover the capabilities required of a new lawyer? What, if any, changes should be made?

b) Is the distribution of the development of those capabilities across the law course, PLT and supervised legal practice in Annexure A appropriate? What, if any, changes should be made?

Annexures

Annexure A	New Lawyer Practical and Professional Capability Framework
Annexure B	Explanatory Document
Annexure C	Glossary

Annexure A - New Lawyer Practical and Professional Capability Framework

Level	Descriptor
Introduced	The New Lawyer encounters the required capability, understands its importance, and begins to practise it in a low-stakes, structured setting
Developed	The New Lawyer demonstrates the capability in more realistic, integrated settings with feedback. The capability is assessed at a level appropriate to a graduate, not a practitioner.
Consolidated	The New Lawyer demonstrates the capability to the standard of a newly admitted lawyer working under supervision in simulated or real practice conditions. The New Lawyer can independently perform straightforward tasks and occasional unfamiliar tasks to an acceptable standard, use their own judgment to progress legal matters, and practise safely and ethically at novice level while recognising when support is needed.

1	**Capability Domain 1: Professional Conduct, Ethics & Integrity**	**Law School**	**PLT**	**SLP**
1.1	Fulfills professional, ethical and legal obligations by reference to professional regulatory frameworks			
1.2	Behaves professionally and exercises good judgment			
1.3	Takes responsibility for their professional conduct and decisions			
2	**Capability Domain 2: Application of Legal Knowledge**	**Law School**	**PLT**	**SLP**
2.1	Complies with relevant law and procedure			
2.2	Gathers relevant facts and information			
2.3	Undertakes effective legal research			
2.4	Applies critical thinking, legal reasoning and analysis			
2.5	Prepares accurate legal documents			
2.6	Advocates effectively for clients			
3	**Capability Domain 3: Client, Community & First Nations Cultural Capability**	**Law School**	**PLT**	**SLP**
3.1	Establishes and manages client relationships			
3.2	Builds client centred practices			
3.3	Adjusts approaches to meet the needs of clients experiencing vulnerability			
3.4	Recognises trauma impacts and adapts professional interactions			
3.5	Demonstrates First Nations cultural capability			
3.6	Works effectively with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) clients			
4	**Capability Domain 4: Communication & Relationships**	**Law School**	**PLT**	**SLP**
4.1	Communicates orally clearly, effectively and professionally			
4.2	Writes and drafts clearly, accurately, effectively and professionally			
4.3	Builds and maintains professional relationships and courtesy			
4.4	Effectively collaborates and works in teams			
5	**Capability Domain 5: Managing Legal Matters & Delivering Legal Services**	**Law School**	**PLT**	**SLP**
5.1	Manages work and client matters including client intake, scoping retainers, file and time management, matter progression and client updates			
5.2	Proactively identifies and manages risks			
5.3	Identifies and responds appropriately to mistakes or errors			
5.4	Complies with costs obligations			
5.5	Addresses financial and other regulatory obligations			
5.6	Works effectively under supervision			
6	**Capability Domain 6: Technology & Future Legal Practice**	**Law School**	**PLT**	**SLP**
6.1	Uses technology effectively to support quality, efficiency and client value			
6.2	Demonstrates accountability for technology-assisted work			
6.3	Contributes to the effective and sustainable delivery of legal services			
6.4	Understands the business and operational context of legal practice			
6.5	Engages in continuous improvement and innovation			
7	**Capability Domain 7: Reflection & Self-Management**	**Law School**	**PLT**	**SLP**
7.1	Continually reflects on and improves professional performance			
7.2	Monitors and manages own wellbeing			
7.3	Maintains and contributes to a safe and healthy workplace			

Annexure B - Explanatory Document

This explanatory document identifies what is intended by the capability under the New Lawyer Practical and Professional Capability Framework and provides examples of legal tasks that demonstrate that capability.

1	**Capability Domain 1: Professional Conduct, Ethics & Integrity**			**Example legal tasks**
1.1	Fulfills professional, ethical and legal obligations by reference to professional regulatory frameworks			
	Applies the ethical and professional obligations of solicitors applicable in their jurisdiction	Respects and upholds the paramount duty to the court and the administration of justice, and can accurately explain the duty to clients		Client advice on a complex scenario regarding instructions that conflict with the paramount duty
1.2	Behaves professionally and exercises good judgment			
	Identifies clients' confidential information, protects client confidentiality in all communications, and understands the limited exceptions to the duty of confidentiality	Demonstrates, professional courtesy, candour, honesty and integrity in dealings with clients, colleagues, the courts, the regulator and others	Protects client confidentiality in the use of technology tools	Conversation with supervisor regarding an error related to confidentiality caused by workload
1.3	Takes responsibility for their professional conduct and decisions			
	Accurately assesses their own suitability to take on legal matters, considering their level of expertise and capacity	Identifies perceived, potential and actual ethical issues and conflicts, identifies when appropriate to seek guidance from supervisor, peers and others (e.g. Law Society) about how to manage them	Acts with honesty and candour when mistakes, concerns or circumstances affecting their ability to meet professional obligations arise, and takes appropriate action to protect clients and the administration of justice	Conversation with supervisor regarding suitability to take on a particular legal matter and requesting additional supervision for that work
2	**Capability Domain 2: Application of Legal Knowledge**			**Example legal tasks**
2.1	Complies with relevant law and procedure			
	Identifies and applies legislative instruments, case law, relevant legal procedures and other sources of authority accurately in relevant practice areas			Client advice in civil, criminal or dispute on including advice on litigation procedure
2.2	Gathers relevant facts and information			
	Identifies relevant facts and information through client intake, interviews, document review and other forms of due diligence	Accurately identifies inconsistencies and gaps in available information and seeks clarification	Organises materials in a coherent way, including accurate record keeping	Work on a client matter concerning a small business purchase
2.3	Undertakes effective legal research			
	Recognises when legal research is needed, and undertakes research using appropriate tools and relevant, current and authoritative sources	Verifies the accuracy of case citations and legal authorities		Procedural research memo to supervisor regarding application for extension of limitation period
2.4	Applies critical thinking, legal reasoning and analysis			

	Analyses facts and evaluates the quality and accuracy of information	Uses legal knowledge, experience and research to identify potential legal, practical or client issues	Draws reasoned conclusions to inform the development of credible legal options and advice to help the client make informed decisions	Generates constructive strategies and case plans	Applies strategic thinking when assessing legal risks, uncertainties and opportunities in client matters.	Memo to supervisor concerning practical options and strategy in managing a claim against a client e.g. employment law or professional negligence
2.5	Prepares accurate legal documents					
	Prepares legally effective documents independently, including by adapting precedent documents, template communications and standard notes that are appropriate to specific client circumstances	Prepares commonly used legal documents across areas such as criminal law, family law, commercial practice or property practice	Writes clearly and concisely, accurately addressing all relevant legal and factual issues	Carefully reviews drafted documents		Varied document preparation either as discreet tasks or as part of client matters, including notes, advice, letters of demand, pleadings, affidavits, briefs, contracts, leases
2.6	Advocates effectively for clients					
	Identifies and critically analyses all parties' interests, objectives and limitations to advocate effectively for their client	Organises facts, evidence and applicable legal principles coherently to advance arguments or positions	Presents case and negotiates options to facilitate compromise when necessary or advantageous for their clients	Appears as a solicitor advocate in a simple court application with appropriate understanding of court processes and etiquette	Communicates courteously and appropriately with a judicial officer, court staff and other parties in a court matter	Preparation for and participation in negotiation or mediation
3	**Capability Domain 3: Client, Community & First Nations Cultural Capability**					**Example legal tasks**
3.1	Establishes and manages client relationships					
	Communicates clearly to their client about roles, processes, limitations and next steps to support a transparent professional relationship	Treats their client courteously fostering a trusting relationship that supports informed client decision-making	Establishes and maintains appropriate professional boundaries with their client	Responds to their client's concerns and complaints in a timely and professional manner	Accurately identifies who their client is and who is providing instructions, including ensuring compliance with verification of identity requirements and maintaining confidentiality	Client intake meeting and subsequent review, self-reflection and supervisor feedback
3.2	Builds client centred practices					
	Tailors their communication style to support client understanding and agency, and endeavours to take a trauma-informed	Pro-actively verifies that their client understands information and advice provided	Considers their client's circumstances holistically and how legal advice and options align with their needs, goals, priorities and constraints	Recognises factors that may impact the lawyer client relationship based on geographical location, the use of technology, and other barriers to participating in the legal system	Recognises how peoples' lives are influenced by multiple interacting and layered identities or experiences (e.g. gender, race, disability) and how	Presentation to team meeting about the new client and their matter, setting out client's needs and proposed strategy to ensure they are met

	approach, where appropriate				discrimination and bias might arise	
3.3	Adjusts approaches to meet the needs of clients experiencing vulnerability					
	Identifies whether the client has (and continues to have) capacity to provide instructions		Considers the client's legal capability (i.e. the client's legal knowledge, skills, attributes, resources to deal with legal problems and any vulnerability factors) in relation to all aspects of their matter		Identifies when referrals to other professionals are needed (e.g. medical, counselling, support services, interpreters, or other expert advice)	Work on a wills and estates matter involving questions of capacity
3.4	Recognises trauma impacts and adapts professional interactions					
	Adopts trauma-informed approaches and supports client agency					Discussion regarding professional interaction with a vulnerable client
3.5	Demonstrates First Nations cultural capability					
	Comprehends the adverse historical role of law and legal institutions and its continuing forms and impacts on First Nations peoples	Identifies systemic and institutional racism in legal systems and institutions	Recognises how their own cultural background informs communication, professional norms and relationships	Accurately assesses the need for and explains the role of an interpreter to the client and works effectively with the interpreter when providing legal services to the client	Promotes culturally safe and responsive legal practice and workplaces for First Nations clients and colleagues	Supports First Nations clients' empowerment	Engages in reflective practice with supervisor about how cultural background informs professional relationships and building culturally safe legal practice
3.6	Works effectively with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) clients and colleagues					
	Accurately assesses the need for and explains the role of an interpreter to the client and works effectively with the interpreter when providing legal services to the client	Recognises how their own cultural background informs communication, professional norms and relationships	Identifies systemic and institutional racism in legal systems and institutions	Promotes culturally safe and responsive legal practice and workplaces for CALD clients and colleagues		Engages in team discussion regarding strategies to reduce barriers to accessing justice for CALD clients
4	**Capability Domain 4: Communication & Relationships**					**Example legal tasks**
4.1	Communicates orally clearly, effectively and professionally					
	Tailors engagement and communication style to meet the needs of different audiences and culturally diverse clients		Structures and delivers information clearly, concisely and logically using plain language		Recognises and manages the impact their own views and emotions have on communication style and tone when interacting with others	Provision of oral advice to a challenging client
4.2	Writes and drafts clearly, accurately, effectively and professionally					
	Writes with clarity, concision, effectiveness and accuracy					Written correspondence to other legal professionals, judge's associates and expert witnesses

4.3	Builds and maintains professional relationships and courtesy					
	Listens actively in professional settings and asks appropriate questions to clarify issues	Ethically and effectively interviews a witness or other third party	Manages difficult conversations by delivering information clearly and sensitively	Builds and maintains effective professional relationships with clients, supervisors, colleagues, courts, tribunals, regulators, government agencies, community organisations and other stakeholders		Participation at a client meeting with the barrister to prepare the client to give evidence at trial
4.4	Effectively collaborates and works in teams					
	Works collaboratively within a team, contributing reliably and constructively to shared objectives and an inclusive team environment	Proactively seeks feedback, guidance and clarification	Reflects on experiences working within a team, takes on feedback and adapts in response			Work as part of a team preparing for and appearance at an urgent injunction
5	**Capability Domain 5: Managing Legal Matters & Delivering Legal Services**					**Example legal tasks**
5.1	Manages work and client matters including client intake, scoping retainers, file and time management, matter progression and client updates					
	Considers and accurately assesses resources, capacity, time and budget when taking on matters	Follows appropriate client intake processes to identify and record the scope of the retainer and factors such as urgency or sensitivity	Effectively takes and accurately records their client's instructions, and updates instructions as needed	Develops and maintains a matter plan identifying objectives, deadlines, risks and next steps	Takes responsibility for progressing allocated aspects of a matter, completing agreed actions and following through on next steps	Management of an evolving legal matter
	Prioritises tasks, manages competing commitments and adjusts work plans to meet deadlines and client needs	Applies established practice systems, workflows and procedures to manage legal matters consistently and accurately	Keeps accurate client files, containing up-to-date file notes, client records and documents	Complies with document and file management systems and protocols	Uses practice management systems, centralised calendars and reminder systems to track the progress of matters and critical dates, and to manage competing deadlines, according to importance and urgency	Undertaking a file audit and identifying the issues and appropriate responses
	Identifies where early resolution is achievable and undertakes dispute resolution, where appropriate	Conducts litigation efficiently and effectively in accordance with relevant court and/or tribunal rules and procedures	Provides timely progress updates to their client and other parties as needed	Adjusts strategy and case plan in response to changing circumstances		Management of an evolving legal matter
5.2	Proactively identifies and manages risks					
	Recognises when specialised input is required and seeks appropriate guidance or escalation from mentors, supervisors and other colleague to improve the quality of their work	Takes steps to identify potential risks, warning signs and required steps	Manages identified risks before they become problems by taking proactive steps and promptly escalating concerns with their supervisor			Management of an error in advice, preparation of a supervisor briefing note and proposal of remediation steps

5.3	Identifies and responds appropriately to mistakes or errors				
	Reviews work systematically to identify and resolve mistakes or errors, seeking guidance as needed, and proactively works to minimise the impact of mistakes on client outcomes				
5.4	Complies with costs obligations				
	Complies with costs disclosure obligations set out in the regulatory framework applicable to their jurisdiction		Takes all reasonable steps to make sure their client understands and gives consent to proposed costs		Prepare a revised costs estimate following a material change in scope or assumptions
5.5	Addresses financial and other regulatory obligations				
	Identifies and complies with obligations that apply in relation to the receipt and disbursement of trust money	Identifies and complies with obligations to report irregularities and suspected irregularities in trust accounts	Identifies and complies with regulatory obligations that are relevant to their legal practice		Identification and management of irregularities in trust accounts
5.6	Works effectively under supervision				
	Works effectively under supervision and provides accurate updates to supervisors				Discovery of an incorrect assumption in advice, identify the issues requiring escalation and brief the supervisor
6	**Capability Domain 6: Technology & Future Legal Practice**				**Example legal tasks**
6.1	Uses technology effectively to support quality, efficiency and client value				
	Maintains an awareness of developments in legal technology and emerging technologies relevant to legal practice		Understands the capabilities, limitations, risks and opportunities presented by emerging technologies		Identify the issues in content developed by AI and presented by a client in support of their matter including communication with the client
6.2	Demonstrates accountability for technology-assisted work				
	Selects and uses technology tools appropriate to the task while considering reliability, security, confidentiality and regulatory obligations	Maintains independent judgment, critically evaluates and verifies technology assisted outputs before relying on or using them	Is transparent about the use of technology assisted work where required by professional obligations, court requirements or client expectations	Recognises and manages specific risks such as inaccuracy, bias, privacy and data governance and cybersecurity threats associated with technology use	Preparation of court submissions without recourse to Gen AI and subsequent comparison with AI generated content
6.3	Contributes to the effective and sustainable delivery of legal services				
	Uses technology to support efficiency, innovation and improved client service while complying with professional and ethical obligations				Compare AI-generated legal analysis against source authorities and identify inaccuracies, omissions, unsupported conclusions and hallucinations
6.4	Understands the business and operational context of legal practice				

	Demonstrates an understanding of the business, economic and social environment in which legal services are delivered		Understands different legal service delivery models, fee structures and pricing approaches		Review a pricing scenario to identify assumptions, scope and risk
6.5	Engages in continuous improvement and innovation				
	Participates in quality improvement activities and practices that promote consistency, efficiency and client service		Identifies opportunities to improve processes, workflows and service delivery outcomes		Map a legal process and identify inefficiencies or risks and redesign opportunities including automation
7	**Capability Domain 7: Reflection & Self-Management**				**Example legal tasks**
7.1	Continually reflects on and improves professional performance				
	Continually reflects on own knowledge, skills and abilities	Identifies areas for development to improve professional performance	Undertakes continuing professional development activities to address identified development needs	Actively seeks feedback on professional performance and acts on this feedback to enhance professional practice	Reflective journal relating to professional performance and wellbeing
7.2	Monitors and manages own wellbeing				
	Develops general mental health literacy and understands the factors that affect wellbeing and psychosocial health	Monitors wellbeing and recognises personal triggers and signs of poor wellbeing (including vicarious trauma and burnout)	Proactively manages stressors and uses strategies to support personal resilience, health and wellbeing		
7.3	Maintains and contributes to a safe and healthy workplace				
	Supports positive behaviours and safe, respectful and inclusive legal workplaces	Recognises when others might be at risk and takes appropriate steps to support their wellbeing	Takes appropriate positive action to address counter inclusive behaviours such as unlawful discrimination, bullying, sexual harassment and victimisation		Conversation tackling counter inclusive behaviour and providing support to a colleague

Annexure C – Glossary

Capability	The cumulative knowledge, skills, behaviours and attributes that enable a New Lawyer to practise law independently and effectively
Cultural Safety	Creating an environment where the client's identity is valued, their experiences are respected, and which is free from racism and discrimination. Cultural safety is determined by the clients of legal services.
Example legal tasks	The types of legal tasks that a New Lawyer may be expected to perform to demonstrate the capability
First Nations Cultural Capability	Demonstrated ability to provide culturally safe and responsive legal services to First Nations peoples, recognising their unique status as the original sovereign peoples of Country
Law School (**LS**)	The period of university based legal education or equivalent
New Lawyer	For the purpose of this framework, captures all stages of legal education including law students, law graduates and newly admitted lawyers through to the end of the mandatory supervision period for new lawyers
Practical Legal Training (**PLT**)	The period of practical legal education completed either after law school or as part of an integrated program of academic study
Supervised Legal Practice (**SLP**)	The period of compulsory post admission restricted legal practice under supervision including any enhanced post-admission training

DISCUSSION PAPER 2

PRACTICE AREA COMPETENCIES

1. Overview of the issue and key policy considerations

The capability framework (see **Discussion Paper 1: Practical Capability Mapping Across the Spectrum of Legal Education, Annexure A**) has been designed on the principle that the new lawyers should have transferrable legal capabilities to practise in any context. The framework does not set out any practice areas as a competency or any practice area specific capabilities but instead focuses on the **core practical and professional** capabilities that are required regardless of practice area.

The introduction of post-admission legal training (**PALT**), if progressed, would shift at least part of the study of practice area competencies from the PLT course and into the post-admission, supervised legal practice period. By then, graduates would be more likely to know the practice areas that they wish to pursue and appreciate the knowledge and skills required to effectively practise it and the issues that arise that in practice. However, the practice areas policy questions arise even if PALT is not adopted.

The key practice area policy questions are:

1. Should new lawyers have training in practice areas?
2. Should new lawyers be required to undertake mandatory practice areas, and if so, what should these areas be?
3. Should new lawyers be required to undertake elective practice areas, and if so, how should these be prescribed?

2. Should new lawyers have training in practice areas?

Currently, the PLT Competency Standards for Entry-Level Lawyers[1] (**PLT Competency Standards**) require PLT students to develop certain identified skills (falling within four categories), to study ethics and professional responsibility and to develop competencies in the following practice areas:

1. three compulsory practice areas: civil litigation practice, commercial and corporate practice, property law practice; and
2. two optional practice areas, out of a list of eight identified areas (administrative law, banking and finance, criminal law, consumer law, employment and industrial relations, family law, planning and environmental law, wills and estates).

This was intended to equip graduates with knowledge across a range of areas, to equip students with practice area specific knowledge and processes, and to provide an additional opportunity for students to apply and practise the core legal skills they have developed.

The PLT Competency Standards were adopted in 2002. They reflect legal practice at that time. The legal world has moved on significantly since then. The competencies are highly detailed and prescriptive in a manner which tends to stifle evolution and innovation. There is a total of 146 performance criteria articulated for the competencies that all law graduates must study (leaving aside the optional practice areas), of which the compulsory practice

[1] LACC, PLT Competency Standards for Entry-Level Lawyers.

areas cover 54 performance criteria. A core criticism of these has been that they are too limited and rigid in the way in which they are currently stated.

No suggestion has been made in the current reform process that the PLT course should not still be required to address core legal skills, along with ethics and professional responsibility. However, questions have arisen with respect to whether the PLT Competency Standards should continue to include compulsory and optional practice areas. The results of the national survey found that graduates perceived the curriculum to be overly weighted towards particular practice models while offering limited relevance to others, including government, in-house, community legal, regional and specialist practices.[2]

An analysis of the benefits and disadvantages of retaining practice areas under the PLT Competency Standards is set out in the table below.

Benefits	Disadvantages
• Reinforces the development of the core legal skills that graduates learned by applying them within specific contexts • Graduates who do not have prior legal work experience may feel better equipped to practise within specialised contexts • Exposes graduates to detail of practice areas (especially procedural or mechanical issues) which may not have been taught at university (e.g. a commercial transaction) • Graduates who are employed in organisations with limited resources or poor supervision may be better equipped to practise within specialised contexts • Will enable graduates to have a broader understanding of intersecting areas of law (e.g. a criminal lawyer may sometimes need to be familiar with a type of commercial transaction; a commercial lawyer may encounter a criminal law issue) • May assist PLT providers to satisfy any volume of learning requirements if the core legal skills unit falls short of the requirements of a particular AQF level • The only opportunity for formal practice area training across the legal education if PALT is not progressed	• Increases the cost and length of PLT • Less need for practice areas if the reformed PLT course effectively equips graduates with the transferrable legal skills to practise in any context • Specialised knowledge areas and practical skills are best developed and practised on the job. The knowledge and skills that students acquire during PLT may not be fully appreciated until practice. • May duplicate graduate training at their place of employment (particularly in larger organisations) • Developing specific skills in multiple practice areas may not be as important now as it was in the past, given lawyers frequently move practice areas throughout their career • As practice areas are diverse and extensive, it may be more beneficial to expose students to the broader streams of legal practice instead (i.e. disputes and litigation, transactional, advisory, regulatory) • It may be difficult to require graduates to develop practice area competencies without the PLT Competency Standards being prescriptive

It is noted that other common law jurisdictions do not prescribe substantive areas of law as solicitor competencies or as a course content requirement. See for example, the United Kingdom Statement of solicitor competence, Western Canada Competencies for Entry to Legal Practice and New Zealand Professional Legal Studies Course.

[2] Urbis, National Practical Legal Training Research Survey Research Report (March 2026), p 35.

3. Should new lawyers be required to undertake some mandatory practice areas?

The underlying premise for mandating some specific practice areas is that there are some foundational areas of legal knowledge and skills that all lawyers should have, regardless of which area of law they ultimately specialise in.

Currently, the three compulsory practice areas are:

- Civil Litigation Practice
- Commercial and Corporate Practice
- Property Law Practice.

As noted, currently there are 54 performance criteria in the PLT Competency Standards attributed to the compulsory practice areas.

Arguably, much of the detail of these topics will not be useful for lawyers working across a diverse range of fields. For example, the mandatory Property Law practice area describes that an entry-level lawyer should be able to "(a) convey, lease and mortgage real property; and (b) provide general advice on standard matters arising under local government, planning, environmental or other legislation relating to land use in the relevant State or Territory".

The 2025 national survey of early career lawyers found that only 38% of graduates were satisfied about the compulsory subjects,[3] graduates considered that core soft and legal practical skills were lacking,[4] and PLT did not reflect the diverse nature of modern legal practice.[5]

An analysis of the risks and benefits of mandating practice areas is set out in the table below.

Benefits	Disadvantages
• There may be some foundational areas of legal knowledge and skills that all lawyers should have because those interact with most areas of law • The mandatory areas will reflect what the legal profession considers to be critical areas of practice at that time • Provides consistency in which practice area skills are learnt and assessed by students, which may lead to more consistent graduate outcomes • By exposing students to a range of practice areas, provides some counterweight to the current trend towards early specialisation • Teaching the core legal skills must focus on *some* subject matter, and it is reasonable to specify what that is to some extent	• Not future proof/resilient against changing legal contexts • Students may be required to study practice areas that are not relevant or of interest to them and incur additional costs in doing so • May continue to be a barrier for smaller firms to offer Supervised Workplace Training as they have reduced expertise to deliver training in all the mandatory areas • All core legal practical skills will be taught within a real legal context and inherently involve the teaching of fundamental knowledge.

[3] Urbis, National Practical Legal Training Research Survey Research Report (March 2026), p 32.
[4] Urbis, National Practical Legal Training Research Survey Research Report (March 2026), p 34.
[5] Urbis, National Practical Legal Training Research Survey Research Report (March 2026), p 35.

If the preferred approach is to retain mandatory practice areas, **what should those mandatory practice areas be?** Some stakeholders consider that all lawyers should understand civil and criminal litigation, and aspects of commercial or property practice.

If it is considered important that graduates be exposed to certain practice areas but that the risk of over prescription of the practice area competencies under the PLT Competency Standards is high, an alternative approach is to require the core legal competencies to be taught so as to address at least some particular practice areas (e.g. criminal law or litigation) instead. This approach may be considered appropriate because all core legal skills cannot be taught within a vacuum and must be taught within a real legal context. It will also promote pedagogical innovation and flexibility.

This approach reinforces the guiding principles of the proposed Practical and Professional Capability Framework that the capabilities should be transferrable, should apply to all practice areas and should not be too prescriptive and task based.

New Zealand takes this approach by requiring the Professional Legal Studies Course to teach the prescribed skills "…in the context of specific legal transactions that are commonly required to be completed by newly-admitted lawyers…may include criminal and civil proceedings in the District Court, matrimonial proceedings involving custody, access or property division, buying and selling residential or farm property, the purchase and sale of a business, drawing a will, or other common commercial transactions".[6]

4. Should new lawyers be required to undertake elective practice areas?

Currently, graduates are required to undertake two out of eight optional areas prescribed by the PLT Competency Standards (i.e., as noted, administrative law, banking and finance, criminal law, consumer law, employment and industrial relations, family law, planning and environmental law, wills and estates).

Concerns have been raised about both the identification of the eight areas and the degree of specification of the content that must be covered. Identifying those eight areas excludes others, such as workers compensation/personal injury, government law (beyond administrative law), or intellectual property. The very detailed specification of content also tends to stultify evolution and innovation with respect to the areas that are included.

Requiring graduates to complete elective practice areas broadens exposure to areas of specific practice in which those graduates are working or intend to work. It provides graduates an opportunity to reinforce their core legal skills beyond the compulsory curriculum and build knowledge of specialised areas of law.

Further, teaching core legal skills and knowledge will need to focus on *some* practice areas as the subject matter for teaching and illustrating relevant matters. However, that does not necessarily mean that those practice areas must be identified, let alone in terms which provide great detail as to the necessary content.

If the PLT course is required to be taught at, say, graduate certificate level, it would be open for PLT providers to choose different practice areas to focus on as part of filling out the required course content and volume of learning. A PLT provider could even have different iterations of their course, each having a different focus. For example, a PLT provider could partner with a DPP or Legal Aid body, or with commercial law firms, to offer

[6] Professional Examinations in Law Regulations 2008 (NZ), Second Schedule.

courses particularly directed to recruits of those bodies and focus on practice areas of significance to them.

Three overlapping issues arise:

1. Should *any* optional practice areas be prescribed as required to be undertaken in the PLT course?
2. If so, to what degree should those practice areas be identified?
3. If identified, to what degree should the content that must be taught be specified?

As to the last of those questions, there is much to be said for not identifying the content in great detail so as to avoid stultification and to enable content to keep pace with evolving legal practice.

The following table identifies options which address the first two questions.

	Benefits	Disadvantages
<u>Option 1</u> Prescribed model – electives are required to be undertaken and the list of areas *is* identified	• Provide a clear criterion against which the accrediting authorities assess PLT providers and in doing so, may simplify regulatory processes • Greater consistency in the development of graduate capability • Will reflect what the legal profession considers to be useful areas of practice at that time	• Not future proof or resilient against changing legal contexts, noting legal practice is now diverse and broad ranging • Students may elect practice areas that are perceived to be easier to complete
<u>Option 2</u> Flexible model – say two elective practice areas are required to be addressed but the list of areas is *not* identified	• Allows greater flexibility, innovation and evolution than option 1 • PLT providers develop practice area courses that are tailored to employer and/or student demand or interest	• Places a significant degree of trust in PLT providers • More inconsistent student experiences • Students may elect practice areas that are perceived to be easier to complete • Requires consideration of an additional regulatory framework for the accrediting authorities assure content and delivery • Relatedly, query if it would be appropriate to require the accrediting authority to approve the content of the variants proposed by PLT providers. If so, that would impose a regulatory burden on those authorities.
<u>Option 3:</u> Open model – no elective practice areas are required, in terms, to be addressed	• Allows greatest flexibility • Would allow high degree of focus in particular courses – e.g. could focus just on criminal practice matters (along with any other compulsory practice areas) • Least difficult for employers provided Supervised Workplace Training to undertake • Would be consistent with a shortened PLT course	• Would involve the least degree of commonality – e.g. may mean that only any compulsory practice areas would be studied • Might produce practitioners whose practical skills are too focused on one or two areas • Inconsistent outcomes for PLT graduates

5. Discussion questions for the Conference

a) Should new lawyers be required to undertake mandatory PLT practice areas? If so, what should these areas be and how should they be prescribed (e.g. through distinct mandatory practice areas, or via the core capabilities)?

b) Should new lawyers be required to undertake elective PLT practice areas? If so, how should these areas be prescribed in a way which ensures flexibility and quality?

DISCUSSION PAPER 3

LAW COURSES

1. Overview of the policy issue and key policy considerations

Policy issue
Law graduates need to be adequately prepared at the point of admission to start supervised legal practice.

Accredited law courses are required to deliver the prescribed areas of academic knowledge ("Priestley 11"), as well as meeting the Law Admissions Consultative Committee (**LACC**) requirements in relation to teaching of statutory interpretation. Information about the regulation of law courses under the LACC framework and otherwise is set out at **Annexure A.**

Individuals seeking admission are also been required to complete practical legal training (**PLT**), usually in the form of a Graduate Diploma or Certificate in Legal Professional Practice which is substantially focused on the acquisition of applied skills. PLT has typically been undertaken after the completion of the requirements for the law degree. Only a small number of law schools are also PLT providers.

Lawyers must develop two related but distinct sets of skills. The first is directed towards finding, understanding, analysing and critiquing law, encompassing legal reasoning, research, statutory interpretation and legal writing. The second is directed towards the application of law in professional practice, encompassing advocacy, negotiation, transactional drafting, client counselling and practice management. Both sets are practical in nature, but the first relates (broadly) to the discipline of law and the second (broadly) to the practice of law. They differ, importantly, in how they are most effectively acquired.

The first set lends itself to structured instruction. The student works principally with legal materials such as statutes, judgments and scholarly commentary and the objective is to develop the ability to read those materials closely, identify the relevant principles, and articulate conclusions with precision. Because these skills can be disaggregated, taught in sequence and assessed through hypothetical problems, they sit comfortably within an academic model.

The second set is of a different character. These skills do not exist in the abstract; they take shape only in the particular circumstances of a real engagement. They call for professional judgement: the ability to appreciate different perspectives, to manage competing interests, to reach sound decisions on incomplete information and across conceptual boundaries, and to adapt as circumstances develop. Skills of this kind are acquired principally through observation and supervised practice, by watching experienced practitioners at work and then undertaking the task, with the benefit of informed feedback.

If the intention is to have students develop (or develop more fully) the second set of skills at university, this would likely require a greater emphasis on clinical education - in turn requiring a significant pedagogical, staffing, resourcing and timetabling change for many law schools.

The LACC Accreditation Standards for Australian Law Courses (**LACC Accreditation Standards**) do not currently include requirements concerning practical skills. This is not to suggest that there is no teaching of practical skills by Australian law schools, including

those set out in the Threshold Learning Outcomes and otherwise included in particular subjects by the law school. Communication skills (written and oral), skills in legal research and analysis, and responsible use of AI are all examples of skills that are central parts of the law degrees that qualify graduates for admission. Additional skills such as advocacy negotiation, and mediation are widely offered on an elective basis by most law schools.

Some law schools run legal clinics that offer opportunities for students to develop their practical skills including client communication and matter management, as well as working under supervision. Many more support work-integrated learning (WIL) through student placement with legal services providers. Some additional detail on the extent to which we know that law schools include practical skills is included at **Annexure B**.

In recognition of the fact that legal education occurs on a continuum from law course to practice, the Consultation Paper prepared by the Legal Services Council's Admissions Committee and the LACC suggested that consideration be given to incorporating delivery of some practical skills within a law degree to embed early practical skills training. These skills can then be further developed in PLT and training undertaken after admission.

There is **broad consensus** that skills should be taught as part of the law school curriculum. Law schools are committed to teaching and developing the foundational skills of law students. The key questions relating to the current proposals centre around the relationship between law courses and PLT, and what practical skills would look like if incorporated into law courses. Furthermore, there are implementation challenges given the current resource constraints of universities and staffing profiles of law schools.

Throughout this paper, the term "course" is used to refer to a qualifying law degree (Bachelor of Laws or Juris Doctor) and the term "subject" is used to refer to an individual unit of study within a course (e.g. Constitutional Law or Contract Law).

Key policy and implementation considerations

a) Prescribed skills - While the skills/competencies for entry level lawyers at each stage of the educational continuum are being considered separately, the implications of prescribing skills to be introduced at universities should be considered. Prescribing some skills may simply be a codification of what the majority of law schools already teach, whereas some skills may require law schools to substantially change their curriculum. (See **Annexure B** for an overview of what practical skills are already incorporated by law schools.)
b) Incorporation - How might law schools incorporate practical skills within courses? What are the factors to consider in different methods of incorporation?
c) Assessment – What types of practical skills are appropriate for law courses to assess and what challenges may be associated with doing so? Should skills assessment be distinct from that of academic knowledge or combined? Should assessment be graded or competency-based?
d) Implementation – What operational and staffing challenges arise from the proposal to import more specific skills instruction and assessment into law courses? What implications are there for the depth of learning in Priestley 11 subjects and student opportunity for electives and experiential learning in a more prescribed curriculum? How might challenges associated with cross-institutional transfers be addressed?

2. Overview of feedback provided to national consultation

In feedback to the national Consultation Paper, many stakeholders were supportive of adding practical skills to law courses but expressed that the skills schedule set out in the Consultation Paper was not fit for purpose and required further work. Several submissions

referred to the need to consider practical skills against the Priestley 11 and the Threshold Learning Outcomes for law courses.

Law schools raised questions about exactly how and when skills should be incorporated, whether existing skills delivery can be recognised, whether each skill must be assessed and the level at which skills must be demonstrated. An area of concern was how practical skills can be considered for the purpose of students transferring between law schools. Law schools were also concerned about including additional content in a crowded curriculum and the impact this may have on the cost and length of a law course, as well as the difficulty of ensuring that law schools have appropriate teaching staff to deliver skills instruction at scale.

Some stakeholders noted that, at least under the Legal Profession Uniform Law, it may not be possible for the LACC Accreditation Standards to impose a requirement for practical skills, as the Standards are limited to the accreditation of law courses for the delivery of the academic qualifications prerequisite (not the practical legal training prerequisite). An amendment to the Priestley 11 may be required, creating uncertainty about the timeline of reform.

Nearly all law schools indicated that they would not be able to implement the proposed changes by the beginning of the 2028 academic year. After the relevant regulatory amendments are made, law schools need time to go through internal approval processes for curriculum changes (approximately 12 to 24 months) and may also need to consider recruitment of appropriately qualified staff to deliver practical skills.

3. International comparison

Skills-based learning has become increasingly embedded in higher education since the 1960s, driven by sectoral demands for 'employability', scepticism about the durability of disciplinary content, and the use of skills discourse as a governance and accountability mechanism. Despite this trajectory, the place of practical (as opposed to generic) skills within academic law degrees remains uncertain and contested.

In preparing this Paper, a review of professional regulation across six common law jurisdictions was undertaken, focusing on the USA, Canada, New Zealand, Singapore, Hong Kong and India. It found only limited integration of practical skills into the academic curriculum – see **Annexure C** for further details.

The USA stands alone in mandating practical skills through American Bar Association accreditation standards. These require law schools to deliver an experiential (clinic, work placement, or practice simulation) component and to set learning outcomes requiring competency in ‘professional skills’. However, these skills are defined only broadly and illustratively, leaving coverage to the discretion of individual law schools. India has recently extended its drafting requirements but skills integration remains relatively limited in that jurisdiction. Elsewhere, regulatory floors are set largely around knowledge and generic communication or research skills, with practical skills training left to a discrete vocational or PLT stage. The growing emphasis in Canada and New Zealand on the need for a deeper understanding of Indigenous law, and its relations with Western law, as a precursor to creating culturally safe professional practices, is also noteworthy for Australia as another fundamentally plural legal system.

This does not mean that practical skills are not being taught in law degrees in these other jurisdictions, but it does mean that the scope, mode and placement is very much under the direction of the law schools, and, insofar as most of this teaching tends to take place within the elective rather than required curriculum, it operates ‘above’ the regulated floor,

and outside the scope of professional oversight. It follows too that, trans-nationally, there is also little or no *professional* direction or guidance as to how such skills should be taught.

4. Including practical legal skills in law courses – the why

There are five main considerations for why practical legal skills, and not just legal academic skills, may be included in a law degree, namely:

(a) To create opportunities for an even deeper critique of the role, purpose and effect of the law in society.
(b) To encourage a deeper understanding of the theoretical principles taught by contextualising them.
(c) To improve the wellbeing outcomes of graduates by providing opportunities to make progress towards their values and self-determining their role as part of the legal profession (in its broadest sense) of putting the law into action and context.
(d) To assist in development of skills that will enable students to implement their legal theoretical learning beyond or within the academy.
(e) To address the rise of AI by both increasing the human element of law and the need for diversification of assessment models to assure and secure assessment.

As noted above, there is broad consensus that skills should be taught as part of the law school curriculum. Law schools are committed to teaching and developing the foundational skills of law students.

5. The where, what and how of embedding practical skills into the law curriculum

(a) Where should practical skills be located in the law curriculum?

While the feedback provided to the national consultation indicated that many stakeholders were supportive of including practical skills in the law school curriculum, key questions arise about *where* in the curriculum the teaching of skills should be located. To a large degree, what location in the curriculum practical skills should be taught will depend on the nature of the skills themselves. For example, skills relating to ethics would naturally fit within Ethics and Professional Responsibility, and skills relating to negotiation may be best placed within Civil Dispute Resolution. However, if a capstone approach to teaching practical skills is adopted, then the required skills would be taught within a capstone subject completed toward the end of the law course.

If practical skills development is to be enhanced at university, possible approaches are:

i) <u>Embedding practical skills into existing Priestley subjects in the curriculum</u>.

The integration of practical skills into existing Priestley subjects has the potential to allow skills to be scaffolded across the curriculum so as to provide students with opportunities to build their skills over the course of their study of law. It would also make the cross-institutional transfer of law students more straightforward.

The disadvantage of this approach is that it will add more content into an already crowded curriculum, especially in certain subjects, without reducing the need to teach any of the content in the existing prescribed areas of knowledge.

ii) <u>Introducing a capstone skills-centred subject in law courses.</u>

The advantage of the introduction of a capstone subject for skills is that it allows for a dedicated period of skills development at a later stage in the curriculum when students

have well-developed doctrinal and other skills from their law studies. A capstone subject may be easier for law schools to implement operationally.

The disadvantage of this approach is that it leaves practical skills development until late in the curriculum. Practical skills are best developed when embedded in the curriculum and students have opportunities to develop and practice their skills over time. Practical skills may also be usefully introduced to students at earlier stages of their study. This would have pedagogical benefits, as well as practical ones (e.g. many students work in law offices through their law studies as paralegals).

A capstone subject would also have the effect of reducing the number of elective subjects available to students in a curriculum that already has a high number of compulsory subjects. It also may not meet the needs of law schools (such as Newcastle), that already offer PLT on an integrated basis within their LLB/JD programs, as a capstone requirement would move the teaching of practical skills to the end of the law curriculum which would run counter to an integrated approach.

iii) Introducing a requirement for practical skills to be taught in the law school curriculum but not specifying where they should be taught.

The advantage of this approach is that it is consistent with the current approach which requires law schools to teach prescribed areas of knowledge but does not require those areas to be taught in specified subjects. This provides law schools with flexibility in how they structure their curriculum and provides opportunities for innovation and diversity in approaches.

The disadvantage of this approach is that it will add to the complexities of managing cross-institutional transfer of students.

iv) Embedding opportunities for development of practical skills through externships.

The development of practical skills by students could be achieved through recognition of clinical externships undertaken by students during their law course. The advantage of this is that it would provide students with real world practical experience. Consideration could be given to whether students who are undertaking legally-related work could have this work recognised for the purposes of meeting the practical skills requirements required to be taught at university. A further advantage of this approach is that it would achieve practical experience for students without imposing additional staffing requirements on law schools.

A disadvantage of this approach is that its success would be dependent upon the provision of externship opportunities by the legal profession. These opportunities may be constrained in some locations, such as in large metropolitan areas where there are large numbers of law students. A further disadvantage is that the assessment of practical skills may be complex, with a need for detailed guidance to be provided to lawyers supervising externship students.

v) Making no changes to existing requirements.

The advantage of this approach is that it provides flexibility for universities to determine their curricula, and greater agility in amending curriculum moving forwards. Universities are subject to quality assurance and oversight by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (**TEQSA**), internal governance frameworks, and

professional accreditation.[1] In addition, the Threshold Learning Outcomes (**TLOs**), developed for the LLB/LLB(Hons) in 2010 and the JD in 2012 through the national Learning and Teaching Academic Standards project, were designed to harmonise professional accreditation requirements with the academic quality assurance regime that commenced with TEQSA. More information on the regulatory framework is set out at **Annexure A**.

If the 'no changes' option is the preferred approach, this will have implications for the structuring of PLT. This option also recognises that both the current Australian approach, and the proposed reforms, have much more extensive requirements for law schools than comparable common law jurisdictions (see the international comparison in **Annexure C**).

The disadvantage of this option is that it fails to address the perceived need to develop the skills needed by entry level lawyers, and risks university education and practical legal training operating in silos. But that need may be better addressed by developing different reform options for the PLT stage of the legal education continuum.

Recommendation 1:
A requirement for practical skills to be taught as part of law courses should provide law schools with flexibility to decide the location of skills teaching in the curriculum and whether the required skills will be taught within a capstone subject or embedded within core subjects in the curriculum.

The requirements for students who transfer universities mid-course will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

(b) What practical skills should be included in the law curriculum?

The required practical and professional capabilities for new lawyers have been considered separately in Discussion Paper 1. As such, the identification of the capabilities are outside the scope of the Law Courses Working Group. However, there are still some threshold questions to be considered.

Given that law schools already teach some practical skills, the amount of change from prescribing which practical skills must be taught at university will depend on the nature and extent of those skills. Prescribing some skills (such as legal research) would likely be a codification of what law schools already teach. However, some other skills (such as client interviewing skills and file management) may require law schools to substantially change their curriculum.

Given the continuum of legal education from law school to practice, the practical skills needed by entry level lawyers may be grouped into one of three intersecting stages, according to where the skills are best introduced, developed, and consolidated along this continuum.

This will assist in identifying those skills that are best introduced as part of the law school curriculum, and those that are best introduced elsewhere along the continuum. Taking account of the insights from Working Group 1 and the identification of the capabilities needed by entry level lawyers, those capabilities should be categorised into one of three stages:

[1] As far as the Working Group is aware, the only accredited course that is not provided by a TEQSA regulated provider is the Diploma in Law offered by the New South Wales Legal Profession Admission Board.

- Stage 1 – practical skills that should be introduced as part of the law school curriculum, recognising that within the law curriculum itself, skills will be scaffolded and developed over time
- Stage 2 – practical skills that should be introduced or developed further as part of PLT
- Stage 3 – practical skills that should be consolidated as part of post-admission legal training.

The earlier stages should be seen as laying the foundations for the skills that are developed in later stages, with skills development occurring along a continuum.

These stages are broadly consistent with the Progression Levels for New Lawyers as part of the Capability Framework proposed by Working Group 1.

Some of the capabilities within the proposed Framework are already taught within existing law courses. Examples of these capabilities include: legal research, the ability to apply critical thinking, First Nations cultural capability, written and oral communication and advocacy. Other capabilities within the proposed Framework will present new requirements for law schools. Examples of these include: preparing legal documents, communicating with clients and capabilities relating to client and professional relationships.

Recommendation 2:

Noting that the work to map capabilites is being addressed by Working Group 1, this Working Group recommends that the skills should be identified on a continuum and notes that while some skills may already be being taught by many law schools, others will require a change.

(c) How can practical skills be included in the law curriculum?

At the outset it is recognised that practical skills are acquired in different ways from the academic knowledge that currently comprises much of the law school curriculum. Skills are acquired through *doing* and through practising the doing of skills-based tasks. As such, the teaching of skills requires different pedagogical approaches when compared to the teaching of theoretical or doctrinal knowledge. It also engages with different considerations for assessment, moving beyond a pass/fail or grades approach, to one that allows students to practice the new skill, and to gradually acquire competency in the skill.

i) How to introduce a requirement for teaching of practical skills in the law curriculum

Two options have been canvassed for how the requirement for law schools include practical skills training could be imposed:

- Through the Prescribed Academic Areas of Knowledge (Priestley 11) developed by the LACC, as adopted in each jurisdiction.
- Through the LACC Accreditation Standards.

While amending the Priestley 11 may provide a practical mechanism for implementing a requirement for teaching of practical skills in the law school curriculum, it should be recognised that this would be a wholly new requirement for law schools and not simply an extension of the existing prescribed areas of knowledge. The form of the requirement is also significant as prescriptive requirements will potentially constrain curriculum innovation in law schools.

In the jurisdictions operating under the Legal Profession Uniform Law (**Uniform Law**) (New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia), this would require amendments to schedule 1 to the Legal Profession Uniform Admissions Rules 2015 (**Uniform Admission Rules**) and possible consequential amendments to rule 5. Other jurisdictions would need to implement the necessary amendments to the instrument that sets out the equivalent requirement.

Recommendation 3:

a) Any requirement for specific practical skills to be delivered as part of a law course should be implemented via amendment to the Prescribed Academic Areas of Knowledge developed by the LACC and as adopted in each jurisdiction.
b) In making those changes, the LACC may wish to reconsider renaming the Prescribed Academic Areas of Knowledge to signal that the document incorporates some requirements for skills training.

ii) How should practical skills be taught for law degrees that are offered online?

Many Australian law schools are accredited to deliver courses with some reliance on online delivery. Some programs make substantial use of online delivery, and a few are delivered entirely in this mode.

A question arises as to whether practical skills could be incorporated into the law course's existing delivery method and whether there should be additional requirements for delivery of proposed new practical skills components.

Potential options are:

- The law course determines how prescribed practical skills are delivered, in accordance with their overall delivery method. This would allow law schools to have discretion in determining the preferred approach but may raise concerns about whether skills are being adequately delivered.
- The LACC Accreditation Standards could be amended to require prescribed practical skills to be delivered via synchronous means, whether in person or online. This would allow some flexibility within the existing delivery methods and accommodate all students.
- The LACC Accreditation Standards could be amended to require prescribed practical skills to be delivered in person. This may pose challenges for law schools which have an online focused delivery method, and alternative arrangements would need to be offered to students who are not able to attend in person (for example, due to disability or remote location), which would have resourcing implications for those law schools.

The Working Group notes that the Admission Committee and the LACC have been separately undertaking a review of the LACC Accreditation Standards to update and modernise them. One proposal emerging from that review has been to introduce a new requirement for synchronous learning for part of each Priestley 11 subject, which would require active learning and direct interaction. That work has been put on pause pending further progress on the review of PLT, to avoid the possibility of law schools being asked to implement two sets of changes in close succession.

Recommendation 4:

The instruction of practical skills should be delivered synchronously, either in person or online.

iii) How should staffing practical skills instruction be addressed?

There is a consensus that the teaching of practical skills should be undertaken by those with experience in the practice of law. While some academic staff have experience in legal practice, such experience is not universal.

The addition of substantial new requirements focused on practical skills may have implications for law schools' staffing profiles. Any new requirement for delivery of specified practical legal skills will require law schools to consider whether they need to bring new staff onboard to teach those skills. This will potentially have budget implications for universities. A requirement for new staff will also qualify the traditional focus on academic expertise as the basis for staffing decisions, despite maintenance of the extensive prescription of academic areas of knowledge as an accreditation requirement through the Priestley 11.

This has the potential to detract from the contribution of law schools to the profession through academic research as well as the broader institutional research goals of the Australian higher education sector.

It is also important to emphasise that practitioner involvement in law courses is professional engagement not volunteerism. Accordingly, it requires casual staff to undertake various forms of training mandated in the sector, the ability to commit to scheduled classes over the term, the need to submit casual pay timesheets, and also to carry out some administrative load associated with teaching and assessment. Under current industrial laws, and as demonstrated by a recent Fair Work Commission ruling,[2] recurring contractual engagements can entitle the employee to continuous employment – unaffected by a lack of research expectations and part-time status. This is a significant potential liability for law schools in engaging members of the profession as casuals for practical skills instruction.

Recommendation 5:
During implementation of the reforms, consideration should be given to the time and resources needed for universities to ensure that they have a staffing profile and appropriate staff training to deliver prescribed practical skills.

During implementation of the reforms, admitting authorities and law schools should work together collaboratively.

iv) How do we address the issue of teaching skills at scale?

Specialised skills instruction of the kind traditionally offered by PLT courses requires smaller class sizes than may be currently utilised by different law schools to good effect in supporting academic learning. Law schools with large cohorts may face significant operational challenges in assessing specific prescribed skills in core subjects or a capstone subject that involve individual performance in real time (e.g. client and witness interviews, presentations, oral advocacy).

Recommendation 6:
During implementation of the reforms, consideration should be given to the time needed for universities to address teaching skills at scale.

[2] *Medrano v The Hero Corporation Pty Ltd* [2026] FWC 2546.

v) How should practical skills be assessed in law courses?

Assessment in law courses typically includes several different assessment tasks within each subject. Currently, the weighting of assessments within each subject is not prescribed for law schools, giving law schools the flexibility to design assessment tasks and weightings to best meet the needs of each subject and course.

If practical skills are taught as a standalone subject, it would be reasonable to expect that students should be required to pass that subject to pass their degree (as is the case for other mandatory areas of learning under Priestley 11 subjects).

However, if practical skills are to be embedded in Priestley 11 subjects, will a student need to pass the skills components of each subject in order to pass each subject overall? Conversely, would a mechanism be needed to ensure students passing an academic subject overall do not do so on the basis of strong performance in demonstration of a skill rather than demonstrated grasp of the academic content? Are these issues avoided by use of competency-based assessment of skills components?

The advantage of assessment of the skills component is that it would give confidence that each student had achieved the required competency for the specified skills.

The disadvantage is that it would introduce practical and financial barriers for students. This is because a student who failed the skills component of a subject, and therefore failed the entire subject, would be required to re-enrol in the whole subject the next time it is offered (which may not be until the following year). This would have implications for the student in terms for their progression through the degree, and a financial burden through additional subject fees.

It may also involve repeating other aspects of the subject which the student passed. Currently, if a student fails a component of a subject, this does not necessarily mean they fail the entire subject if their weighted overall mark is 50% or over (for example, a student would not necessarily fail the torts subject if they failed an assessment item within the subject focussed on the tort of false imprisonment).

Recommendation 7:
Some flexibility in should be taken in the approach to assessments, by requiring law schools to satisfy the admitting authorities that they have the right balance of assessments for knowledge and skills throughout the law course. This can be determined on a case-by-case basis for law schools.

vi) What is a realistic timeframe for implementation of any new requirements for the teaching of practical skills in the law curriculum?

With the process now adopted by the national consultation led by the Admissions Committee and the LACC, it is clear that the timeline will be dependent on what emerges from the discussion in November 2026 and the recommendations that are released in early 2027. To the extent this may require changes to legislative instruments (e.g. the Legal Profession Uniform Admission Rules), that will obviously add an intervening step that extends the process. It is difficult for law schools to proceed with sufficient confidence and clarity until these developments have come to pass.

Recommendation 8:
Timeframe for implementation needs to allow time for law schools to amend their course design (approximately 18 months after the amendments are finalised).

vii) What is the impact for people with international qualifications?

Currently, when a person with an overseas qualification in law seeks admission in Australia, consideration is given to the extent to which their qualification in law is "sufficient" to make them eligible for admission [3] or whether their overseas qualifications are "substantially equivalent" to Australian qualifications.[4] It is possible that amending the academic requirements for admission in Australia may affect the way that overseas qualifications are assessed, and may make it more difficult for some overseas qualified people to seek admission in Australia.

It may be appropriate for the LACC to develop guidance on this for admitting authorities in advance of any amendments coming into effect, and for admitting authorities to liaise with overseas qualified persons about the same.

Recommendation 9:
The LACC should develop guidance for admitting authorities on the assessment of the practical skills requirement for applicants with international qualifications.

6. Discussion questions for the Conference

a) What are the key enablers for universities to teach practical skills effectively, in a way which ensures a 'warm handover' to the PLT stage?

b) What are your group's views on the suggestion that law schools should have flexibility to decide how and when prescribed practical skills are taught within the law curriculum?

c) Should prescribed practical skills be required to be delivered and assessed in person or synchronously (and if so, why)?

d) Should there be requirements around how practical skills are assessed and weighted? If so, what should they be?

Annexures

Annexure A	Regulatory Frameworks Governing Law School Curriculum in Australia
Annexure B	Practical Skills Currently Incorporated in Law Courses
Annexure C	Regulation and the International Context

[3] Legal Profession Uniform Admission Rules 2015, rule 11.
[4] LACC, Uniform Principles for Assessing Qualifications of Overseas Applicants for Admission to the Australian Legal Profession.

Annexure A – Regulatory Frameworks Governing Law School Curriculum in Australia

The design and delivery of the Australian law curriculum sit at the intersection of four regulatory layers: national higher education regulation, discipline standards, internal institutional governance, and the professional admission framework. Each operates with a different purpose and imposes distinct constraints on what law schools teach and how they teach it.

National higher education regulation: TEQSA

The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (**TEQSA**), established under the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* (Cth), is the national regulator of higher education. All law degrees must comply with the Higher Education Standards Framework 2021 (**HES Framework**), which sets requirements for course design, learning outcomes, assessment, academic integrity, and student support.

Law degrees must also align with the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF): the LLB sits at AQF level 7 (level 8 with honours), while the JD is accredited at level 9 as a masters (extended) qualification. This has curriculum consequences – the JD must demonstrate graduate-level outcomes, notwithstanding that both awards lead to the same professional qualification. Each AQF level specifies required skills and their application, as well as knowledge. It was this requirement that necessitated the explicit integration of skills and values into the academic stage – a requirement given disciplinary form through the Threshold Learning Outcomes (**TLOs**), discussed below.

TEQSA regulation is institution-wide. It does not prescribe legal content, but its standards shape course approval, assessment design, benchmarking, and periodic review of law programs.

As far as the Working Group is aware, all law courses accredited by the Australian admitting authorities, except one, are subject to TEQSA regulation.

Discipline standards: the Threshold Learning Outcomes (TLOs)

A further layer sits between national regulation and professional accreditation: standards developed by the discipline itself. In 2009 the Council of Australian Law Deans (**CALD**) adopted the Australian Law School Standards, revised in 2013 to incorporate the TLOs and again in 2020 to add Guidance Notes.

The TLOs – developed for the LLB/LLB(Hons) in 2010 and the JD in 2012 through the national Learning and Teaching Academic Standards project – were designed to harmonise professional accreditation requirements with the academic quality assurance regime that commenced with TEQSA. They articulate what law graduates should know, understand and be able to do at completion of the academic stage, expressed as outcomes across six domains: knowledge, ethics and professional responsibility, thinking skills, research skills, communication and collaboration, and self-management. The Priestley 11 are incorporated by reference within TLO 1 (Knowledge) — a framing deliberately chosen to accommodate professional accreditation while allowing the requirements to develop over time. The TLOs integrated the skills and values required by the AQF into the academic stage and remain the discipline's existing outcomes-based statement of graduate capability. In practice, all accredited law courses must comply with both the TLOs (for higher education purposes) and the Priestley 11 (for admission purposes).

Internal governance

The HES Framework requires universities to maintain strong internal academic governance. Ultimate curriculum authority rests with an Academic Board (or Senate/Academic Council), supported by delegated committees. Any new law course, major curriculum change, or change to assessment models is tested through this process against institutional policy, workload, assessment design, and course viability.[1]

Internal regulation also encompasses course and unit review cycles, moderation and benchmarking, student feedback mechanisms, external course advisory panels, and institutional graduate attributes — all of which shape curriculum design independently of professional requirements. Universities already integrate skills into their courses: skills are mapped and assessed at subject level, with the required skills at each AQF level articulated in graduate attributes or generic skills policies.[2]

Finally, enterprise agreements, internal policies, and budgets constrain staffing decisions, including staff qualifications and reliance on sessional staff.

Professional accreditation

Accreditation of law courses for admission purposes forms the final layer. Accreditation is exercised by the admitting authority in each state and territory, ultimately answerable to the Supreme Courts. National consistency is pursued through LACC and the LSC, which forge consensus between admitting authorities but do not themselves accredit courses.

The Priestley 11 academic requirements occupy a substantial proportion of the degree, limiting space for electives, clinical programs, and skills-based or interdisciplinary content. They remain substantially in the form first settled in 1982. The subject descriptions were always intended to be indicative rather than prescriptive, but the practice of admitting authorities has varied.

Professional and higher education regulation apply to the same courses without any formal articulation between the two regimes. Law schools must satisfy both, and any reform proposal that adds requirements at the accreditation level will also be tested against the HES Framework through internal governance processes.

Practical implications

These layers of regulation carry practical consequences for how change can be made:

- **Timeframes** — internal governance processes typically require 18–24 months to complete. This is after curriculum design processes and consultation are complete.

- **Curriculum space** — the Priestley content occupies a large proportion of the existing curriculum. Adding content requires decisions about what will be removed.

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[1] See for example: https://adelaide.edu.au/about/policies/curriculum-policy/curriculum-approval-procedure/; https://staff.flinders.edu.au/learning-teaching/course-and-topic-approval; https://www.sydney.edu.au/content/dam/corporate/documents/about-us/governance-and-structure/academic-board/ab-standards---guidelines-/academic-board---curriculum-refreshment-course-version-and-student-transition-guideline-2021.pdf.

[2] See for example: https://libguides.usc.edu.au/graduate-attributes; https://www.sydney.edu.au/students/graduate-qualities.html; https://www.murdoch.edu.au/mymurdoch/support-advice/learning-study/graduate-attributes.

- **Autonomy** — law schools need scope to adapt reform proposals to institutional mission, resourcing, and cohort, while internal governance applies strict scrutiny of pedagogical soundness.

- **Staffing** — TEQSA staffing requirements, enterprise agreements, and budgets constrain who can teach new content and how delivery is resourced.

  The HES Framework, section 3.2 requires Universities to demonstrate sufficient staffing to meet needs of student cohorts and to provide academic leadership to lead intellectual enquiry at the level required by the course of study. Specifically, teaching staff must be qualified at one AQF level higher than the course of study being taught. That is, to teach at bachelors level, the teacher should hold a graduate diploma/ honours degree or above, and to teach at master level, a PhD should be held. There are provisions for demonstrating equivalence to a formal qualification and also exceptions where staff are supervised by staff that do meet the standards. Universities will need to document how they comply with these requirements. High reliance on casual staff, and insufficient academic leadership poses a risk to compliance and good student outcomes.

- **Duplication of regulatory burden** — the same course is assessed under both the professional accreditation regime and the HES Framework, with no formal articulation between the two. Reform proposals must be designed to satisfy both.

Annexure B – Practical Skills Currently Incorporated in Law Courses

Threshold learning outcomes

The Threshold Learning Outcomes are the nationally agreed minimum learning outcomes expected for graduates of a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) or Juris Doctor (JD) developed under the Learning and Teaching Academic Standards project.[1]

Bachelor of Laws (LLB) Threshold Learning Outcomes

TLO Domain	Details
1. Knowledge	Demonstrates understanding of a coherent body of knowledge that includes: a) The fundamental legal knowledge and the Australian legal system; b) the broader contexts within which legal issues arise; and the principles and values of justice and ethical legal practice.
2. Ethics and Professional Responsibility	Graduates of the Bachelor of Laws will demonstrate: a) an understanding of approaches to ethical decision-making, b) an ability to recognise and reflect upon, and a developing ability to respond to, ethical issues likely to arise in professional contexts c) an ability to recognise and reflect upon the professional responsibilities of lawyers in promoting justice and in service to the community, and d) a developing ability to exercise professional judgement.
3. Thinking Skills	Graduates of the Bachelor of Laws will be able to: a) identify and articulate legal issues, b) apply legal reasoning and research to generate appropriate responses to legal issues, c) engage in critical analysis and make a reasoned choice amongst alternatives, and d) think creatively in approaching legal issues and generating appropriate responses.
4. Research Skills	Graduates of the Bachelor of Laws will demonstrate the intellectual and practical skills needed to identify, research, evaluate and synthesise relevant factual, legal and policy issues.
5. Communication and Collaboration	Graduates of the Bachelor of Laws will be able to: a) communicate in ways that are effective, appropriate and persuasive for legal and non-legal audiences, and b) collaborate effectively
6. Self-Management	Graduates of the Bachelor of Laws will be able to: a) learn and work independently, and b) reflect on and assess their own capabilities and performance, and make use of feedback as appropriate, to support personal and professional development.

[1] Available at: https://cald.asn.au/resources/.

Juris Doctor (JD) Threshold Learning Outcomes

TLO Domain	Details
1. Knowledge	Graduates of the Juris Doctor will demonstrate an advanced and integrated understanding of a complex body of knowledge that includes: a) The fundamental areas of legal knowledge, the Australian legal system and underlying principles and concepts, including international and comparative contexts; b) The broader contexts within which legal issues arise; c) The principles and values of justice and of ethical practice in lawyers' roles; and d) Contemporary developments in law, and its professional practice.
2. Ethics and Professional Responsibility	Graduates of the Juris Doctor will demonstrate: a) An advanced and integrated understanding of approaches to ethical decision making; b) An ability to recognise and reflect upon, and a developing ability to respond to, ethical issues likely to arise in professional contexts; c) An ability to recognise and reflect upon the professional responsibilities of lawyers in promoting justice and in service to the community; and d) A developing ability to exercise professional judgment.
3. Thinking Skills	Graduates of the Juris Doctor will be able to: a) Identify and articulate complex legal issues; b) Apply legal reasoning and research to generate appropriate jurisprudential and practical responses to legal issues; c) Engage in critical analysis and make reasoned and appropriate choices amongst alternatives; and d) Demonstrate sophisticated cognitive and creative skills in approaching legal issues and generating appropriate responses. skills.
4. Research Skills	Graduates of the Juris Doctor will demonstrate the intellectual and practical skills needed to justify and interpret theoretical propositions, legal methodologies, conclusions and professional decisions, as well as to identify, research, evaluate and synthesise relevant factual, legal and policy issues.
5. Communication and Collaboration	Graduates of the Juris Doctor will be able to: a) Communicate in ways that are effective, appropriate and persuasive for legal and non-legal audiences; and b) Collaborate effectively.
6. Self-Management	Graduates of the Juris Doctor will be able to: a) Learn and work with a high level of autonomy, accountability and professionalism; and b) Reflect on and assess their own capabilities and performance, and make use of feedback as appropriate, to support personal and professional development.

Feedback to the national Consultation Paper

The national Consultation Paper didn't specifically ask law schools what practical skills law they currently teach. In responding to the proposed skills schedule included in the Consultation Paper, some submissions provided the following information.

Submission from	Comments
ANU	In law courses at the ANU Law School skills such as communication skills, collaboration and teamwork, court processes and advocacy, legal research, ethics and professional responsibility and responsible use of technology are already incorporated, to varying extents. Many other crucial skills are also incorporated including critical thinking, legal problem solving and how to construct legal arguments suitable for different for a such as courts, law reform processes and parliamentary inquiries and elements of skills pertaining to cultural competency and knowledge relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. Elective courses also incorporate significant experiential learning opportunities, including internships, clinics and practicums.
Bond University	Bond's own Legal Skills and Professionalism Program demonstrates that skills-based teaching and assessment can be effectively integrated into core and elective subjects without diminishing academic rigour.
Flinders University	Flinders' law degrees have always included practical skills, taught and assessed in ways that are integrated with doctrinal learning rather than treated as an add-on at the end of students' studies. Embedding skills across the degree allows scaffolded development, opportunities for practice and feedback, and building professional judgment over time. It also better supports equity of access by ensuring that all students, including those without prior legal work experience or professional networks, have exposure to learning these skills. However, the level at which specific skills can be taught and assessed will necessarily depend on where students are in their degree and how much foundational legal knowledge they have acquired.
La Trobe University	La Trobe Law School supports the continued development and strengthening of practical skills within law degrees. We already integrate skills-based learning, work-integrated learning, clinical opportunities and placements across our courses, and recognise the importance of equipping students with capabilities relevant to professional practice.

Submission from	Comments
Legal Education Associate Deans (LEAD) Network	Notes that several skills set out in the proposed skills schedule (Appendix F) are already taught in many law schools to varying degrees.
Law Institute of Victoria	Notes that many Victorian law schools already incorporate practical knowledge and skills into their compulsory and elective courses
Monash University	Monash already embeds practical and contemporary skills into the law degree.
Queensland University of Technology	QUT has mapped the practical skills currently developed and assessed across its LLB consistent with the TLOs and the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Level 8 criteria. That mapping ensures that practical legal skills are already systematically incorporated through QUT's curriculum at an appropriately advanced level, and that teaching and assessment practices are aligned with the existing TLOs.
University of Newcastle	The School of Law and Justice at the University of Newcastle has a strong tradition of teaching practical skills through our Diploma of Legal Practice. For this reason, we are supportive of the embedding of practical skills within the law curriculum. We are supportive of a requirement for appropriate assessment of the skills and would appreciate greater clarity around the requirements for the assessment.
University of Western Australia	Notes that some of the practical skills set out in the skills schedule are already embedded in the compulsory unites in the JD degree that sit outside the Priestley subjects.
University of Wollongong	UOW already has a number of practical skills incorporated within its LLB degrees, reflecting the value that UOW School of Law places on teaching and assessing practical legal skills within the law curriculum. This includes two dedicated skills subjects, LLB1115 Legal Skills and LLB2225 Advanced Legal Skills, as well as teaching of practical legal skills in other law subjects within the curriculum. The UOW LLB degree has a compulsory 20-day Legal Internship Program where students must complete a legal placement e.g. in a law firm, government legal department, community legal centre or with a judge in a court.
Western Sydney University	WSU undertook a review of its curriculum in 2024 and is planning to commence a new, practice-aligned curriculum in 2027.

Annexure C – Regulation and the International Context

Origins of skills based learning

Skills-based learning has its origins in guild and apprenticeship models of learning by doing but has become increasingly integrated into higher education in the context of the 'massification' that has occurred since the 1960s. It has evolved as a response to three trends: (i) growing demands from employers for relevance or, latterly, 'employability', and with it an associated focus on vocational, competence-based, approaches to learning and teaching;[1] (ii) a view that as knowledge changes so quickly, teaching disciplinary 'content' is, insufficient or outmoded,[2] and also (iii) a perception that skills are superior as a mode of governance, so that skills discourse becomes a mechanism for the public accountability of universities.[3]

The role and place of *practical* (vs generic) skills[4] in academic legal courses has remained, somewhat uncertain, if not contested, however.

There are two comparative 'how' questions material to the work of this sub-group: (i) To what extent and how are practical skills defined and understood through professional regulation, and (ii) how such regulation seeks to shape curriculum, teaching and assessment.

How Professional Regulation Addresses Knowledge and Skills

Historically, professional regulation has focused on the prescription of knowledge as a form of 'input' as opposed to 'output' or 'outcome' regulation. Input regulation seeks to define academic standards by reference to what students need to know (know what and some know how), whereas output regulation focuses on what students can do. Insofar as any skills are prescribed for the law degree, these have tended to be a bolt-on to existing knowledge requirements, and as Table C.1 below demonstrates sometimes defined in input terms, but increasingly specified in terms of outcomes or competences.

Jurisdiction(s)	Technique (currency)	Scope
Australia (LACC/LSC)	Input regulation (2015 [1992])	Eleven PAKs. [Supplemented by TLOs as soft regulation]
Canada (Federation of Law Societies of Canada, FLSC)	Competency regulation (2018 – amended 2024, in force 2029) + (brief) standards	Ethics plus three broadly defined knowledge areas [4 in 2029 when indigenous legal orders are added] plus

[1] Competence-based learning developed initially in the US, first in the context of teacher education in the 1960s. In professional legal education, skills- and competence-based approaches came together in the mid-1980s when the Canadian province of British Columbia replaced its Bar Admission Program with an innovative 10-week Professional Legal Training Course. By the mid-1990s, variants on the BC model had been taken-up in Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, and across the UK: see Chris Roper, 'The Legal Practice Courses – Theoretical Frameworks and Models' (1988) 6(1) *Journal of Professional Legal Education* 77. Some training in applied skills was also directly or implicitly embedded in university clinical legal education programs from the 1970s. This later became accompanied by a more explicit focus on foundational legal (research and reasoning) and 'generic' skills in law degrees, underwritten by associated competency benchmarks or threshold learning outcomes: see, eg, Andrew Boon, 'History is Past Politics: A Critique of the Skills Movement in England & Wales' (1998) 25(1) *Journal of Law & Society* 151.

[2] Boon, id.

[3] Josh Patel, *Universities and the Purpose of Higher Education,* Routledge, 2026.

[4] Generic skills are commonly a required graduate attribute for degree level qualifications and part of the content required for university accreditation/quality purposes. The practical vs generic distinction can possibly be overstated, insofar as practical skills have a foundation in generic skills and may be an 'applied' way of developing some generic skills in the curriculum.

Jurisdiction(s)	Technique (currency)	Scope
		problem-solving, research and communication skills
England & Wales (Solicitors Regulation Authority, SRA / Bar Standards Board, BSB)	Assessment regulation (SRA)(2021) Input regulation (Bar)(1995 approx)	Broad range of 'functioning legal knowledge'; six practical skills areas (competency-based). Pervasive ethics Seven 'foundation' subjects [supplemented by QAA Law Benchmark – generic skills and values]
Hong Kong (Standing Committee on Legal Education & Training)	Input regulation (2002)	Eleven core subjects (+ three 'top-up' subjects for non-HK graduates)
India (Bar Council of India, BCI)	Input regulation (2008) + standards, amended 2025	Thirty required 'papers' (20 x doctrinal, 4 x clinical, 6 optional). Drafting of Legislation and Plain Language Drafting added from session 2026-27 to Paper 21 (the compulsory clinical paper on *Drafting, Pleading and Conveyance*)
New Zealand (NZ Council of Legal Education)	Input regulation (2008 amended 2025)	Seven prescribed knowledge areas (*Tikanga Māori* added 2025) and professional ethics.
Singapore	N/A	N/A
United States (American Bar Association, ABA)	Outcomes + standards for accredited JDs (2014, amended 2022)	Professional responsibility course; legal writing; experiential credits; professional skills; bias education
Table C.1		

Practical Skills in their Regulatory Contexts, and Implications for Teaching and Assessment

This section expands on the summary information on each jurisdiction in Table C.1 and where, exceptionally, regulation addresses issues in respect of the teaching and assessment of skills, it highlights the approach taken.

USA

The American Bar Association Standards for Accredited Law Schools (2025-26)[5] require all accredited law schools to establish learning outcomes that include competency in substantive and procedural law and legal ethics, skills of legal research, analysis, problem-solving, and legal writing, and 'Other professional skills needed for competent and ethical participation as a member of the legal profession' (Standard 301).

The skills to be developed are not further prescribed. Guidance on Standard 301 states that the skills content may be 'determined by the law school and may include skills such as, interviewing, counselling, negotiation, fact development and analysis, trial practice, document drafting, conflict resolution, organization and management of legal work, collaboration, cultural competency, and self-evaluation.' Relatedly, Standard 303 also requires students to complete one or more simulation course, law clinics, or field placements). By Standard 304(a)(1) experiential courses are required, inter alia, to 'integrate doctrine, theory, skills, and legal ethics, and engage students in performance of one or more of the [necessary] professional skills…'. Such courses are required to provide multiple opportunities for student performances and, with the (significant) exception of externship placement programs, must include feedback about those performances from faculty.

In the US and Canada several law schools have, particularly following publication of the 2007 *Carnegie Report*[6] supplemented their existing clinical programs with a later year 'practicum' course designed to better prepare students for practice. These may attract 'diploma privilege' – i.e., exemption from the Bar Examination,[7] or satisfy other admission conditions, as in Ontario (below).

The Uniform Bar Exam is also in the process of being substantially revised (the 'NextGen' Bar Exam). This like the English Solicitors' Qualifying Examination (SQE) is an assessment-based model for which there is no prescribed training program (though there are multiple bar exam preparation courses, the right to sit the Examination is not predicated on attendance). The UBE and state Bar Exams had been notoriously light on the assessment of professional skills. The new UBE structure is fully digital, shorter (1.5 vs 2 days) focused on a narrower group of foundational subjects, and introduces assessment in 4 skills areas: legal analysis, investigation and evaluation; client counselling, negotiation and dispute resolution, and CRM; legal research; legal writing and drafting. Unlike the English SQE2, it appears that these skills are all to be assessed through written work, rather than live simulation.

India

The BCI model is the most prescriptive of the comparators examined, though whether such prescription can actually sustain quality in a system as large and diverse as India's remains a challenge for regulation (see, e.g., BCI Circular D:375/2024: Cir.005/2024 (LE), on maintaining standards of legal education). It approaches the regulation, teaching and assessment of skills through its four required 'clinical' (meaning practice-related and experiential) papers, rather than by integration across the broader range of knowledge-centred subjects. These four subjects are: (i) Drafting, Pleading and Conveyance; (ii) Professional Ethics and Professional

[5] See https://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/accreditation/standards/.
[6] William M. Sullivan et al., *Educating Lawyers: Preparation for the Profession of Law* (2007).
[7] Only three law schools currently attract permanent diploma privilege – the University of Wisconsin Law School and Marquette Law School – both in arrangement with the Supreme Court of Wisconsin, and the Daniel Webster Scholar Honors Program at University of New Hampshire, which enables a small cohort of high performing students to complete a two year program of study in lieu of the Bar: Anne F. Zinkin and John Burwell Garvey, New Hampshire's Daniel Webster Scholar Honors Program: Placing Law School Graduates Ahead of the Curve, (2015) 84(3) *The Bar Examiner* 16, republished online at https://mitchellhamline.edu/intellectual-property-institute/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2022/05/Curricular-Pathway-DWS-Zinkin-and-Garvey-Article.pdf.

Accounting System; (iii) Alternative Dispute Resolution; and (iv) Moot Court Exercise and Internship. These have been required 'papers' since 2008.

Following lengthy consultations, further reforms are being introduced into the Drafting subject in 2026-27 under BCI Directive D:8917/2025. Its approach to this revision is illustrative of the Bar Council's emphasis on standardisation. Under this revised framework, students must show competence in three new areas:

- Understanding the role of legislative drafting in public policy and governance
- Preparing basic legislative clauses and delegated instruments.
- Rewriting legal texts in accessible language without altering legal meaning

The Bar Council does not require law schools to allocate additional teaching to the subject, arguing that the changes can be accommodated by enhancing teaching quality rather than curriculum expansion. The Directive does however expressly reallocate a third of the fifteen compulsory drafting exercises to legislative drafting, and likewise five of the fifteen conveyancing exercises to plain language drafting.

Canada and the smaller jurisdictions

Canada, Hong Kong, New Zealand, and Singapore operate a broadly similar division between academic and vocational (PLT) stages as Australia.

In Canada, the FLSC *National Requirement* expects that competency is established in the skills of (legal) problem-solving, research and oral and written communication.[8] There is no further requirement for practical skills training in the degree. There are some regulatory innovations, notably in Ontario where students who complete their law degree at a law school with an approved 'integrated practice curriculum' can use that degree to meet their experiential learning requirement for Bar admission.[9]

Practical legal skills are not a required component of the academic law degree in New Zealand, Singapore, or Hong Kong, and there is no substantive professional regulation regarding their teaching and assessment in such degrees.

Singapore is an outlier in regulatory design and the lack of structured skills training requirements across the piece. It controls quality by restricting admission to graduates of a legislatively approved list of domestic and foreign law schools. All domestic law schools are included, following an approval process through structured, government-appointed, committees and legislative approval. Foreign law schools are included primarily on the basis of international ranking rather than curricula content. Except for advocacy, the Singapore Bar course remains the most heavily knowledge-based of our comparators. Nonetheless, there is growing recognition that skills-based training is important. The Singapore Academy of Law has been piloting a post-Bar Exam 'Junior Lawyers Programme' which is heavily skills/transactions focused. The Ministry of Law has also just announced that it is planning a 'broad' review of legal education and training, specifically to address the impacts of artificial intelligence, industry sustainability, and evolving demand for cross-border capabilities.[10] In this context, Minister for Law, Edwin Tong SC, has previously observed 'law schools can no longer be purely academic institutions in this space. They must be closely connected to practice,

[8] See https://flsc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/National-Requirement-Jan-2018.pdf.

[99] Erica Green, 'Opinion: Can US innovations help Canada enter a new era of legal licensure and education? *CBA/ABC National* (6 June 2025) https://nationalmagazine.ca/fr-ca/articles/opinion/2025/can-us-innovations-help-canada-enter-a-new-era-of-legal-licensure-and-education.

[10] Ang Hwee Min, Law Ministry to undertake broader review of legal education: Edwin Tong (29 July 2026) https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/law-school-lawyers-bullying-firms-toxic-work-culture-6285781

working alongside law firms and legal technology providers, to ensure students are equipped for how legal work is actually being transformed'.[11]

In terms of professional training, like most Canadian programs, the graduate Professional Legal Studies Course in New Zealand is heavily skills-based, lasting an equivalent of 13 weeks of full-time study. The Hong Kong model is closer to the former English/current Scottish/Australian PLT mix of substantive knowledge + practical skills.
Law schools in all of these jurisdictions, moreover, show some pattern of clinical or skills-based innovation, but in a generally less extensive form than in the US or Australia, and mostly within the elective curriculum.

England & Wales

At the other end of the scale, the Solicitors Regulation Authority in England and Wales has essentially decoupled professional skills and knowledge from the traditional academic law degree by creating a two-stage Solicitors' Qualifying Examination. The first stage of this assesses academic and professional knowledge. The second, using a modified form of 'objective standardised clinical examination' (**OSCE** – as used in medical schools) assesses core professional skills through simulated real-world task completion.[12] The effect on the law degree so far has been relatively muted, with law schools continuing to demonstrate a high level of isomorphism around the seven 'core' knowledge subjects (which are still required by the independent Bar), alongside a diversity of employability and skills-related subjects, including clinic, legal simulation and module-level work placements, many of which operate within the elective rather than required curriculum.[13]

[11] Ministry of Law, 'Keynote Address by Minister for Law and Second Minister for Home Affairs, Edwin Tong SC, at Litigation Conference 2026 - "The Human Essence of Advocacy in an AI-Enhanced World"' at [61] (Speech, 21 April 2026). https://www.mlaw.gov.sg/keynote-address-by-minister-edwin-tong-at-litigation-conference-2026/.
[12] On the background to the SQE2 model, see Eileen Fry, & Richard Wakeford, The Qualified Lawyers Transfer Scheme: The Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) 2014–2022. (2023) 57(3) *The Law Teacher* 377. https://doi.org/10.1080/03069400.2023.2246359.
[13] Cameron Giles & Yue Ang, Are we all electives now? Not quite: analysing the core curriculum within undergraduate law degrees. (2026) 60(1) *The Law Teacher* 2; Cameron Giles & Yue Ang, What qualifies a law degree? Surveying elective module provision in undergraduate legal education across England, Wales and Northern Ireland in 2023–2024. (2025) 59(1) *The Law Teacher* 2.

DISCUSSION PAPER 4

PRE-ADMISSION PRACTICAL LEGAL TRAINING

1. Background

The delivery of pre-admission practical legal training (**PLT**) is provided for by the Law Admissions Consultative Committee (**LACC**) PLT Competency Standards for Entry-Level Lawyers (**PLT Competency Standards**) and LACC Uniform Standards for PLT Course and Providers. It is regulated by the local admitting authority in each state or territory.

A law graduate develops the required competencies through a combination of coursework and workplace experience.

- Coursework is that which would be required for a graduate diploma, or at least 450 hours for training other than a graduate diploma, delivered by a PLT provider who has been accredited by the local admitting authority.

- Workplace experience is a minimum of 15 days, the purpose of which is to provide the graduate with an opportunity to:
    - apply, test and reflect on what has been learned during coursework, while interacting with practising lawyers, other staff, government officers and clients
    - develop an understanding of the nature of legal practice and of the student's aptitude for engaging in legal practice (additional information on workplace experience is set out in the Standards for PLT Workplace Experience).

All PLT providers offer at least a graduate diploma, with four exceptions. Of the exceptions, one provider offers a graduate certificate, one provider offers a diploma as part of an undergraduate integrated academic and PLT program and two offer courses that are not accredited as either a graduate diploma or a graduate certificate.

It is also possible to satisfy the pre-admission PLT requirement by undertaking Supervised Workplace Training (addressed below).

Further information on the discrete requirements for course delivery and how the PLT Competency Standards have been implemented in each jurisdiction is at **Annexure A**.

2. Policy issue and stakeholder feedback

The comprehensive National Practical Legal Training Research Survey Research Report (March 2026) prepared by Urbis for LACC and the Legal Services Council's Admissions Committee showed that recent law graduates and supervisors are generally dissatisfied with PLT and have raised concerns about the cost and quality of PLT delivery. Key relevant findings are summarised at **Annexure B**.

Earlier in 2025, Urbis had conducted a survey of recent law graduates and supervisors in NSW at the request of the NSW LPAB. The results were similar to those of the national survey.
In early 2026 the LACC and Admission Committee conducted a national public consultation on proposals to reform PLT. An overview of the course delivery related proposals and the stakeholder feedback received in response is detailed at **Annexure C**.

3. Reform options for the PLT course

This section identifies the options available to reform each aspect of the PLT course and the recommendations of the PLT Working Group, if any. The annexures provide a full discussion of each area.

a. Course duration and nature of qualification

The key policy question here is: What is the optimum PLT course length and type, having regard to cost, the revised PLT Competency Standards, and the need to ensure sufficient time for graduates to develop the required skills?

In terms of length, it is important that graduates have sufficient opportunities to understand, practise and be assessed on each required area of skills and knowledge. This must be balanced against the need to provide graduates with value for money. The appropriate course length should be determined by what PLT must achieve before admission, rather than being the starting point from which that purpose is to be compressed or expanded. The optimum course duration is to be determined by reference to the following process:

> **Admission standard → required professional capability → legal tasks → skills and workflows → required practice and feedback → evidence of performance → required volume of learning → course duration**

The nature of the qualification, if any, is intertwined with the issue of course duration. The key options available include:

1. requiring PLT to be a graduate diploma or equivalent training
2. requiring PLT to be a graduate certificate or equivalent training
3. removing the requirement for some particular qualification and/or volume of learning.

Graduate diplomas and certificates are qualifications falling within the Australian Qualification Framework (**AQF**) and are administered by the federal Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (**TEQSA**). The typical volume of learning for a graduate diploma is one to two years (being 1,200-2,400 hours) and for a graduate certificate is half a year to one year (being 600-1,200 hours). In practice, many PLT providers fill out their current courses with additional workplace experience requirements in order to meet the necessary volume of learning.

Many stakeholders raised concerns during the national consultation that not requiring PLT to be within that framework would remove graduate access to FEE-HELP because only higher education providers approved under the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (Cth) that offer eligible courses can offer FEE-HELP assistance. However, PLT is not currently required to be within the AQF framework and it is noted that a significant minority of graduates (e.g. Juris Doctor graduates) may have exhausted their FEE-HELP allowance by the time they commence PLT.

One variant of options 1 and 2 above would be to require that the PLT courses be a graduate certificate or graduate diploma (i.e. without permitting equivalent training). This would ensure TEQSA accreditation within the AQF framework, which would promote consistency in quality assurance across providers.

There are various other pros and cons for each these options. They are analysed at **Annexure D**. This issue overlaps with the topic of quality assurance (see below and at **Annexure G**).

b. Assessment

Respondents to the national survey consider that PLT assessments are box-ticking exercises which are "hard to fail" and do not reflect the realities of legal practice. The key policy question is: how can PLT assessment be improved to ensure rigour?

To ensure the reform options are justified and proportionate, there is a need to identify how assessment rigour is lacking and then identify the options to improve it in that respect.

Some options for enhancing rigour may include:
- requiring practice-based or contextually integrated tasks
- having a clear competency criteria
- having strong moderation and calibration processes
- having opportunities for feedback and improvement
- aligning it with or relying on the existing higher education frameworks
- having limits or conditions on resubmission.

This issue is discussed in **Annexure D**.

c. Delivery mode

The options for delivery mode include:

1. flexible online delivery, which may involve wholly online delivery or synchronous interactions
2. in-person delivery for specified components of PLT (with accessibility exceptions).

Arguments can be put in favour of both views. The issue is discussed in **Annexure E**.

Key arguments in favour of permitting flexible online delivery include:
- Mandating a significant amount of face-to-face attendance tends to disadvantage those with work obligations, caring responsibilities, health constraints or who cannot afford travel and accommodation costs. It may also disadvantage those living in remote, rural and regional locations.
- Online teaching may be equally effective as high-quality in-person teaching through careful course design.

Key arguments in favour of requiring some in-person delivery include:

- It aligns better with the principle that law is an applied interpersonal discipline. Representatives of the legal profession have expressed concern about the efficacy of wholly online education in facilitating engagement, interaction and interpersonal skills, where those skills are critical to being a lawyer.
- Emerging lawyers need to build professional networks and relationships within their cohort during the training period. Law is a profession in which collegiality facilitates the proper administration of justice and the efficient delivery of legal services. Developing professional links and a sense of collegiality are best achieved in person.
- Equity issues can be addressed by exceptions. Requiring some teaching to be in person does not increase the time spent engaged in the course.

The national survey showed that graduates who completed their PLT in person had higher levels of satisfaction than those who undertook a hybrid model or undertook the course fully online. The NSW requirement for three week in-person delivery, introduced this year, has so far produced good feedback in the College of Law NSW course (**Annexure F**).

The key policy questions are:

- All other things being equal (i.e. the same quality of teaching in any form), will mandating a minimum level of in person training produce better graduate outcomes, having regard to the nature and needs of the legal profession? If so, what should that minimum be to achieve the appropriate balance?
- How can that minimum be implemented within course design? For example, should certain tasks be delivered in-person or should it be conducted in a single block or segment?
- If a component of in person delivery is to be mandated, what exemptions should be provided (e.g. for people in regional/remote areas, with disability, or caring responsibilities)?

It is noted that in the Northern Territory, all PLT students undertake PLT remotely because there is no local provider which delivers PLT in person.

4. Quality assurance

The Uniform Standards for PLT Courses and Providers provide the core quality assurance standards for PLT courses and providers and additional standards for PLT providers. The Uniform Standards are administered by the admitting authorities as part of the accreditation process. TEQSA also has a role in the accreditation of PLT providers that sit within the AQF framework.

Ongoing quality assurance is important to ensure that PLT courses are consistently high quality and that any concerns raised are promptly and appropriately responded to. Quality assurance is relevant to course content, training outcomes and the teaching institution.

Annexure G discusses:

- the role of the TEQSA and admitting authorities in providing quality assurance of the institutions and course content
- opportunities to enhance quality assurance of institutions e.g. through an ongoing disclosure requirement, appointment of a provider's qualified staff to assess another provider's course, or independent audit.

It is recommended that the efficacy of PLT reforms be reviewed some time after they are implemented to assess whether the reforms have achieved their intended objectives and whether the quality assurance measures remain effective.

5. Workplace experience

Workplace experience is an essential part of the pathway to admission and at its best, exposes the student to the core legal skills required and processes involved in everyday legal practice. However, the quality of PLT workplace experience is impacted by the quality of supervision, business pressures and the opportunities for legal work.

The key policy questions are:

- What should the minimum length for workplace experience be?
- Under what circumstances, if any, should work experience acquired during the law degree should be credited for the purpose of PLT workplace experience?
- Should PLT providers be required to assist students to find workplace experience placement?

- Is there a need to strengthen the regulatory framework to ensure quality of workplace experience?

These issues are discussed in detail in **Annexure H**.

a. Duration

The PLT Competency Standards require students to undertake a minimum of 15 days' workplace experience. The appropriate duration of workplace experience requires consideration of the need for students to have sufficient time to develop and practise their legal skills before admission; law practices' willingness to host students (particularly over short periods of time); the potential for students to be exploited by unpaid work experience; workplace experience requirements being used to satisfy the respective volume of learning required for the PLT award level.

Potential reform options for duration include:

1. requiring 15 days only
2. prescribing a minimum requirement (e.g. between 15 to 30 days) and imposing a maximum limit (e.g. between 45 to 60 days)
3. increasing the minimum requirement e.g. 30 days.

A potential alternative model is to require graduates to undertake 12-months of workplace training in conjunction with PLT coursework before seeking admission. This would provide graduates with a greater opportunity to refine their legal skills in a legal environment and better prepare them for legal practice. However, this model would significantly delay the point of admission, which would disadvantage firms that favour graduate admission as soon as possible, and may risk exploitation of graduates through unpaid or underpaid workplace experience. In effect, this model would be very similar to the SWT (which is currently an alternative method of completing PLT, but which has a low take up rate).

The recommendation is that the 15 day requirement be maintained as an appropriate minimum, even if the PLT course is recommended to be at a Graduate Certificate or equivalent, or a shorter course. Given the benefits of gaining practical experience in the workplace, it is not recommended that any maximum period be set.

b. Recognition of prior work experience during the law degree

Workplace experience that is acquired during the law degree currently cannot be counted towards the 15 days minimum workplace experience requirement because this minimum must be undertaken concurrently with or after completion of the PLT coursework. However, workplace experience acquired up to two calendar years prior to a student commencing PLT can be credited towards additional workplace experience requirements (i.e. requirements over the 15 day minimum).

Stakeholders generally agree that prior work experience that satisfies the Standards for PLT Workplace Experience should be counted for all purposes.

The options are:

1. no workplace experience during the law degree may be counted towards the minimum requirement
2. any workplace experience obtained at any stage during the law degree may be counted
3. workplace experienced obtained in the final two years of the law degree may be counted.

Option 3 is recommended because by the penultimate year, students would have acquired the substantial knowledge they need to properly understand the legal environment in which they work and may be given more responsibilities of a legal (rather than administrative) nature.

c. Requiring PLT providers to assist with workplace experience placements

Assisting students to find PLT workplace experience is particularly beneficial for students who commence PLT without prior workplace experience. Some PLT providers, including Leo Cussen, provide services that guarantee student placements at an additional cost. Reform options for arranging placements include:

1. requiring PLT providers to guarantee students a placement
2. requiring PLT providers to assist students to find placements (but not requiring them to guarantee placements)
3. no requirement to assist i.e. students to find their own placements.

Option 2 is recommended because requiring PLT providers to find a placement is resource intensive, difficult to scale and will increase the costs for students. However, it is reasonable to expect PLT providers to offer assistance.

d. Adequacy of workplace experience

The Standards for PLT Workplace Experience broadly outline the types of tasks that students on workplace experience are expected to do. The Standards require PLT providers to be satisfied that students have achieved the required learning outcomes during their workplace experience before certifying that the student has satisfied the relevant PLT Competency Standards.

Concerns have been raised about the adequacy of these processes and the supervision of PLT students. A question arises as to who is best placed to assess the adequacy of workplace experience. The issue is also affected by the proposed reform to count workplace experience undertaken prior to students developing a relationship with a PLT provider.

The options for who certifies, and assesses the adequacy, of a person's workplace experience are:
1. PLT providers (current approach)
2. workplace supervisors
3. workplace supervisors and the PLT providers both play a role – the former in certifying what amount and type of work has been done, and the latter in checking and approving the sufficiency of the quantity and quality of the workplace experience.
4. admitting authorities.

Option 3 is recommended.

It would be desirable to provide workplace supervisors with more guidance on creating a valuable workplace experience by amending the PLT Standards for Workplace Experience to provide clearer tasks which they are able to tick off as the student experiences or achieves them during the workplace experience.

6. Clinical legal education

Clinical legal education develops effective, ethical and reflective legal professionals through intensive legal learning experiences that involve high-quality supervision arrangements, structured reflective practice and a focus on social justice. Although it is a distinct program

that is offered to students during the law degree, the clinical experience that students acquire during this program and up to two years before they commence their PLT coursework could be credited towards any additional PLT workplace experience requirements if the above recommendation is adopted.

The key policy question is: What role, if any, should clinical legal education play in PLT?

It is recommended that PLT providers consider:

- developing clinical legal education programs for graduates by incorporating clinical insights and practices to workplace experience arrangements
- working with existing clinical legal education programs to allow PLT students to contribute to the provision of client services
- partnering with existing legal service providers, including community legal centres and the pro bono sections of major law firms.

It is not recommended, however, that clinical legal education be mandated.

Further discussion of clinical legal education is at **Annexure I.**

7. Supervised Workplace Training (SWT)

SWT is one PLT pathway available under the PLT Competency Standards for law graduates to develop the required competencies for admission. It is currently only available in practice in Victoria and Queensland, with relatively small graduate numbers, and could be adopted by other Australian jurisdictions.

Stakeholder consultation led to significant support for its retention from those familiar with it.

The options for reform include:
1. retaining the current availability of SWT (in Victoria and Queensland)
2. expanding the availability of SWT to other jurisdictions or nationally
3. removing the availability of SWT.

The recommendation is that SWT be retained as a means of satisfying the PLT prerequisite, and that regulatory authorities in each jurisdiction be encouraged to consider facilitating it occurring in practice.

Consideration is also required in respect of whether:
- the content of Supervised Workplace Training should be amended based on any changes to the PLT Competency Standards
- the duration should be amended to reflect changes to PLT course duration
- graduates who undertake pre-admission Supervised Workplace Training should be required to complete post-admission legal training (PALT), if progressed.

Further information about Supervised Workplace Training and opportunities to increase uptake is at **Annexure J**.

8. Discussion questions for the Conference

a) Out of the three options identified in this Discussion Paper, what is the optimum PLT course length and type? Consideration should include:
   - cost
   - revised PLT Competency Standards
   - time required.

b) How can PLT assessment be improved to ensure rigour (see Annexure D)?

c) Should there be a minimum in-person attendance requirement? If so, what should that minimum be (see Annexure E)?

d) What quality assurance mechanisms can be further leveraged or developed to ensure PLT courses are consistently high quality (see Annexure G)?

e) What should the minimum length for workplace experience be and why (see Annexure H)?

Annexures

Annexure A	PLT National Regulatory Framework
Annexure B	National Survey Results
Annexure C	Overview of Admissions Committee/LACC Reform Proposals and Stakeholder Feedback
Annexure D	Course Length and Nature of Qualification
Annexure E	Should some of the course be required to be in person?
Annexure F	College of Law report on experience in delivering the NSW PLT course
Annexure G	Quality Assurance
Annexure H	Workplace Experience
Annexure I	Clinical Legal Education
Annexure J	Supervised Workplace Training

Annexure A – PLT National Regulatory Framework

Successful completion of practical legal training (**PLT**) is a requirement for admission to legal practice in Australia and is regulated by the local admitting authority in each state or territory.

1. PLT Content

The PLT Competency Standards for Entry-Level Lawyers (**PLT Competency Standards**) developed by the Law Admissions Consultative Committee (**LACC**) in partnership with the Australasian Profession Legal Education Community (**APLEC**) set out the competencies that a student is expected to develop during PLT. They are broken down into four categories: skills, compulsory practice areas, optional practice areas and values.[1]

Area	Details
Skills	Lawyer's Skills Problem Solving Work Management and Business Skills Trust and Office Accounting
Compulsory practice areas	Civil Litigation Practice Commercial and Corporate Practice Property Law Practice
Optional practice areas (any two)	Administrative Law Practice Banking and Finance Criminal Law Practice Consumer Law Practice Employment and Industrial Relations Practice Family Law Practice Planning and Environmental Law Practice Wills and Estate Practice
Values	Ethics and Professional Responsibility

The PLT Competency Standards describe each of these areas and set out the elements with associated performance criteria that a graduate must meet. The elements and performance criteria are detailed, with a single competency containing between three to nine elements and up to 29 performance criteria.

A law graduate is required to develop the competencies through a combination of coursework and workplace experience:

- Coursework is that which would be required for a graduate diploma, or at least 450 hours for training other than a graduate diploma, delivered by a PLT provider who has been accredited by the local admitting authority.
- Workplace experience is a minimum of 15 days, the purpose of which is to provide a student with an opportunity to:
    - apply, test and reflect on what has been learned during coursework, while interacting with practising lawyers, other staff, government officers and clients
    - develop an understanding of the nature of legal practice and of the student's aptitude for engaging in legal practice. Additional information on workplace experience is set out in the Standards for PLT Workplace Experience.

[1] Law Admissions Consultative Committee (LACC), PLT Competency Standards for Entry-Level Lawyers (PLT Competency Standards).

The PLT Competency Standards also set out how the competencies can be developed via Supervised Workplace Training rather than PLT. In some jurisdictions this is referred to as Supervised Legal Training or supervised traineeships. This is a period of at least 12 months of full-time supervised work with specific training requirements aligning with the PLT Competency Standards.

2. Delivery

PLT courses can be delivered in the following ways:

- a standalone course
- integrated with a law course
- a partnership model between a law school or law firm and PLT provider.

Both the PLT Competency Standards and the Uniform Standards for PLT Courses and Providers contain information about when and how PLT is to be delivered.[2]

Aspect of PLT delivery	Details
When PLT may be commenced	Generally, after the applicant has completed an academic qualification in law that could lead to admission, unless the student is undertaking a program where PLT is integrated with a law course.[3]
Form and duration of PLT	In the case of a graduate diploma, coursework appropriate to a graduate diploma (i.e. 1,200-2,400 hours[4]) and 15 days' workplace experience.[5] In the case of training other than a graduate diploma, the equivalent of at least 900 hours' duration, comprising at least 450 hours of coursework and at least 15 days' workplace experience.[6] In the case of Supervised Workplace Training, the equivalent of at least 12 months of full-time work which includes some coursework.[7] Note that the PLT Competency Standards do not require that a PLT course lead to a graduate diploma (or a graduate certificate), nor do they require PLT providers to be TEQSA accredited. However, most courses do lead to a graduate diploma award qualification (as regulated by TEQSA). As illustrated in Table 4, one provider offers courses that lead to a graduate certificate, one provider offers a diploma as part of an integrated undergraduate program and there are two current PLT providers which are not on the TEQSA register and their courses do not lead to any recognised higher education award.
When workplace experience can be undertaken	Generally, to be undertaken concurrently with or up to two years after completing PLT coursework.[8] To be completed at a minimum of two full days per week or four lots of four hours per week.[9]

[2] LACC PLT Competency Standards; LACC, Uniform Standards for PLT Courses and Providers.
[3] LACC, PLT Competency Standards, cl 3.2.
[4] Australian Skills Quality Authority, Standard 10.5 - Australian Qualifications Framework levels.
[5] LACC, PLT Competency Standards, cl 4.1(a).
[6] LACC, PLT Competency Standards, cl 4.1(b).
[7] LACC, PLT Competency Standards, cl 4.1(c).
[8] PLT Competency Standards, cl 4.2(c).
[9] PLT Competency Standards, cl 4.2(d).

Aspect of PLT delivery	Details
	In practice, many PLT providers require (or offer options) that participants undertake more than 15 days workplace experience, with those days treated as counting towards the necessary volume of learning on the coursework requirement.
Teaching method	The LACC framework is agnostic as to how PLT should be delivered (e.g. in person, online, hybrid). In the past, there has been an expectation that providers will deliver coursework intensives at the beginning of the course in person. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the LACC encouraged admitting authorities to allow PLT providers to deliver coursework intensives (usually delivered in person) by virtual means. From 2026, NSW requires all PLT providers to deliver 15 days of coursework in person.[10]
Level of training	PLT must be provided at a level equivalent to post-graduate training and build on the academic knowledge, skills and values about the law, the legal system and legal practice which a graduate of a tertiary qualification in law should have acquired during that qualification.[11]
Assessment	There is requirement for assessment to determine whether a student has acquired and demonstrated an appropriate understanding of, and competence in, each element of the skills, values and practice areas,[12] noting that the course may provide for student to re-sit assessments.[13]

3. Implementation of the LACC Standards

The PLT Competency Standards have been implemented in each state and territory through local legislation or rules, with some variations. In each jurisdiction, the local admitting authority regulates PLT delivery through the PLT provider accreditation process, with regard to the following LACC documents:

- PLT Competency Standards
- Uniform Standards for PLT Courses and Providers
- Standards for PLT Workplace Experience[14]
- Guiding Principles for Integrating Academic and PLT Courses.[15]

The following table provides an overview of how each state and territory has implemented the PLT Competency Standards.

[10] Legal Profession Admission Board of NSW Discussion Paper on PLT Reform (30 September 2025), p 11; Legal Profession Admission Board of NSW, Interim Report on PLT Reform (13 March 2026), p 76.
[11] PLT Competency Standards, cl 4.4.
[12] PLT Competency Standards, cl 4.6.
[13] LACC, Uniform Standards for PLT Courses and Providers cl 1.7(g).
[14] LACC, Standards for PLT Workplace Experience.
[15] LACC, Guiding Principles for Integrating Academic and PLT Courses.

	NSW	VIC	WA	QLD	TAS	SA	NT	ACT
Delegated Legislation	Legal Profession Uniform Admission Rules 2015			Supreme Court (Admission) Rules 2004	Legal Profession (Board of Legal Education) Rules 2021	Legal Practitioners Education and Admission Council (LPEAC) Rules 2018	Legal Profession Admission Rules 2007	Court Procedures Rules 2006
Local Regulatory Authority	Legal Profession Admission Board	Victorian Legal Admissions Board	Legal Practice Board	Legal Practitioners Admission Board	Board of Legal Education	Legal Practitioners Education and Admission Council	Legal Practitioners Admission Board of the Northern Territory	Legal Practitioners Admission Board
Content	The same as the PLT Competency Standards (Schedule 2 Part 4).			The same as the PLT Competency Standards as per the guidelines issued by the Chief Justice and the board under r 9AA(1)(b).[16]	The same as the PLT Competency Standards with some differences in relation to the optional practice areas and descriptions (Sch 3).	The same as the PLT Competency Standards (Appendix B).	The same as the PLT Competency Standards (Sch 4).	The same as the PLT Competency Standards (r 3607D(1)(b)).
Form and duration of coursework	The same as the PLT Competency Standards with minor drafting differences (Sch 2, cl 5). • For a graduate diploma, requires programmed training to be equivalent to at least an Australian Qualifications Framework Level 8 qualification (Sch 2, cl 5(a)), or • For a training course other than a graduate diploma, requires programmed training is to be at least 450 hours (of at least 900 hours total) (Sch 2, cl 5(b)).			The same as the PLT Competency Standards through the guidelines.	The same as the PLT Competency Standards with some further specifications. • At a graduate diploma level, programmed training is to be 900 hours total (r 8(4)(a)), or • For a non-award training course, it is to be at least 450 hours of programmed training (of 900 hours total) (r 8(4)(b)), or • For distance training or in electronic form, it is to be 450 hours of computing time (r 8(4)(c)).	The same as the PLT Competency Standards (Appendix B) or course prescribed under r 8(1)(b).	The same as the PLT Competency Standards (Sch 4).	The same as the PLT Competency Standards (r 3607G).
Workplace experience	The same as the PLT Competency Standards (Sch 2, cl 5(a)-(b)).			The same as the PLT Competency	At least 90 hours for a Graduate Diploma and non-award	The same as the PLT Competency	The same as the PLT Competency Standards (Sch 4).	The same as the PLT Competency Standards (r 3607G).

[16] Queensland Supreme Court, *Admission Guidelines for Approving Practical Legal Training Requirements, Admission Guidelines Number 2* (2019).

	NSW	VIC	WA	QLD	TAS	SA	NT	ACT
				Standards through the guidelines.	training course (r 8(4)).	Standards (Appendix B).		
Delivery mode	The same as the PLT Competency Standards.			The same as the PLT Competency Standards through the guidelines.	The same as the PLT Competency Standards.	The same as the PLT Competency Standards (Appendix B).	The same as the PLT Competency Standards (Sch 4).	The same as the PLT Competency Standards.
Assessment	The same as the PLT Competency Standards (Sch 2, cl 9).			The same as the PLT Competency Standards through the guidelines.	The same as the PLT Competency Standards in so far as it requires comprehensive assessment (r 8(1)).	The same as the PLT Competency Standards (Appendix B).	The same as the PLT Competency Standards (Sch 4).	The same as the PLT Competency Standards (r 3607G).
Supervised Workplace Training	The same as the PLT Competency Standards (Sch 2, cl 5(c)).			The same as the PLT Competency Standards with a 2-year maximum (r 9G, r 9O).	Not prescribed.	The same as the PLT Competency Standards (Appendix B).	The same as the PLT Competency Standards (Sch 4). Also provides for at least 1 year of articles and if required, a supplementary course approved by the Board (r 5(1)(b)).	The same as the PLT Competency Standards (r 3607G).

4. Australian PLT providers

The table below provides an overview of current accredited PLT providers in Australia.

PLT Provider	Qualification	National	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA
Leo Cussen	Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice (**GDLP**)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The College of Law	GDLP	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
University of Newcastle	Juris Doctor & GDLP			✓						
	Bachelor of Laws (Honours) and Diploma of Legal Practice									
University of New South Wales	Graduate Diploma of Legal Professional Practice (**GDLPP**)			✓						
University of Technology Sydney (UTS)	Graduate Certificate in Professional Legal Practice (**GCPLP**).			✓						
	Juris Doctor Graduate Certificate in Professional Legal Practice (**JD Accelerate**)			✓						
Queensland University of Technology	GDLP					✓				
Bond University	GDLP					✓				
Flinders University* (in partnership with Leo Cussen)	Dual award – Flinders University LLB and Leo Cussen GDLP						✓			
Centre for Legal Studies	GDLP (awarded by University of Tasmania)							✓		
Swinburne University of Technology (In partnership with Leo Cussen)	Dual award – Swinbourne LLB & Leo Cussen GDLP								✓	
ACAP University College (in partnership with Law Institute Victoria)	GDLP			✓					✓	
Piddington Society Inc	None									✓
Curtin University	GDLP									✓
Institute of Legal Training	None									✓

The results of the national and NSW surveys indicate that the College of Law is the largest PLT provider across Australia.

The figures below provide a visual breakdown of where respondents to the national and NSW surveys completed their PLT.

Figure 1. Breakdown of where respondents to the LSC/LACC National Survey completed PLT (not distributed in NSW).[17]

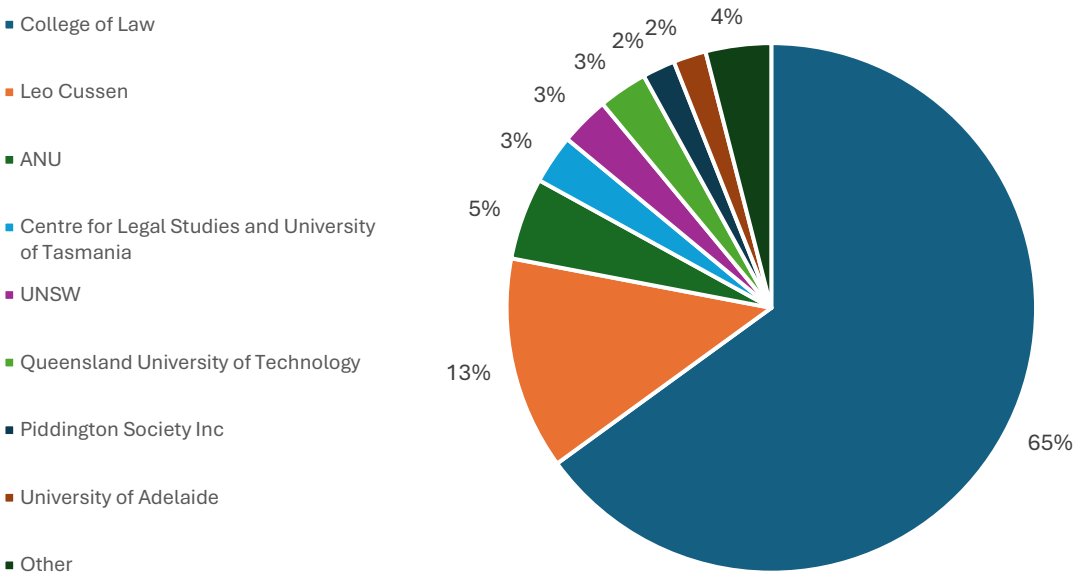
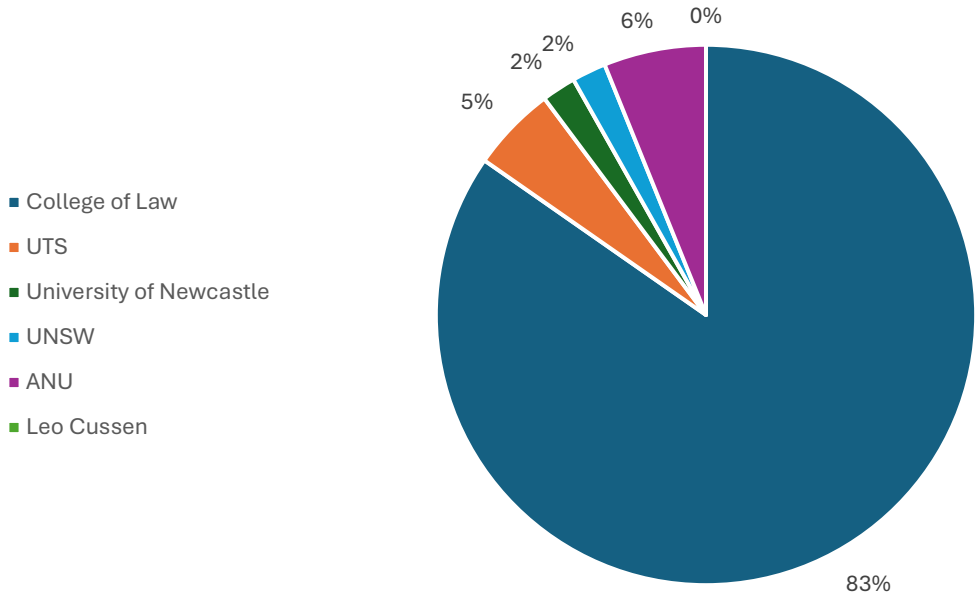


Figure 2. Breakdown of where respondents to the NSW LPAB Graduate Survey completed PLT.[18]



[17] Urbis, National Practical Legal Training Research (March 2026), p 18.
[18] Legal Profession Admission Board, Discussion Paper on PLT Reform (30 September 2025), p 40.

Annexure B – National Survey Results

In late 2025, the Admissions Committee of the Legal Services Council and the Law Admissions Consultative Committee (**LACC**) engaged Urbis to conduct a national online survey of graduates and supervisors of early career lawyers to examine the cost, quality and effectiveness of PLT in Australia (apart from in New South Wales where a local survey had already been undertaken).

The National Practical Legal Training Research Survey Research Report (March 2026) prepared by Urbis showed that recent law graduates and supervisors are generally dissatisfied with PLT and have raised concerns about the cost and quality of PLT delivery. Some of the relevant key findings from the national survey are extracted below.

The full report of the national survey can be accessed here.

Area	National Survey Findings
Overall perceptions of PLT	• Over half (53%) of graduates were dissatisfied with their overall PLT experience, with 24% of the graduates being very dissatisfied (page 24). A further 20% were neutral (page 24). • The exception was Tasmanian graduates, who were substantially more satisfied with PLT compared with those in other States. 83% of those graduates had in-person delivery of PLT (pages 64-65 and 114). • 63% of graduates disagreed that PLT was useful in supporting the training of early career lawyers (page 25). Of supervisors, 47% disagreed that PLT was useful in bridging the gap between academic studies and work, with 11% neutral and 40% agreeing (page 25). • 71% of graduates were dissatisfied with the value for money of PLT, with 46% being very dissatisfied. 14% were neutral, and 13% were satisfied. This was the single area of greatest dissatisfaction (page 26).
Coursework	• 46% of graduates were dissatisfied with coursework structure and content, with 21% neutral and 33% satisfied. Feedback was provided that the coursework was repetitive, outdated and irrelevant to the realities of the legal profession (page 31). • Graduates who completed their PLT in-person had significantly higher levels of satisfaction with delivery method (78%) than hybrid delivery (49%) or fully online (43%) (page 32). • 45% of graduates indicated that less time should spent on coursework, and a similar proportion suggested the same allocation of time (page 35).
Workplace experience	• Graduates were generally satisfied with the tasks undertaken, supervision and usefulness of workplace experience (page 41). • 74% of graduates considered that the workplace experience was useful to their career development (page 47). • 21% of graduates reported undertaking 30 days or less of workplace experience, with 52% undertaking more than 30 days, with the rest unsure (pages 43-44). • Almost half of graduates indicated that the length of workplace experience was appropriate, and a third considered it should be longer (page 44). • 24% of graduates undertook unpaid workplace experience, and 3% had a reduced pay rate. Of the graduates who were unpaid or received a reduced rate, 70% reported this having a moderate to major impact on their financial situation (page 46).

Earlier in 2025, Urbis had conducted a survey of recent law graduates and supervisors in NSW at the request of the NSW LPAB. The report of that survey can be accessed here. The results were similar to those of the national survey.

Annexure C – Overview of Admissions Committee/LACC Reform Proposals and Stakeholder Feedback

In April 2026 the Admissions Committee and the Law Admissions Consultative Committee (**LACC**) conducted a national public consultation on proposals to reform PLT. Amongst other things, the proposals would restructure the framework in which PLT is delivered with an intention to improve cost and quality.

The table below identifies the relevant proposal and provides an overview of the stakeholder feedback received during the national public consultation process in early 2026.

Issue	Proposal	Stakeholder Feedback
Course length	Reduce PLT course length to a minimum of four weeks, plus up to one preparatory week (Proposal 3)	Most stakeholders do not support or have concerns about the proposed four-week minimum course duration because: • it is not enough time for graduates to learn and develop skills • it is not evidence-based and it is unclear how it will improve program quality or graduate outcomes • market realities will make the minimum the default and impact the viability of existing providers • the associated removal of FEE-HELP will limit access to the profession.
Nature of qualification	Provide that a PLT course may be, but does not have to be, delivered at a graduate diploma level or equivalent (Proposal 4)	There are mixed views about not requiring that PLT to be delivered at the level of a graduate diploma or equivalent (noting that that is not currently required). Overall, more stakeholders responding on this issue raised concerns about it due to: • the associated removal of FEE-HELP will limit access to the profession • the removal of TEQSA's primary oversight, given it is unclear whether there is an appropriate body to assume this role • market realities will make the minimum the default and impact the viability of existing providers • the change will not recognise PLT as a complex post-degree stage that is more appropriate to be delivered within the tertiary education framework. Alternative options raised for consideration include: • Integrating PLT into law courses • Delivering PLT at graduate certificate level or equivalent • Considering the quality of the PLT courses within the existing AQF requirements.
Delivery mode	Require the coursework to be delivered in person, or in exceptional cases, by synchronous online learning (Proposal 5)	While some stakeholders agree that in-person delivery for components of PLT would be beneficial, others have raised concerns about: • equity and access and the subsequent impacts on the profession's diversity • the unclear 'exceptional circumstances' criteria and the risk of inconsistency • the requirement not being evidence-based • the requirement not reflecting the realities of contemporary legal education and practice

Issue	Proposal	Stakeholder Feedback
		• the impact on the viability of PLT providers, particularly those that offer PLT online only. Many stakeholders consider it important for there to be flexibility in the delivery mode and consider that the underlying issue is not about the delivery format itself, but how it can support quality interaction and learning. In this regard, some stakeholders consider that the quality of the delivery mode could be regulated.
Assessment	Ensure the assessments are rigorous (Proposal 6)	Stakeholders generally support rigorous assessment of PLT and have various suggestions on how this can be achieved, including: • requiring practice-based or contextually-integrated tasks • having a clear competency criteria • having strong moderation and calibration processes • having opportunities for feedback and improvement • aligning it with or relying on the existing higher education frameworks • having limits or conditions on resubmission.
Workplace experience	Retain the minimum 15 days of workplace experience (Proposal 7)	• Stakeholders generally support retaining 15 days as a minimum requirement for workplace experience (although some suggested that the period should be longer to provide opportunity for sufficient skills development and to enable employers to offer opportunities and graduates to find workplace experience opportunities). • Some stakeholders have noted that other professions (e.g. health and allied health) and other international jurisdictions impose longer placement requirements. • One stakeholder suggested allowing workplace to be completed by online simulation through an available forum.
	Update the Standards on PLT Workplace Experience to provide more information about the type of tasks to be undertaken during workplace experience (Proposal 8)	Stakeholders support the Standards on PLT Workplace Experience providing further information on skills development during workplace experience. This information should be intended as guidance, be broad, flexible and not overly prescriptive to allow application across various practice settings.
	Prepare guidance for supervisors on workplace experience (Proposal 9)	• Stakeholders support additional guidance for supervisors of workplace experience and the review and development of additional training for supervisors of PLT students. Stakeholders note that there are existing resources that may be drawn from. • The most common suggestions for training coverage include: o mentoring o giving effective feedback o wellbeing and workload management o supporting capability development

Issue	Proposal	Stakeholder Feedback
		o understanding the purpose of supervision o managing risk and accountability o ethical supervision o supporting adult and diverse learners o cultural and psychological safety.
	Amend the PLT Standards and Standards for PLT Workplace Experience to count prior workplace experience that is undertaken during the law course (Proposal 11)	• Stakeholders support allowing workplace experience undertaking during the law course to be approved with requirements around recency, supervision and the nature of the work undertaken. • There are mixed views about which bodies should certify this. Many stakeholders support PLT providers being the appropriate certifying body, however suggestions have also been made for it to be the profession/supervisor/organisation, universities, or the law societies. The stakeholders who do not support this proposal consider it important that the full extent of what is learned during PLT is being applied contemporaneously.
	Require PLT providers to assist students with sourcing workplace experience opportunities (Proposal 12)	• Stakeholders support PLT providers assisting students with sourcing workplace experience within the confines of what is practicable for them.
Clinical legal education	Include clinical legal education as a component of PLT (Proposal 20)	• The majority of stakeholders support clinical legal education being part of legal education, including law courses, PLT and workplace experience. However, stakeholders noted that due to the cost of delivery, clinical legal education should remain optional as the model is not scalable and cannot be made available to all law students and graduates. • Most stakeholders agree that clinical legal education should not be part of PALT, as PALT that serves a different purpose.

The Admissions Committee and the LACC also consulted on whether supervised workplace training should be retained as a way of completing PLT. Most stakeholders who addressed the issue support retaining supervised workplace training as a way to undertake PLT because they recognise the value it can offer, subject to clear standards and oversight. Some stakeholders who do not support retaining supervised workplace training consider national consistency to be more important.

Annexure D – Course Length and Nature of Qualification

1. Framing remarks

The questions of what qualification should be mandated and how long the PLT course should be cannot be answered before answering the following questions:

- What content is to be taught?
- Relatedly, what has already been taught during the law degree?
- How much time is required to teach the desired content effectively?
- How can it be ensured that teaching and training meets a satisfactory standard?

The factors that affect course length and the nature of the qualification include:

- How much practice, development and feedback is required?
- What evidence is needed to justify admission?
- What reasonable volume of learning follows?

The following process would guide the consideration of these issues:

> **Admission standard → required professional capability → legal tasks → skills and workflows → required practice and feedback → evidence of performance → required volume of learning → course duration**

2. Course length

Legal training takes place in multiple phases: at law school, during the PLT course, in supervised practice, through continuing professional development, and through additional training (such as a course undertaken to qualify for a principal's practising certificate). Legal education should not be compartmentalised but seen as a continuum. As the LACC / LSC Paper observed, it is "important to consider the role of PLT in the context of legal education and training throughout a legal practitioner's career".[1]

Choices therefore need to be made as to:

- what practical training is undertaken in the course of the law degree
- what practical training is required to supplement the law degree to prepare a lawyer for practice
- what practical training is best delivered in the early (foundational) years of practice.

Ultimately, the appropriate course length should be determined by what PLT must achieve before admission and not be the starting point from which that purpose is compressed or expanded. A shorter PLT course may be justified if students enter it with stronger practical foundations from their law course and if post-admission supervised practice is sufficiently well structured to continue their development. A longer PLT course may be justified where PLT itself is expected to introduce, develop and assess a broader range of entry-level professional capabilities.

Regardless of course content, the shorter the formal training period, the greater the need for:
- tightly defined learning outcomes
- rigorous assessment

[1] Legal Services Council and Law Admissions Consultative Committee, Consultation Paper, Review of Practical Legal Training, April 2006.

- trained practitioner-educators
- reliable workplace supervision
- clarity about what is developed before and after admission.

A PLT course should provide trainees with sufficient opportunity, in relation to each required area of competency, to undergo the following process:

> **understand → observe → practise → apply → perform → receive feedback → correct → perform again**

Course design and thus course length will turn on matters such as the need to provide sufficient opportunity for repetition and feedback, according to the following process:

> **performance → feedback → correction → renewed performance**

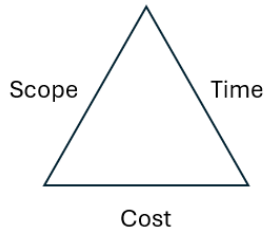
The course should also be long enough to facilitate assessment which measures the student's ability to:

- frame the task
- exercise professional judgement
- understand confidentiality and risk control
- work under supervision
- provide factual and legal verification of their work product and communicate reasoning.

The need for such assessment is highlighted by the emergence of technology which enables students to produce an apparently polished work product. A reliable system of assessment must therefore expose the process behind the work product to demonstrate that skills are being acquired rather than subcontracted.

These considerations cannot, however, be divorced from the issue of cost. Recent experience shows that cost of the PLT course can raise barriers to entry. The LACC/LSC National Survey Report also revealed a broad level of dissatisfaction among graduates with the “value for money” of their PLT course.[2]

A practical and sensible PLT course thus balances content (i.e., scope) against course length (time) and cost. Value for money is a factor which informs the balancing exercise. The concept of the "triple constraint", used in the field of project management, may readily be deployed to underpin the balancing exercise:



Some members of the legal profession have proposed, as an alternative to a "pure" PLT course, that graduates undertake a training year prior to admission, during which year the graduate undertakes a prescribed amount of workplace experience in conjunction with a PLT course—a program which is analogous to a medical internship. A year has been proposed because, experience suggests, it would provide sufficient time for a PLT course to be undertaken and then for basic practical skills to be iteratively acquired or refined in the

[2] Urbis, National Practical Legal Training Research, Survey Research Report (March 2026), p 6, 27-28.

workplace. Such a program, designed and executed well, would provide excellent preparation for legal practice as the profession has given strong feedback that practical learning in a legal workplace is critical pre and post admission. It may also reduce the length of post-admission training (and therefore the cost to the new lawyer) by a year.

However, such a proposal would require wide support by the profession to avoid placing an unfair burden on graduates. The Admissions Committee and LACC commissioned National Survey Report also revealed that in 2026, 24% those undertaking workplace experience did so without being paid, and another 3% work at reduced pay.[3] Thus the scheme would need to be supported by a regulatory or other framework which is practically viable for employers to support and prevents exploitation.

As discussed below, it may be that PLT courses should be accredited by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (**TEQSA**). If so, then Australian Qualifications Framework will fix the minimum length of the course.

Following determination of the appropriate course length, consideration will then need to be given to whether any amendments should be made to:

- the length of Supervised Workplace Training
- the length of an integrated academic and PLT course, noting the LACC Guiding Principles for Integrating Academic and PLT Courses requires the PLT component to be at least half a calendar year.[4]

3. Nature of qualification

In a perfect world, the nature of the PLT qualification would be determined by the length of a course which delivers the desired training outcomes. However, there is some imperative for FEE-HELP to be available to those who can qualify for it so that the cost of PLT does not become a barrier to entry. In that case, the nature of the qualification would, as a practical matter, influence the course length because FEE-HELP is only available to students who undertake an eligible course, including a TEQSA accredited course, that is offered by a higher education provider approved under the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (Cth).[5]

Use of the terms “graduate diploma” and “graduate certificate” are regulated pursuant to the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* (Cth). Both are “Level 8” qualifications under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF – linked here) while the LLB is an AQF Level 7 qualification. In practical terms, such awards can only be issued by an entity registered with TEQSA.

The AQF states that the typical volume of learning for a graduate diploma is 1-2 years (being 1,200-2,400 hours) and for a graduate certificate is 0.5-1 year (being 600-1200 hours). The concept of “volume of learning” involves the following (see this link):

> The volume of learning allocated to a qualification should include all teaching, learning and assessment activities that are required to be undertaken by the typical student to achieve the learning outcomes. These activities may include some or all of the following: guided learning (such as classes, lectures, tutorials, on-line study or self-paced study guides), individual study, research, learning activities in the workplace and assessment activities.

[3] Urbis, National Practical Legal Training Research, Survey Research Report (March 2026), p 46.
[4] LACC, Guiding Principles for Integrating Academic and PLT Courses.
[5] *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (Cth) s 104.10.

> The teaching, learning and assessment activities are usually measured in equivalent full time years. The generally accepted length of a full time year, used for educational participation, is 1,200 hours.

This volume of learning requirement has led many PLT providers to require, or offer options, involving more than the current regulatory requirement of 15 days workplace experience, where that workplace experience is treated as counting towards the volume of learning of the graduate diploma offered by most providers.

The following table sets out three options together with some pros and cons to stimulate discussion. The comments are necessarily somewhat preliminary, that is, many comments would be affected by what is decided about the content of PLT courses.

Reform Option	Benefits	Risks / disadvantages
Option 1 – graduate diploma (1200-2400 hours) or equivalent training *Key policy question* Is the volume of learning required by a graduate diploma genuinely necessary to teach the PLT Competency Standards?	Of the three options discussed in this table: • provides the longest period for structured pre-admission professional formation; • provides the greatest scope for repeated cycles of practice, feedback, correction and reassessment because of the higher volume of learning requirements; • provides greater capacity to integrate professional skills rather than teaching them as isolated exercises; • provides a longer period for substantial authentic assessment and evidence of readiness; • retains the existing higher education quality-assurance environment; • a graduate diploma provides access to the FEE-HELP loan scheme for those who are eligible (noting that a significant minority of students – especially those who have done JDs – will have exhausted their federal funding allowance by the time of doing a PLT course); • allows greater scope for contemporary areas such as AI-assisted legal practice, digital capability and professional judgement to be incorporated without reducing content elsewhere.	• May requires more time than is necessary if PLT is more tightly focused on its distinctive pre-admission role • Even now, many PLT providers fill out their current courses with additional workplace experience requirements in order to meet the necessary volume of learning • Can impose significant cost and delay entry to practice • To the extent practical skills are taught in law school, risks duplication of knowledge or skills • Duration alone does not guarantee quality: a longer course can still be poorly designed or overly dependent on content coverage • May retain historical curriculum requirements that are no longer necessary for threshold professional capability • The survey responses do not speak well of the current system
Option 2 – graduate certificate (600-1200 hours) or equivalent training	• Preserves the conceptual position of PLT as a postgraduate professional formation • Imposes a higher education quality-assurance framework • Is shorter than a graduate diploma and therefore likely to reduce cost and potentially time to	• May affect ability to teach the PLT syllabus within the timeframe (depending on course content) • Less time than in Option 1 for repetition, feedback and remediation

Reform Option	Benefits	Risks / disadvantages
Key policy question Can the required entry-level professional capabilities be intentionally formed, practised and reliably evidenced within a focused graduate certificate? This question should be answered through curriculum modelling rather than assumption.	admission, while retaining access to the FEE-HELP loan scheme for course which are graduate certificates • Creates pressure to distinguish what PLT uniquely needs to do from what belongs at law school or in supervised practice • Can focus curriculum on threshold professional tasks, workflows, judgement and performance rather than broad subject coverage • May provide sufficient time for structured learning, practice, feedback and assessment if designed intensively and coherently • Offers a possible middle position between the current extended model and the short course proposed in Option 3	• Requires clear decisions about what is removed, transferred or assumed as prior learning • Learner cognitive load may increase if breadth is retained without redesign • Assessment becomes more difficult if providers attempt to teach too many competencies in too little time • Conversely to all these points, it might still be regarded as excessive in terms of time, scope and cost, depending on what practical training is provided before and after the PLT course
Option 3 – Remove the requirement for any qualification or volume of learning *Key policy question* An e.g. four-week model represents more than a shorter PLT course. It represents a different allocation of lawyer formation across the pathway. What capability has already been assured before the four-week program begins, and what capability is deliberately left to	• Reduces the formal period between completion of law school and admission • Would reduce course costs compared with the current model, although these would have to be borne up front by students, without access to the FEE-HELP loan scheme (unless the course can be blended with a PALT qualification so as to constitute, together, an AQF Level 8 qualification) • A shorter course may fit in better with revised Competency Standards (noting that they are yet to be developed) • Could operate effectively as a capstone where learners arrive with strong prerequisite capability • Recognises that lawyer development continues after admission	• No FEE-HELP which potentially impacts access to the legal profession • Arguably insufficient time to introduce, practise and assess complex professional skills if learners have not already developed substantial practical foundations • More limited opportunities for feedback, correction, repetition and remediation • Greater reliance on the quality of prior law-school preparation and on the quality and consistency of post-admission supervision • Risk that workplace exposure is treated as a substitute for structured education, especially with respect to PLT provided by large employers (eg, the DPP).

Reform Option	Benefits	Risks / disadvantages
supervised practice after admission? A four-week intensive, as well as being cheaper, may be educationally defensible as a capstone.	• Would enable large employers (eg DPPs) to offer their own PLT course • Not having to comply with TEQSA accreditation standards makes it easier for new PLT providers to enter the market	• Greater variation according to employer, supervisor, practice area and workplace opportunity • Increased cognitive intensity and risk of learner overload (noting, however, that barrister admission courses are commonly taught using this type of model) • Reduced capacity to generate evidence of pre-admission capability • Potential weakening of external educational quality assurance if the intensive sits outside an equivalent framework • Removing PLT courses from TEQSA oversight which shifts the regulatory burden wholly onto the admitting authorities • The PLT courses that would be offered by large employers are likely to be specialised courses

The PLT Competency Standards currently allow PLT courses to be delivered at an equivalent of at least 900 hours, which forms the basis on which non-TEQSA accredited PLT providers operate. All but four PLT providers currently offer courses at a graduate diploma level. Of those four exceptions:

- University of Technology Sydney offers a graduate certificate
- University of Newcastle offers a diploma as part of the undergraduate integrated academic and PLT program
- The Piddington Society and Institute of Legal Training (both based in Western Australia) offer neither a graduate diploma nor a graduate certificate (and therefore FEE-HELP is not available).

A variant of options 1 and 2 above would be to require that the PLT course be required to be a graduate certificate or graduate diploma only. This would ensure TEQSA accreditation within the AQF framework, which would promote consistency in quality assurance across providers. However, it would remove the ability for providers the flexibility to offer non-AQF courses.

4. Assessment

The LACC PLT Competency Standards and Uniform Standards both address the issue of assessment. The PLT Competency Standards require there to be comprehensive methods that are appropriate to post-graduate training which assess competency and certify whether a graduate has demonstrated the requisite level of competency in each area.[6] The Uniform Standards provide further requirements and amongst other things, permit graduates to re-sit components of assessment in which they have not demonstrated the required knowledge or competence.[7]

Noting the findings from the national survey that many graduates considered the PLT assessments to be template-based or box-ticking exercises that do not reflect the realities of legal practice which are ‘’hard to fail’,[8] there is a need to consider how assessment can be more rigorous.

Assessment rigour includes:

- having an appropriate level of cognitive complexity
- being a valid measure of the assessed competency
- reliability and consistency in assessment outcome
- having authenticity i.e. real-world practice
- producing sufficient evidence to support a grade or outcome.

To ensure the reform options are justified and proportionate, there is a need to identify how assessment rigour is lacking and identify the options to improve in that respect.

For example, on the basis that graduates consider the assessments to have limited real-world application, it may be appropriate to consider requiring the assessments to involve practice-based or contextually integrated tasks.

Some stakeholders consider that the lack of academic rigour relates to the ability for graduates to resubmit assessments on an unlimited basis. This may be because of concern that it reduces the level of student independence in the demonstration of a competency and

[6] LACC, PLT Competency Standards, cl 4.6.
[7] LACC, Uniform Standards for PLT Courses and Providers, cl 1.7(g).
[8] Urbis, National PLT Research Report (March 2026), p 6, 14.

becomes an assessment of student memory rather than of understanding or skill. In this regard, this argument may relate to the validity of how the competency is assessed.

However, arguments can also be made for the value of having resubmissions from a developmental perspective, particularly in the development of practical skills. This is because practical skills are developed through an iterative process of observation, practise, feedback, correction and further practise – as indicated in the course duration section above.

Stakeholder suggestions in the national consultation about how assessment rigour may be enhanced include:

- requiring practice-based or contextually integrated tasks
- having a clear competency criteria
- having strong moderation and calibration processes
- having opportunities for feedback and improvement
- aligning it with or relying on the existing higher education frameworks
- having limits or conditions on resubmission.

Annexure E – Should some of the course be required to be in person?

The feedback (including from students and employers) gathered by the Admissions Committee/LACC national survey suggests that the PLT course should primarily comprise synchronous training (however delivered) in which participants and instructors interreact in real time. Activities such as client interviewing, negotiation and mediation, advocacy, difficult client conversations, supervisor briefings and teamwork benefit from synchronous and interactive learning. It may also be accepted that wholly asynchronous online training, particularly in the earlier stages of legal education, is significantly less likely to deliver good outcomes.

An issue arises as to whether some period of in-person training should be mandated (subject to appropriate exceptions, e.g. due to disability, carers responsibilities, or for those in regional areas) or whether the course should be delivered mostly or entirely online. We outline the arguments in favour of each alternative below.

1. Arguments for flexible delivery, especially synchronous online training

The arguments in favour of permitting wholly online instruction focus on considerations of equitable access. PLT serves a geographically, socially, economically and culturally diverse student population. Mandating a significant amount of face-to-face attendance tends to disadvantage those with work obligations, caring responsibilities, health constraints or who cannot afford travel and accommodation costs.

An in-person mandate potentially imposes barriers to entry for these cohorts. It would unintentionally favour more well-off students, who tend to live close to major teaching centres, can afford temporary accommodation, or are able to leave employment and caring responsibilities for extended periods.

Mandating a significant amount of face-to-face attendance may also disadvantage some smaller firms, firms in rural, regional and remote Australia and legal assistance sector organisations which may not be in a position to cover the cost of their employees undertaking PLT (including travel and accommodation) and may not be in a position to bear staff spending significant time away from the office. However, as noted below, there is strong support from some regional practitioners (at least in NSW) for PLT to be taught mostly in person to foster interpersonal relationships among peers in regional practices, provided such teaching is provided in regional centres.

Conversely, online delivery can:

- improve access for regional, rural and remote learners
- reduce travel, accommodation and lost-income costs
- support students with employment and caring responsibilities
- improve accessibility for learners with disability or other participation constraints
- enable providers to reach students across jurisdictions
- preserve participation in PLT without requiring relocation
- promote a more diverse legal profession.

Online delivery does not necessarily lower standards, provided the mode of delivery and course design allows the learner to achieve and demonstrate the required capability. So long as the required learning outcomes, interaction, assessment integrity and professional standards are preserved, providers should be able to use combinations of:

- metropolitan and regional teaching locations
- intensive face-to-face blocks

- synchronous online workshops
- hybrid delivery
- distributed teaching hubs
- weekend or concentrated attendance models
- other forms of supervised live performance.

Moreover, well-designed synchronous online learning can permit repeated small-group practice, observation, feedback and performance without requiring all participants to be physically co-located. Conversely, poorly designed face-to-face teaching may provide little more than passive attendance. The quality question is therefore not simply whether learning occurs in person but what learners are required to do and what learning outcomes are achieved.

2. Arguments for mandating some in person training (with accessibility exceptions)

The arguments in favour of requiring some in person training point to the fact that it aligns better with the principle that law is an applied interpersonal discipline. It is not suggested that the whole PLT course should be conducted on an in-person basis but that a period of, say, 4 weeks be mandated, with a focus on particular skills. The legal profession's experience suggests that some skills — for instance, advocacy, negotiation skills and client interviewing — are inherently interactive and easier to teach and learn in person than online.

This proposition is supported by academic literature which argues that human beings learn through "activating different sense modalities: Hearing, touch, sight, speech, smell and taste" with the result that the "more teaching/learning activities tie down the topic to be learned to multiple sensory modes, the better the learning".[1] Thus, synchronous online training may a useful substitute for in person training in some circumstances, provided it is accepted that online training will not provide all of the benefits of in person engagement.

Representatives of the legal profession have expressed concern about the efficacy of wholly online education "in facilitating engagement, interaction and interpersonal skills".[2] In consultations many practitioners have expressed concerns about the willingness and ability of new graduates, brought up in an online age, to engage in person with other practitioners. Yet the ability to do so remains a critical part of being a legal practitioner, whether in litigation or transactional matters.

Moreover, emerging lawyers need to build professional networks and relationships within their cohort during the training period. Law is a profession in which collegiality facilitates the proper administration of justice and the efficient delivery of legal services. Training should therefore promote collegiality and the development of more than mere competency. As Dr Brian Grim recently observed, "Faith, belief and values … shape how people build trust, make decisions, and define integrity. And while digital platforms help us exchange information, relationships—especially across belief systems—are built most powerfully face-to-face."[3]

Regional practitioners in NSW have also argued in favour of the delivery of PLT face to face to encourage lawyers working in regional areas to develop relationships with their peers. They

[1] John Biggs and Catherine Tang, *Teaching for Quality Learning at University* (The Society for Research into Higher Education, 4th ed, 2011) Table 4, 3, 63.
[2] Letter from James Popple, Chief Executive Officer, Law Council of Australia to the Hon. Andrew Bell AC, Chief Justice of NSW and the Hon. Justice Anthony Payne, Presiding Member, LPAB, 30 October 2025, [44].
[3] Brian Grim, 'Why Face-to-Face Matters…' (LinkedIn post, January 10, 2026) <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/why-face-to-face-matters-even-more-digital-global-business-grim-s6mhe>.

contend that the development of strong interpersonal relationships among colleagues in the profession may matter more in the regions than in capital cities.

These considerations are reflected in feedback received from students. The report on the Admissions Committee and LACC survey notes that "[t]he national survey showed a higher level of satisfaction reported by graduates who completed their PLT in person compared with those who had a hybrid model or undertook the course fully online".[4]

From 1 March 2026, the College of Law NSW has been required by the NSW Legal Profession Admission Board to provide PLT courses which involves 15 days of in person attendance. The results of the College of Law NSW's student surveys on overall on-campus experience as at 30 September 2026 (**Annexure F**) appear to be generally positive and are outlined below:

80% reported that they Often or Always contributed to class discussions.

95% reported that they Often or Always worked with other students on class activities.

87% reported that they Often or Always interacted with other students in ways that supported their learning.

75% reported that the on-campus delivery was well structured and organised.

72% reported that the on-campus delivery was engaging and interesting.

75% reported that the on-campus delivery was relevant to preparing them for entry-level legal practice.

70% reported that attending on-campus improved their learning experience.

82% reported that attending on-campus improved interaction with other students.

85% reported that attending on-campus improved interaction with lecturers.

70% reported that attending on-campus increased their motivation or engagement.

66% reported that their on-campus learning experience was much better than online learning.

The qualitative feedback received by the College of Law also emphasised the value of in person engagement, both from the perspective of developing "real world legal skills" as well as by providing "the opportunity to create friendships with other students" so as to "have familiar faces I will be entering the legal profession with".

The arguments against requiring some in-person teaching mainly rest on issues of remoteness and equity. The former concern is not supported by some regional practitioners and in any event can be addressed by making an exception for people living in such areas. Requiring some teaching to be in person also does not increase the time spent engaged in the course. The comparison is not between well-executed online training vs poorly-executed in-person training. The question is whether, all other things being equal, it is desirable to mandate a minimum level of in person training. The mode should deliver the best outcome for the student rather than the course provider. While training conducted predominantly in person may be more expensive to deliver, the benefits may be seen as outweighing the disadvantages.

[4] Admissions Committee/LACC, Consultation Paper, Review of Practical Legal Training, April 2026, p 35.

That said, synchronous online training would always have a role to play by providing equitable access to graduates with disability, from lower socioeconomic backgrounds or who live remotely (as to which see further below).

3. Relevant considerations for course design

When designing a course, decisions need to be made regarding:

- what parts of a PLT course should be taught in person (with accessibility exceptions — see further below)
- what parts of a PLT course should be taught online
- whether the in-person component should be conducted in a single block or in segments
- if the in-person component is to be taught in segments, whether there should be a prescribed structure — e.g. a requirement that the first segment be taught over a certain number of consecutive days (subject to appropriate pedagogical considerations), with the remaining segments to be structured according to the needs of the course syllabus.

Arguably, where physical presence is considered necessary to develop or assess a particular capability, that conclusion should be justified by clearly identifying the desired learning outcome. For instance, client interviewing, negotiation and mediation, advocacy and difficult client conversations may be better taught in person because they all involve learning how to engage with another human being, including by observing non-verbal cues.

Where equivalent capability can be developed and reliably assessed through synchronous online, hybrid or distributed delivery, providers could be given the flexibility to use those modes. Even so, we should not forget the important ancillary benefits to be gained from in person participation and the need for young lawyers to develop interpersonal relationships and interpersonal skills.

There is also a practical need for some flexibility in the early stages of a revised PLT program. For instance, regional law student cohorts in Queensland have been badly affected by the COVID lockdowns, with the result that regional universities have lowered their entrance requirements and moved entire courses online. Rebuilding the capability to provide in person training will take some time.

As foreshadowed above, allowances would need to be made for students who are genuinely unable to attend a PLT course in person or who would suffer unreasonable hardship if required to do so. Providers would need to comply with Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Cth) as well as make allowances for other forms of hardship. For example, those who reside 100 kms or more from a local PLT offering, or have other compelling reasons (e.g., economic hardship or carer responsibilities) why daily travel is impractical or unreasonable, could be permitted to undertake the majority of their course online.

It should also be noted, for completeness, that Northern Territory graduates have to undertake PLT remotely because there is no course offered in the Territory which is taught in person.

THE COLLEGE OF LAW

To: NSW LPAB PLT Working Group

Report on COL experience in delivering the new NSW PLT course

[Updated as at 30 September 2026]

1. Enrolments

Since 1 March 2026 the College has offered the NSW PLT course in 3 modes –

Option 1 – 3 weeks upfront intensive followed by 12 weeks online

Option 2 – 2 weeks upfront intensive + 5 weekdays attendance (offered in 3 streams with Monday, Wednesday or Friday attendance) + 13 weeks online

Option 3 – 1 week upfront intensive + 10 weekdays attendance (offered in 3 streams with Monday, Wednesday or Friday attendance) + 14 weeks online

Approximately 40% of students have chosen Option 1 and 60% Option 3. Take up of Option 2 has been negligible and that Option has now been discontinued.

Total enrolments since 1 March 2026 have been 1325. The new course arrangements have not had any detrimental effect on enrolment trends.

2. Exemption course

57 students (4.3%) have been approved for enrolment in the fully online Exemption course. The most common ground for exemption has been carer responsibilities, with few applications on the basis of illness or disability. There has been a slight increase in the percentage of exemptions granted since the addition of remoteness as a ground of exemption in August. Currently 19% of applications for exemption are being made on the grounds of remoteness.

3. Student feedback on overall on-campus experience

Since 1 March all students have been surveyed at the conclusion of their 15 days of attendance. The response rate has been low (12%) but the following positive results have been supported by the end-of-course surveys which have a much higher response rate (67%) – see section 5 below.

80%	Often or Always contributed to class discussions
95%	Often or Always worked with other students on class activities
87%	Often or Always interacted with other students in ways that supported their learning
75%	Reported that the on-campus delivery was well structured and organised
72%	Reported that the on-campus delivery was engaging and interesting
75%	Reported that the on-campus delivery was relevant to preparing them for entry-level legal practice
70%	Reported that attending on-campus improved their learning experience
82%	Reported that attending on-campus improved interaction with other students
85%	Reported that attending on-campus improved interaction with lecturers
70%	Reported that attending on-campus increased their motivation or engagement
66%	Reported that their on-campus learning experience was better than online learning

4. Student feedback on course content

The on-campus component of the College PLT course covers:

- Lawyer's Skills (Interviewing, Advocacy, Negotiation, Writing and Drafting, Wellbeing)
- Ethics and Professional Responsibility
- Civil Litigation Practice

Students reported that the aspects of the on-campus curriculum that contributed most to their preparation for practice were:

- Advocacy training
- Civil litigation including drafting court forms and documents
- Collaboration with other students
- Assistance from lecturers
- Ethics

"Many aspects of the on-campus component were useful. In particular, learning how to complete legal forms correctly and practising documents such as memorandums and file notes helped prepare me for legal practice."

"The practical, hands on activities were the most valuable. They helped me build real world legal skills, apply what I'd learned and feel more confident about transitioning into legal practice."

"Now having worked in a commercial law firm for 3 months, I have already noticed how practical the learnings were. Many documents or styles of drafting we practiced in PLT have been directly relevant to work I've been tasked to complete."

"I just want to emphasise that I feel this has really complimented my university learning. So much of what I learnt at PLT was not taught at university and will directly improve my practice as a lawyer."

Students also valued the social aspect of the on-campus component:

"I also appreciated the opportunity to create friendships with other students. It is nice to have familiar faces I will be entering the legal profession with"

"Having discussions with other students has been really helpful in the sense that you don't feel alone in any struggle on tasks."

5. Student feedback on whole course (on-campus + online)

In addition to the survey at the end of the attendance period, students are surveyed at the conclusion of the whole course. Feedback from the first course offerings has been overwhelmingly positive with the following comments being typical:

- *"The course has taught me skills required for preparation in practice, something the universities don't do well. The learning experience was made interesting by the talented lecturers, and gave real insight into the practice of law. "*
- *"I found it struck the right balance of face to face vs online component"*
- *"I really enjoyed the in-person component of PLT – going in once a week for 11 weeks was very beneficial"*
- *"The content taught is very useful since it is everyday work for a junior lawyer"*
- *"Good teaching on campus, good feedback from online markers"*

- *"The whole course was very comprehensive to assist us to step into legal practice and the lecturers we had were very knowledgeable and skilled in their area of practice making the learning experience valuable and enjoyable"*
- *"Being on campus to complete the activities was the most helpful part of the learning experience, as I could talk through the approach with my lecturer and get immediate feedback on drafting"*
- *"I am very satisfied with this course. The content was well-structured, and I particularly appreciated the practical approach taken throughout the trimester. The feedback I received on assessments was clear and helpful, which made a real difference to my learning. I also enjoyed the class discussions — they made the material feel more relevant and engaging. Overall, it was a rewarding experience"*

Nevertheless some students expressed a continuing preference for online learning:

- *"Was quite practical learning, although found that course would have been easy to complete online"*

And some were dissatisfied with the course content:

- *"This course has a number of problems. The three week program is poorly planned and executed as there is not enough content to justify having 3 weeks of full day classes"*
- *"While some practical skills were gained, most things felt like a rehash of university"*

However, these views were contrary to those expressed by the great majority of students.

6. Student suggestions for improvement

The following suggestions were made by students and will be considered during the course review and evaluation now taking place:

- Include more instruction on how to apply for admission
- Some of the face to face content should be taught online and some of the online content should be taught face to face – need to reconsider the design
- All subjects should have a face to face component
- More advocacy training
- Include pre-recorded lectures for each topic
- Include more live direct teaching in the online component
- Improve guidance and support for students when they move to the online component.

7. Lecturer feedback on overall on-campus teaching experience

A debrief session has been held with all the lecturers involved in the delivery of the on-campus component to date. These lecturers have also taught online. Their key observations were:

- Most lecturers enjoyed the classroom teaching experience much more than online teaching
- Students are much more engaged in the classroom than they are online
- Students put more effort into their work in the classroom than they do online
- Students learn from each other, as well as from the lecturer, in the classroom
- Students were building valuable relationships with their peers during the on-campus component
- Real-time feedback to students in the classroom was more helpful to their learning than online feedback
- The quality of coursework completed in the classroom was an improvement on the usual standard of coursework completed online

- Many students come to PLT with a very low level of knowledge from their university studies, requiring revision of basic legal concepts before the PLT content can be absorbed
- Both students and lecturers tend to be exhausted by the end of the 15 days of attendance, which affects the quality of the learning and teaching experience
- A number of students were detected using AI tools to complete their classroom coursework even though such use is expressly prohibited – resulting in academic conduct referrals
- Students find the transition to online learning difficult – however they are noticeably more engaged when they move online compared to students in the previous course structure.

8. Inclusion and student support

The evaluation identified both benefits and challenges for students with differing learning and participation needs. Lecturers noted that:

- Busy classroom environments may be overwhelming for some neurodivergent students.
- Students from English as an Additional Language or Dialect backgrounds may require additional support and processing time.
- Anxious or less confident students may benefit from structured opportunities to participate.

Lecturers addressed these issues by using one-to-one check-ins, scaffolded participation activities, and inclusive classroom management norms. These practices will be incorporated into lecturer professional development and training to ensure that the benefits of face-to-face learning are accessible to diverse student cohorts.

9. Impact on achievement of learning outcomes

Average grades obtained by students in the new course have remained largely unchanged from those achieved in the previous course. An exception is the subject Ethics and Professional Responsibility where the average grades achieved have increased from 76.09 to 83.16 (+7.07). Although this is pleasing, in this subject the assessment regime was changed as well as the delivery method, and it is not possible to say how much of this increase can be attributed to the in-person mode of delivery.

10. Conclusions

The 15 day attendance requirement has been an overwhelmingly positive experience for both students and lecturers with a very significant improvement in levels of student engagement.

There has been surprisingly little student complaint about the requirement to attend for 15 days and applications for exemption from attendance have been surprisingly few in number. Students have adjusted well to the new requirement and have appreciated both the learning and the opportunity to form relationships that are possible in the on-campus environment.

However, a 3 week block of attendance seems to be the maximum that students can manage while remaining engaged, especially given the intensive nature of the learning.

Given strong enrolments, the 15 day on-campus component presents a logistical challenge for the College which is being addressed by the creation of 5 new teaching spaces at our George Street campus and new round of recruitment of practitioner lecturers. This recruitment will entail a training program targeted at effective classroom teaching techniques.

Student and lecturer feedback is being taken into account in a review and revision of the new course format, with a focus on improving the learning experience in the online component.

Lewis Patrick

Chief Academic Officer

13 October 2026

Annexure G – Quality Assurance

1. Ongoing quality assurance of PLT courses

All PLT courses are subject to some form of approval. For example, in the Uniform Law states, the admitting authority approves the PLT provider (rather than the course),[1] while in Queensland, the PLT course is approved by the Chief Justice and the Legal Practitioners Admissions Board.[2] When approving a provider or course, the relevant admitting authority has regard to LACC's Uniform Standards for PLT Courses and Providers.[3]

The Uniform Standards for PLT Courses and Providers[4] provide:

- Core standards for PLT courses. This covers, amongst other things, course content, teaching and learning methods, course materials and assessment. The purpose of these standards is to enable the admitting authority to determine whether a PLT course enables its students to acquire and demonstrate the relevant PLT Competency Standards.[5]
- A core standard for PLT providers, which covers teaching staff. The purpose of this standard is to ensure teaching staff are appropriately qualified to teach the PLT course.[6]
- Additional standards for PLT providers. This covers, amongst other things, financial status, accommodation and teaching facilities, and quality assurance procedures and policies. These additional standards apply to the initial accreditation of all PLT providers and the ongoing accreditation of non-TEQSA accredited providers.[7]

Ongoing quality assurance mechanisms are important to ensure that PLT courses are consistently high quality and that any concerns arising in this respect can be addressed promptly and appropriately. It is, however, necessary to be clear about what is meant by quality assurance. For instance, there is:

- quality assurance of the course content, including assessments (i.e., the quality of the training material, assessments and syllabus)
- quality assurance of the training outcomes (i.e., the efficacy of the training and whether the graduates are meeting the appropriate level of competence for admission)
- quality assurance of the teaching institution (i.e., whether the institution has sufficient numbers of staff, whether the staff are properly qualified and whether the institution is sufficiently well equipped with classrooms etc).

2. The accreditation framework

The PLT Competency Standards require a PLT course to comprise either a program of study at a graduate diploma level, a non-award training course of at least 6 months (900 hours) or an integrated program of academic study and PLT. Most Australian PLT courses currently result in the award of an AQF Level 8 graduate diploma. The University of Technology Sydney confers a graduate certificate and the University of Newcastle confers a diploma as part of the undergraduate integrated program of academic study and PLT. However, in Western Australia, neither the Piddington Society nor the Institute of Legal Training are TEQSA accredited and are therefore non-award courses.

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[1] Legal Profession Uniform Law s 29.
[2] Supreme Court (Admission) Rules 2004 (Qld) r 7
[3] See, for example, Legal Profession Uniform Admission Rules 2015 r 7(2)(a).
[4] LACC, Uniform Standards for PLT Courses and Providers.
[5] LACC, Uniform Standards for PLT Courses and Providers, cl 1.
[6] LACC, Uniform Standards for PLT Courses and Providers, cl 2.
[7] LACC, Uniform Standards for PLT Courses and Providers, cl 3.

History does not supply a basis for requiring that PLT courses be TEQSA accredited. The Piddington Society's course, which has been offered for many years, has a strong reputation.[8] Nonetheless, the question of quality assurance enlivens debate as to whether all PLT providers should have dual oversight from TEQSA and the admitting authorities.

Requiring all providers to be TEQSA accredited and therefore, comply with the Higher Education Standards Framework 2021 (**Threshold Standards)**,[9] might help underpin a more reliable system of professional legal education. The Threshold Standards cover: student participation and attainment; learning environment; teaching; research and research training; institutional quality assurance; governance and accountability; and representation, information and information management. This means that requiring TEQSA accreditation may assist the admitting authorities to ensure a greater degree of consistency among course providers while reducing the amount of duplication of effort in the accrediting process.

TEQSA accreditation also comes with ancillary protections for students, including requirements relating to equity, student safety, access to the National Student Ombudsman and appeal rights.

TEQSA has, from time to time, retained PLT experts to advise in relation to, for example, whether a proposed course meets the content requirements. Nonetheless, some stakeholders have remarked that TEQSA is better suited to the quality assurance of the teaching institution (i.e., the third type of quality assurance listed above) rather than of the substantive course and outcomes.

TEQSA can also grant, on application, independent institutions with self-accrediting authority to accredit their PLT courses. For example, the College of Law is permitted to self-accredit. TEQSA does not, by granting self-accreditation status, totally abdicate responsibility for exercising some oversight over the self-accrediting institution. Rather, its focus shifts from approving individual courses to reviewing the provider's governance, monitoring, review and continuous improvement processes. Even so, the inconsistencies in self-accreditation and TEQSA accreditation introduce the same variability into a system which relies solely on TEQSA accreditation. Thus, even if all PLT courses were TEQSA accredited, admitting authorities would still need to assess each provider's course content and training outcomes (i.e., the first two types of quality assurance listed above).

With respect to the existing regulatory framework for non-TEQSA accredited providers, the Additional Standards for PLT Providers under the Uniform Standards that already apply in relation to ongoing accreditation cover some of the matters under the Threshold Standards and are regulated by the admitting authority.[10] Replicating the TEQSA protections for non-TEQSA accredited providers risks introducing complexity and cost without a commensurate benefit and would be likely to place a burden on the admitting authorities without additional resources. On these bases, the Uniform Standards may be considered be sufficient.

It is noted that in the Uniform Law jurisdictions, the costs of accreditation (including reaccreditation), monitoring or review are borne by the provider unless the Board determines otherwise.[11]

Amending the PLT Competency Standards to require the smaller non-TEQSA accredited providers to become TEQSA accredited may have significant administrative and financial

[8] Legal Profession Admission Board of NSW, Interim Report on PLT Reform, 13 March 2026, p 8 and 14.
[9] Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (Cth).
[10] LACC, Uniform Standards for PLT Courses and Providers, cl 3.
[11] Legal Profession Uniform Admission Rules 2015 r 7(8).

impacts. In particular, the high application and ongoing fees of TEQSA accreditation,[12] the subsequent need for providers to recover these costs from graduates or otherwise and the additional costs of complying with the Threshold Standards may adversely impact their commercial viability. For example, practitioner-led providers may experience operational challenges in recruiting teaching staff that satisfy the general TEQSA requirement for teaching staff to have academic qualifications that are one level above the program they are teaching.[13]

However, in Victoria, the Victorian Legal Admissions Board requires providers to obtain TEQSA accreditation before they can be accredited. Rule 7(3) Admission Rules provides that the Board may accredit a provider on any conditions that it specifies. This approach is taken to reinforce the dual and distinct oversight functions of TEQSA and the admitting authorities.

3. Options to enhance quality assurance of PLT providers

Further information is required to understand the admitting authorities' experience of accrediting PLT providers and whether their current powers, processes and resources adequately equip them to provide consistent quality assurance for both TEQSA accredited and non-TEQSA accredited courses.

One option may be to require PLT providers to routinely disclose enrolment and course completion information to assist accrediting authorities to monitor training outcomes, similar to what the American Bar Association requires of individual law schools.[14] This disclosure requirement could include:

- the number of students enrolled
- pass rates (both overall and in respect of each course component)
- the number of times failed assessments are repeated
- the results of surveys conducted to monitor student and supervisor satisfaction levels.

Greater quality could also be achieved by requiring each accredited PLT provider to nominate an appropriately qualified member of staff to be available to be appointed by the accrediting authority to assess another provider's course on, say, a three-year cycle. That approach is widely adopted by admitting authorities with respect to academic accreditation. However, operational challenges with this approach include limited suitable reviewers being available and concerns about intellectual property and competitive advantage.

Alternatively, a small percentage of PLT fees could be set aside to fund an independent auditing process. Monitoring may also be facilitated by, for instance, the adoption of common core assessment tasks.

Any quality assurance system will come at a cost which, as a matter of economic reality, will ultimately be borne by students. A system of peer review, in which institutions do not charge one another, may be a practical way to manage the cost of accreditation — again, choices will need to be made by reference to the triple constraint of scope, time and cost.

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[12] Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, Application fees.
[13] Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (Cth) Standard 3.2.3.
[14] American Bar Association Required Disclosures Statistics.
ABA Standard 909 stipulates that a law school "shall publicly disclose on its website, in the form and manner and for the time frame designated by the Council, the following information: (1) admissions data; (2) tuition and fees, living costs, and financial aid; (3) conditional scholarships; (4) enrollment data, including academic, transfer, and other attrition; (5) numbers of full-time and part-time faculty, professional librarians, and staff; (6) class sizes for first-year and upper-class courses; number of seminar, clinical and co-curricular offerings; (7) employment outcomes; (8) bar passage data; and (9) accreditation status."

4. Review mechanisms after implementation

Assuming that there are significant reforms to the PLT Competency Standards (which appears likely) following this reform process, substantial changes to PLT curriculum will be required. It will be important for accrediting bodies to have direct and active oversight over the new curricula proposed by PLT providers to ensure consistency and successful implementation of the reforms.

As a form of ongoing quality assurance, a review mechanism needs to be developed to assess whether the reforms to PLT have achieved their intended objectives after a period of implementation and whether the quality assurance measures remain effective. Further consideration is required to determine the appropriate period; however, the criteria for evaluating models that has been developed by the Possible Reform Models Working Group (see Discussion Paper 7) may be one approach to assessing implementation.

Annexure H – Workplace Experience

1. Context and issues arising

The current LACC Standards for PLT Workplace Experience require students to undertake a minimum of 15 days of workplace experience. PLT providers may, as part of a PLT course, require or permit more than 15 days of work experience.

Since 1 July 2018 students must complete workplace experience at not less than the rate of 2 full days per week or 4 x 4-hour sessions of workplace experience per week.

Under clause 8 of the Standards, PLT providers must not approve workplace experience unless it includes most or all of the following:

- significant interaction with external or in-house clients
- drafting documents
- legal research
- using a file management system.

PLT providers must not approve workplace experience unless they are satisfied that the student is supervised by a person who is currently admitted to practice, of good standing and who has substantial experience in practising law. The current Standards allow more flexibility regarding any workplace experience beyond the minimum 15 days. This includes allowing such further workplace experience to be credited if undertaken within two calendar years prior to commencement of a PLT course (clause 7(6) of the Standards for PLT Work Experience).

The results of the 2025 national survey of the legal profession[1] identified the following issues relevant to workplace experience:

- Most graduates in the national survey were either satisfied with the length of their workplace experience or would have liked it to be longer, particularly those who did not have prior work experience.
- Workplace experience was often regarded by graduates as the most positive component of PLT.
- There was variation in tasks undertaken by graduates.
- Unpaid work experience creates additional financial pressure (24% of those undertaking workplace experience were not paid).

Workplace experience has broad support as being an essential part of learning to be a legal practitioner in the real-world context. At its best, workplace experience should allow a student to (as appropriate in the circumstances):

- see experienced practitioners liaising with and representing clients
- observe and participate in client interviews, court or tribunal proceedings, mediations, negotiations and tactical discussions between lawyers
- engage in legal research, draft written advice, submissions and other legal documents
- identify, reflect on and discuss ethical and professional responsibilities of legal practitioners.

In practice, the quality of workplace experience is impacted by the following issues:

- *The quality of supervision provided* – Supervision takes time and legal practice is complex, demanding and time-critical. The practical reality is it can be more efficient for a legal practitioner to do work themself than to explain context, provide guidance, review drafts and engage with a student about the work. Some supervisors are excellent, some do not

[1] Urbis, National Practical Legal Training Research: Survey Research Report (March 2026).

have time to effectively supervise and others need more support and guidance to develop the skills needed to be good supervisors.

- *Business pressures* – Fundamentally a law firm is a business, and the majority of law firms are small businesses. Not all supervisors will have the time or skills to provide quality supervision. The decision to supervise a PLT student can operate as a drain on the business in practice. While many firms and legal practitioners recognise that supervision of PLT students is necessary to ensure there is a continuing stream of skilled practitioners and important to ensure emerging practitioners have the skills they will need to flourish in the future, this alone is often not a sufficient incentive to justify the investment required to supervise a PLT student given the commercial pressures practitioners are under.

- *Narrow range of legal work* – For students who already have a paralegal job, this will usually be in the context of employment for a specific task, which may not provide the breadth of exposure to legal work which a PLT student would ideally have. For example, a student employed as a conveyancing clerk will likely only gain experience in a narrow area of law. A firm may legitimately feel they do not want paid work time spent observing or learning tasks for which fees are not recoverable. This means that while a paid workplace experience relieves financial pressure for the student, it may not provide the ideal workplace experience.

2. Length of workplace experience

The LACC PLT Competency Standards require a minimum of 15 days of workplace experience to be undertaken concurrently with or after completing PLT coursework. How this is implemented varies by jurisdiction and PLT provider (see Annexure A).

Most PLT courses provide a graduate diploma (**GDLP**) qualification, for which the required 1200-2400 hours volume of learning is in part satisfied by requiring more than the base 15 days of workplace experience, usually 60 or 75 days of workplace experience.

In NSW as of early 2026, students can only be required to undertake more than 15 days' workplace experience if it is necessary for some other purpose (e.g. to fulfil the volume of learning for a GDLP). In South Australia, a student can choose between 15 days of workplace experience with an additional six-week online program; or alternatively 75 days of workplace experience with no further coursework required.

If the nature of the qualification for PLT were to change from a GDLP or equivalent to Graduate Certificate or equivalent, it is likely that PLT providers would reduce the amount of additional workplace experience to satisfy and stay within the scope of the reduced volume of learning requirements.

The duration of workplace experience must be long enough for induction and onboarding and then for the student to gain enough familiarity with the work to engage in genuine experience of legal practice (as distinct from a week of work experience). However, shorter durations may be preferred by firms that favour graduate admission as soon as possible. This preference for an earlier point of admission must be balanced against the public's likely high expectations of a newly admitted lawyer who has only undertaken a small amount of workplace experience.

In considering the minimum requirement for workplace experience, the balance to be achieved is the benefit of a longer duration for students (and later point of admission), particularly students with no or limited prior workplace experience during their degree, against the financial hardship that arises from an unpaid or reduced pay PLT placement.

Unpaid PLT placements are lawful under the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) as they are vocational placements that are undertaken pursuant to a course of study. Providers of PLT usually have insurance policies which will cover a student undertaking workplace experience. This insurance is required because an unpaid placement will not attract the usual insurance available to an employee in the event of an injury or workplace accident. Placement hosts have an expectation that placement students have insurance coverage.

On balance, and to enable some students to benefit from a longer period of workplace experience, it may be appropriate to mandate a minimum amount of workplace experience while also allowing additional days up to a specified maximum amount. The benefit of this limit approach would be that a longer placement would still have appropriate insurance coverage for the student for the duration of the placement.

The following table outlines the benefits and risks/disadvantages of three possible options with respect to the required length of workplace experience.

	Benefits	**Risks / disadvantages**
Option 1 Fifteen (15) days only	• Minimises time commitment required for student and workplace • Minimises economic impact of unpaid placements on student • Earliest point of admission compared to Options 2 and 3	• No insurance coverage by PLT provider for students who do more than required • For workplaces, the onboarding required may not justify the short amount of time spent in office • For students with no office/legal experience, the time may be too short to embed real experience
Option 2 Prescribe a minimum days requirement (e.g. between 15 to 30 days) and impose a maximum limit (e.g. between 45 to 60 days)	• Having an upper limit may minimise time commitment and addresses the economic impacts of unpaid or reduced pay placements • The range allows ongoing insurance coverage for student and workplace where a longer workplace experience, up to the maximum, is in the interest of either or both • A more flexible approach for students and workplaces • A minimum of between 15 to 30 days (further stakeholder consideration required) may be considered just enough time to practise the skills learned during the PLT course • A maximum of between 45 to 60 days (further stakeholder consideration required) may be considered adequate to practise the skills learned during the PLT course • A more moderate and balanced approach	• Longer period (or higher end of the proposed ranges) is more onerous for students, especially if unpaid • If the qualification is no longer a GDLP, a longer period may not be justifiable
Option 3 Increase the minimum requirement (e.g. 30 days)	• A longer workplace experience allows more skills to be obtained by the student • A longer workplace experience may better justify onboarding and induction costs for the workplace	• Longer period is significantly onerous for students if unpaid. • Overall increase in minimum must also be borne by profession as a whole. Many firms are unlikely to be in a position to pay students,

	Benefits	Risks / disadvantages
	• Puts the legal profession slightly closer to other vocational disciplines (e.g. medical, allied health) in Australia which require significant placement hours • Aligns with what occurs in practice for some PLT providers who require additional workplace experience days (because of the volume of learning requirements)	noting that it is a burden on their business to host work experience students. • Students may thus find it difficult to find workplaces in which to meet this requirement, thus making it a potentially significant barrier to entry.

Recommendation

The nature of the qualification of the PLT course, if any, will impact the length because of the volume of learning required for the qualification.

On balance, the recommendation is that the 15 day requirement be maintained as an appropriate minimum, even if the PLT course be permitted to be a graduate certificate or a shorter course. Given the benefits of gaining practical experience in the workplace, it does not recommend that any maximum period be set.

3. Recognition of prior experience during degree

The Admissions Committee/LACC Consultation Paper queried whether workplace experience undertaken during a law degree should be counted towards recognised workplace experience for PLT, noting the national survey showed that a large proportion of graduates had worked in legal or other professional services prior to PLT (whether through clinical legal placements as part of their university studies, or through work or volunteering concurrently with their studies).

The PLT Competency Standards do not currently allow the workplace experience acquired during a law degree to be counted towards the 15 days minimum workplace experience requirement. Workplace experience acquired up to two calendar years before a student commences the PLT coursework can be credited towards any *additional* workplace experience requirements (i.e. over and above the 15 day minimum requirement).[2]

There is strong stakeholder consensus that such work should only be relevant for this purpose where it is undertaken during the final two years of the degree and with proper, quality supervision. Any workplace experience undertaken before a substantial number of law courses have been undertaken (that is, in the earlier years of a law degree) should not be considered relevant workplace experience because it may lack the appropriate legal context and it is likely to constitute administrative work rather than legal work experience.

In counting any prior workplace experience during the degree for the purpose of PLT, the Standards for PLT Workplace Experience will continue to apply to ensure that a PLT provider is satisfied that the student has achieved the required learning outcomes before certifying that the student has satisfied the PLT Competency Standards requirements.[3]

The options for recognising workplace experience acquired during the law degree are set out in the table below.

[2] LACC, PLT Competency Standards, cl 4.2(f).
[3] LACC, Standards for PLT Workplace Experience, cl 5.

	Benefits	Risks / disadvantages
Option 1 No workplace experience during law degree may be counted	• Maximises the likelihood of practical learning which builds upon a completed law degree.	• Fails to recognise that practical and academic skills are best learned together.4 • Fails to recognise e.g. the real benefits of clinical legal education if conducted as part of, or in tandem with, a law degree.
Option 2 Any workplace experience during law degree may be counted	• Maximum flexibility for students in time and opportunity	• If a student has not yet studied many law courses, their knowledge of the law, legal skills and ethical and professional considerations would be limited, meaning they lack proper context for observing or engaging in legal matters
Option 3 Workplace experience may only be counted if undertaken during the final two years of study	• Students have sufficient legal context for practical application of legal knowledge • Students are more likely to have an appreciation of ethical and professional issues arising • Workplaces may be inclined to consider a PLT student for ongoing employment	• Less flexibility for students

Recommendation

The recommendation is Option 3, that appropriate prior Workplace experience that satisfies the Standards for PLT Workplace Experience be permitted to be counted but only if undertaken during the final two years of study.

4. Should PLT providers be required to assist with finding workplace experience placements? How can firms be incentivised to take on PLT students?

A requirement on PLT providers to assist students with finding workplace experience may be particularly beneficial for those students who undertake PLT without prior workplace experience.

A small number of PLT providers, including Leo Cussen, assist students to find workplace experience placements; however, those tend to be small programs which acknowledge that the resource burden in identifying placements would not work at scale. There is also a distinction between PLT providers who provide a list of firms which *may* provide placement, as compared to the small number of providers which *guarantee* a student placement. PLT providers that guarantee a placement generally charge an additional fee for this service, reflecting the fact that guaranteeing a placement is resource intensive.

Noting this, if PLT providers are to be required to assist students in finding a placement, it is recommended that this not be a requirement to guarantee a placement (unless the PLT provider chooses to do so), but rather, a requirement to assist students to find their own placements, for example by:

[4] Sir Victor Windeyer, 'Learning the Law' (1961) 35 *The Australian Law Journal* 102, 112: "what the student learns in class helps him to understand why he does what he does in the office; and his experience in the office helps him to learn what he is taught at the school. Law and practice and procedure are intertwined. A student should learn about one while watching the other."

- connecting students with the legal profession
- referring students to available opportunities
- providing a database of available opportunities
- providing additional support and guidance on how to apply for placements.

Guaranteeing workplace experience is also constrained by the reality that firms may be reluctant to take on PLT students for workplace experience. This is particularly the case for firms that have had experiences of taking on a new graduate, investing time in training them and then the graduate leaving for a different role elsewhere. Some firms feel quite burnt by that experience and it discourages them from supervising PLT students or recruiting junior lawyers.

Genuine incentives (beyond the requirement under the Australian Solicitors Conduct Rules to provide supervision) may be required to encourage practitioners to take on PLT students for work experience. Incentives could include providing solicitors with free continuing legal education seminars regarding supervision skills, providing Continuing Professional Development credits for supervising PLT students, or perhaps even providing firms with funding to host students (noting that if PLT providers provide funding, then ultimately PLT students will likely bear this cost through increased course fees). There could be a role for Law Societies to offer benefits (or some form of recognition/incentive) for firms who make themselves available for PLT student supervision.

Options for the role of PLT providers in finding workplace experience for students are set out in the table below.

	Benefits	**Risks / disadvantages**
Option 1 PLT providers are required to guarantee students a placement	• Students with no or little prior workplace experience or no or little connections with the profession have equitable access to placement opportunities • PLT providers are more confident that the placement will enable the students to achieve the required learning outcomes	• Students have to pay higher PLT fees to fund such a service • For PLT providers this is resource intensive and very difficult, especially at large scale. • May be unnecessary for most PLT students who will already be working in an appropriate legal environment • Limited pool of available placements at any one time • May be an unrealistic option given the expanding numbers of law students
Option 2 PLT providers are required to assist students to find their own placements, but are not required to guarantee the placement	• Students have additional assistance and support finding their own placements • Given that the national survey findings suggest that most students are already working in a legal environment when they commence PLT, the burden on PLT providers would appear to be limited, especially when all that would be required would be reasonable, good faith efforts • PLT providers are not discouraged nor prevented from offering a service to guarantee placements	• For PLT providers this will require some resourcing and development of relationships with firms. • Students have to pay higher PLT fees to fund such a service, though at a reduced fee compared to Option 1 • The overall high student demand for assistance may impact the ability of PLT providers to appropriately focus their efforts on the students that may require the most assistance

	Benefits	Risks / disadvantages
Option 3 No requirement to assist i.e. students need to arrange their own placement	• Lower costs of PLT, compared to Options 1 and 2 • Aligns with the national survey findings that most students are already working in a legal environment when they commence PLT	• Students must find their own placement, which will be more difficult for students from disadvantaged backgrounds who may not have relevant contacts

Recommendation
The recommendation is Option 2, that PLT providers are required to assist students to find their own placements, but are not required to guarantee the placement.

5. Assessment and certification of adequacy of workplace experience

The Standards for PLT Workplace Experience provide that a PLT provider must not approve workplace experience for a student unless it is satisfied that the student will receive appropriate legal or law-related work during their workplace experience.[5]

Additionally, PLT providers, amongst other things:
- must not approve workplace experience unless satisfied that the student will be appropriately supervised throughout[6]
- must be satisfied that students have achieved the prescribed learning outcomes before certifying that the student has satisfied the programmed training and workplace experience requirements[7]
- need to be able to demonstrate that they have systems for checking the nature and quality of work that a student is receiving.[8]

In assessing whether students have achieved the learning outcomes, PLT providers may require students or supervisors to undertake certain activities (e.g. keep a reflective journal), or review and monitor the workplace experience themselves.[9]

Despite these provisions, some stakeholders are concerned that in practice, parts of the legal profession continue to provide low-quality workplace experience that do not enable the students to attain the required learning outcomes and that some PLT providers certify these arrangements as satisfying the PLT Competency Standards. This raises operational questions about the current workplace experience certification process. There may also be an opportunity for PLT providers to leverage some of their existing powers under the Standards for PLT Workplace Experience.

For law firms, distinguishing between administrative and legal tasks can be difficult as there are tasks which could be classified in both categories, such as letter writing (pro forma or tailored), client billing, producing notes of meetings, inputting data into online probate or divorce applications etc.

The middle ground may be to amend the PLT Workplace Standards provide a clearer and more specific structure as to what areas are required, with supervisors progressively ticking off those areas as the student achieves or experiences them. This should be accompanied by

[5] LACC, Standards for PLT Workplace Experience, cl 8.
[6] LACC, Standards for PLT Workplace Experience, cl 6.
[7] LACC, Standards for PLT Workplace Experience, cl 5.
[8] LACC, Standards for PLT Workplace Experience, cl 8.
[9] LACC, Standards for PLT Workplace Experience, cl 5.

greater support and guidance for supervisors in this regard. The supervisor commitment could be recognised as meeting CPD requirements as an incentive.

The options for the body that should take responsibility for ensuring the adequacy of workplace experience are set out in the table below.

	Benefits	Risks / disadvantages
Option 1 PLT providers	• Some entity needs to certify that the workplace experience requirement has been satisfied. That role is currently undertaken by the PLT providers. Providers may also play a role in arranging the workplace experience. In that context, the PLT providers are closest to the coalface in playing an assessment and certification role. • PLT providers are required to comply with Uniform Standards • Has oversight from the admitting authorities during the accreditation process • PLT providers have existing mechanisms to inquire into and review the quality of workplace experience that can be leveraged further	• Variation between PLT providers may not ensure consistency of assessment across the sector
Option 2 Workplace supervisor (under guidelines provided)	• Assessment is done by the supervisor who has most knowledge of the workplace experience • The guidelines will provide a clear criterion against which students successfully complete their workplace experience • Legal profession has greater involvement and accountability in the development of entry-level lawyers • More important if, as suggested above, workplace experience prior to the PLT course (and thus prior to students establishing a relationship with a PLT provider) may be counted	• Lack of consistency • Could be a tick a box exercise • If onerous, it may discourage supervisors from taking on PLT students
Option 3 Workplace supervisors and the PLT providers both play a role – the former in certifying what amount and type of work has been done, and the latter in	• This maximises the benefits of options 1 and 2. • The regulatory burden on workplace supervisors need not be onerous, amounting to completion of a form. Simple versions of such forms are already used by many PLT providers.	• Variation between supervisors and PLT providers may not ensure consistency of assessment across the sector

	Benefits	Risks / disadvantages
checking and approving the sufficiency of the quantity and quality of the workplace experience		
Option 4 Admitting bodies in the states and territories	• Higher level of consistency than other options	• Resourcing may be expensive and administratively challenging

Recommendation
The recommendation is Option 3, which is a minor evolution of the current approach, and maximises the benefits of Options 1 and 2.

It would be desirable to provide workplace supervisors with more guidance on creating a valuable workplace experience by amending the PLT Standards for Workplace Experience to provide clearer tasks which they are able to tick off as the student experiences or achieves them during the workplace experience. This will be especially important if, as proposed above, workplace experience may be counted from prior to the commencement of the PLT course (and thus prior to students forming a relationship with a PLT provider).

Further stakeholder consideration may be required to identify the core legal tasks that students should complete during their workplace experience.

Annexure I – Clinical Legal Education

1. What is clinical legal education?

Clinical legal education involves 'learning by doing and reflecting' through facilitated learning experiences. It may be defined as follows:

> Clinical legal education involves an intensive small group or solo learning experience in which each student takes on legal- or law-related tasks for a client (whether real or simulated) under the supervision of a supervisor (who is responsible to any clients for any legal practice work as a qualified legal practitioner). Structures enable each student to receive feedback on their contributions and to take the opportunity to learn from their experiences through reflecting on matters including their interactions with the client, their colleagues and their supervisor as well as the ethical dimensions of the issues raised and the impact of the law and legal processes.

What distinguishes clinical legal education from experiential education in other disciplines is the prominence of critical reflection, the focus on social justice and the nature of student supervision. Many disciplines involve single student or at most double student placements that appear akin to what legal educators identify as externship arrangements. Other disciplines (such as medicine, nursing and engineering) also involve student placements for longer periods, more intense placements (including full-time) as well as multiple placements across a student's degree studies.

The key differentiators in understandings of clinical legal education are the involvement of real clients, the supervision arrangements, links to classroom-based activities, focus on social justice and structured reflective practice.

There are many forms of clinical legal education that feature in the degree programs offered by Australian law schools. These include direct work with clients, providing information, advice and other services. Some law school clinics offer a general service, often in a community law setting. This has been the backbone of Australian clinical legal education since the first such program began at Monash in 1975. Some clinics specialise in providing services in a particular area of law while others offer advice and assistance across a range of areas. Other than the University of Newcastle and a very small program at UNSW, Australian PLT programs have not developed in-house clinical legal education offerings.

Clinical legal education can also involve placements with external organisations, particularly law firms. While external placements undertaken by law students are similar to the Workplace Experience completed by PLT students, they tend to take place on a part-time basis over a semester whereas many PLT students complete their 15-day minimum workplace experience full-time across 3 weeks. This provides greater opportunities for students to engage with their supervisor(s).

When they are well-designed, law school external placements enable learners to benefit from the dual supervision of their field supervisor and their faculty advisor. The field supervisor focuses on the client and organisational dimensions of the extern's legal work. This can foster learner self-reliance and independence. The law school supervisor can focus on the integration of theory, practice, and substantive law as well as fostering the development of reflective practices.

The variability of external placements makes the preparation of both supervisors and students particularly important. Law schools and PLT programs should provide external supervisors with advice on what constitutes effective supervision of students together with frameworks to help them implement that supervision advice. Well-run law school programs already do this.

Placement students need to appreciate that their opportunities to assume responsibility for legal work on behalf of clients are likely to be limited. They also need to be realistic about the access they can expect to have to their supervisor.

Community legal education work (known in some countries as street law or public legal education) is also recognised as a form of clinical legal education. It involves students presenting legal information to audiences in schools and community organisations.

In the early-2000s, the College of Law (England & Wales) introduced a form of clinical legal education as part of its PLT equivalent, the Legal Practice Course (**LPC**). Streetlaw, a form on interactive community legal education, was developed by the College (together with the Citizenship Foundation and the law firm Eversheds) as part of a broader suite of *pro bono* activities for LPC students. Their model built on Street Law initiatives in that USA (1970s) and South Africa (1980s). In 2002/03, more than 700 LPC students participated in the program.

Some Australian law schools have committed substantial time and resources to developing distinctive clinical legal education programs. These include Monash University, Murdoch University, the University of New South Wales and the University of Newcastle. The Newcastle Professional Program prepares undergraduates for immediate admission. Since 2018, Monash has guaranteed all commencing students the opportunity to participate in its clinical legal education program. More than 90% of Monash Law students choose to participate in the program, with more than 700 student places offered each year. UNSW provides all law students with a brief clinical experience as part of its legal ethics unit. Flinders Law School also includes clinical legal education as a core component of its curriculum.

Community law and family law remain important areas for those law schools that partner with or operate their own community legal centre (**CLC**). Other specialist clinics are increasingly prominent, particularly in areas involving human rights, street law and various forms of technology. Another area of growth in clinics has been in creating standalone 'law reform clinics' in which students engage in systemic law reform either through law reform submission writing, or in public interest litigation. Rather than involving strategic and public interest litigation, policy clinics conduct research for external organisations, such as charities and NGOs with the aim of influencing policy and law reform. They enable a strong social justice focus and can generate research outputs and external engagement in one activity. Further, they can be supervised by experienced researchers who do not have to be a legal practitioner. Clinical methods should be recognised as having particular value in enabling PLT students to learn about working with and serving clients, problem solving, ethical and reflective practice, professional identity development, collaboration and commitment to social justice and the rule of law. Clinical methods are also well-suited to the development of many practice-related skills, including many of the skills listed in the skills schedule in Appendix F of the Admissions Committee/LACC Consultation Paper.

What is done in a clinical program should involve active learning with client responsibility, supervision focused on student development, a social justice orientation, structured reflective practice and a classroom component that assists students to learn from their experiences, with a focus on ethics and professional identity. If students participate for academic credit, there should also be robust assessment of student work and development.

2. The role of clinical legal education in PLT

Clinical legal education is distinct from PLT, however, the workplace experience that students acquire through prior clinical legal education experience during the law degree may currently be credited as workplace experience for the purpose of any *additional* PLT workplace experience requirements.

If the proposed reform to count prior workplace experience undertaken during the law degree for the purpose of satisfying the minimum workplace requirement is progressed, this would mean that prior clinical legal education could contribute to satisfying this requirement. The Standards for PLT Workplace Experience will still apply to ensure that a PLT provider is satisfied that the student has achieved the required learning outcomes before certifying that the student has satisfied the PLT Competency Standards requirements.

3. Opportunities to integrate clinical methods in PLT programs

Time spent learning in a well-structured clinical legal education program is valuable in developing effective, ethical and reflective professionals. Clinical supervisors focus on developing the skills and professional identity of their supervisees. Clinical and other experiential learning methods are used extensively in the development of practitioners in most professional disciplines.

The use of clinical pedagogy is important given the limited capacity of PLT students to make a significant contribution to the work of the legal practice hosting them for their minimum 15-day workplace experience. Such a period is arguably too short for host practitioners with a range of client and business responsibilities to engage deeply with each PLT student.

Links between clinical legal education and the minimum 15-day workplace experience should be developed, recognising these experiences are complementary forms of professional education. Externships (where the learner works with a supervisor within a host organisation) are recognised as a valuable model of clinical legal education and the pedagogy of this type of learning is well-developed.

Opportunities to incorporate clinical education methods into PLT programs may include:

- *Developing clinical legal education programs for PLT students.* Clinical methods are engaging for students and contribute to the development of important capabilities. Clinical programs can also make important contributions to addressing access to justice concerns. Existing workplace experience arrangements for PLT students would be enhanced by program designers incorporating insights and practices from the extensive clinical legal education literature on external placements.

- *Working with existing clinical legal education programs*. Australian Clinical legal education is recognised as an international leader and members of the Australian Clinical Legal E Network (**ACLEN**) are well-placed to contribute to developing clinic-based opportunities for PLT students. The ACLEN submission to the National Consultation clearly outlines the experience and imagination its members can contribute to the development of greater clinical legal education opportunities for PLT participants. Many current Australian clinical legal education programs involve close supervision of students providing authentic legal services to clients in ways that enable the development of effective, ethical and reflective professional practice skills. There are models that could see PLT students contribute to the provision of services to clients. This is especially the case where the PLT student has already participated in the host clinical unit as part of their LLB/JD studies.

  While not suggested in the Australian context, as one point of comparison, in South Africa, the *Attorneys Act* permits candidate attorneys to do their mandatory placement in an accredited law clinics and appear in court. The candidate attorneys are used as junior supervisors in some clinical legal education programs and are allocated firms of LLB students to supervise.

- *Partnering with existing legal service providers*. Partnership models and collaborative frameworks are central to the work of most clinical programs. Australian clinical legal education programs have maintained a strong relationship with CLCs that has informed clinical pedagogy that emphasises social justice, reflective practice and the wellbeing of law students and legal professionals. There are also multiple examples of clinicians working internationally, contributing to development of new and emerging clinical models and programs.

  PLT providers could also look to partner with the *pro bono* sections of major law firms, subject to capacity to take on additional students noting existing work experience programs and record levels of pro bono participation.[1]

- *RRR extensions.* Funding might also be sought from governments to support clinical legal education partnership models with legal service providers, including sole or small law practices in rural, regional and remote (**RRR**) Australia, given difficulties experienced by RRR practitioners in securing high-quality graduates and RRR communities experiencing 'postcode justice' gaps as a result.

- *Effective integration* of the clinical legal education experience with the other components of a PLT program. Clinical methodologies can make a more substantial contribution to legal education as part of an integrated and effectively sequenced program than on a stand-alone basis.

- Looking to use of *technology* to serve those who otherwise miss out. Australian clinical legal education programs have experience with the use of various forms of technology to enhance and extend the services provided to clients. The focus should be on accessible technologies rather than high-tech approaches.

In addition to the concerns raised during the national consultation about the scalability of clinical legal education, the strategic constraints are identified below:

- *Resourcing* – The ACLEN submission emphasises the resource-intensive nature of effective clinical legal education. The resources needed to effectively coordinate the meaningful participation of students are significant. Successful Australian clinical legal education programs have built their capacity through bringing together resources from their law schools, their universities, the legal assistance sector, government departments, philanthropists, the practising profession and the judiciary. The history of Australian clinical legal education shows the potential of such collaborations, especially with CLCs.

- *Program duration* – While short placements can be a useful primer for longer experiences, they do not enable the deep development of professional skills and reflective practices. Learners need time to become familiar with workplace systems and processes and induction processes take time. The literature on professional practices also recognises the iterative nature of building professional capabilities.

- *Lack of accreditation* - Since 2014, the American Bar Association has required accredited law schools to enable all students to complete at least six credit hours of experiential courses before graduation. Students may satisfy this requirement through a law school-based clinic, an external placement or a simulation courses. There is no comparable requirement in Australia.

[1] Australian Pro Bono Centre, 'Culture of Pro Bono Work Prevails Among Australia's Large Law Firms', Media Release, 27 February 2025.

4. Conclusion

Once it is clear how clinical legal education can practicably contribute to PLT, it is then possible to develop suitable clinic-based work for participants to do. Supervision can then be structured to support participants and ensure the quality of the services provided. Supervision requirements for participating legal practitioner supervisors need to be feasible, straight-forward and well-supported. Students can engage in skills development, working with and serving clients, problem solving, ethical and reflective practice, professional identity development, collaboration and commitment to social justice and the rule of law. Clinical legal education can complement the existing educational methods used in PLT programs.

Standards will be important to supporting effective clinical legal education. The Best Practices in Australian Clinical Legal Education Project produced 2 reports and a set of Best Practices that were unanimously adopted by the Council of Australian Law Deans in November 2012. Those Best Practices provide a useful starting point for the development of standards for clinical legal education in PLT settings. They cover course design, the learning of law in context, supervision, reflective student learning, assessment, staffing and infrastructure.

Annexure J – Supervised Workplace Training

1. About Supervised Workplace Training

In all Australian jurisdictions, one of the requirements for admission is the completion of an approved practical legal training (**PLT**) component. Currently, for most people seeking admission this will involve the completion of an approved PLT course.

In Victorian and Queensland, prospective legal practitioners can instead undertake engage in Supervised Workplace Training (**SWT**) in a legal office as a way of completing PLT. SWT is known as Supervised Legal Training (**SLT**) in Victoria and Supervised Traineeship in Queensland. Additionally, in the Northern Territory, articles of clerkship remains an option (subject to certain requirements).[1]

The Law Admissions Consultative Committee's Practical Legal Training Competency Standards for Entry-Level Lawyers (**PLT Competency Standards**) set out how the competencies that are to be developed during PLT can be developed via SWT.[2]

SWT is a period of at least 12 months of full-time supervised work with specific training in an approved legal practice, similar to articles of clerkship. In some jurisdictions, the alternative pathway of SWT is available to satisfy the requirement for completion of the PLT requirement. SWT is potentially available in Uniform Law jurisdictions under Rule 6(2)(b) of the Legal Profession Uniform Admission Rules 2015 (**Uniform Admission Rules**). However, Rule 9(1) allows the relevant Board in each Uniform Law jurisdiction to determine whether SLT may be undertaken for the purposes meeting the PLT prerequisite in Rule 6(2)(b). To date, only the Victorian Legal Admissions Board has made such a determination.

In Queensland, supervised traineeships are available under Rule 7A of the Supreme Court (Admission) Rules 2004 (Qld) (**Queensland Rules**).

2. Current uptake

As identified in the Admissions Committee/LACC Consultation Paper, the number of students who choose to fulfil their PLT requirements through SWT is relatively small.[3]

Victoria

In 2024-2025, 123 SLT trainees were admitted in Victoria (out of a total of 2,126 admissions).[4] This represents approximately six per cent of admissions. However, there was a 23 per cent decrease in SLT admissions in Victoria the 2024-25 year as compared to 2023-24.

In 2024-2025, trainees were admitted from 42 law firms. Firms with the largest cohorts were HWL Ebsworth (23), Arnold Bloch Leibler (13), Thomson Geer (9), the Victorian Government Solicitors Office (8), and the Department of Families Fairness and Housing (7). 28 firms had just one trainee.

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[1] See rule 5(1)(b)(i) and generally Part 6, Legal Profession Admission Rules 2007 (NT).
[2] LACC, Practical Legal Training Competency Standards for Entry-Level Lawyers, (2015, revised 2017). See eg, cl 4.1(c), requiring in the case of SWT the equivalent of at least 12 months' full-time work which includes a minimum of at least 90 hours' coursework.
[3] Admissions Committee and Law Admissions Consultative Committee, Consultation Paper: Review of Practical Legal Training (April 2026) 22.
[4] Victorian Legal Admissions Board, Annual Report 2024-2025 (November 2025) 20-21.

Queensland

In 2024-2025 in Queensland, 34 supervised trainees were admitted (out of a total of 1,338 admission applications). [5] This represents approximately 2.5 per cent of admission applications. The Queensland Legal Practitioners Admissions Board considered 28 applications from firms for registration under the supervised traineeship scheme.

3. Requirements and oversight

In each state where SWT is available, the relevant Board is responsible for overseeing the SWT scheme, including approving training plans, accrediting coursework providers, setting requirements and providing guidance and assistance to law firms and trainees.

The Guide for Supervised Legal Training published by the Victorian Legal Admissions Board provides further information about the requirements and relevant processes in Victoria.

Common requirements of SWT schemes in Victoria and Queensland are set out in the table below.

Elements of SWT	Victoria	Queensland
Supervisor qualifications and experience	Engaged in legal practice (or as a government, corporate, commercial or community legal officer) for at least 5 years. See Uniform Admission Rules, sch 3 cl 2.	An Australian legal practitioner who is a sole practitioner, or is a partner in a law firm: at least 3 years. An Australian legal practitioner, or a government legal officer: at least 5 years. See Queensland Rules, r 9C.
Number of trainees per supervisor	One trainee per supervisor. See Uniform Admission Rules, sch 3 cl 5.	Up to two trainees per supervisor depending on the firm type and number of eligible supervisors. See Queensland Rules, r 9F.
Training plan	A training plan must be executed on behalf of the employer and by the trainee. Uniform Admission Rules, sch 3 cl 9 sets out the requirements for the training plan. The training plan must be approved by the Board. See Uniform Admission Rules, sch 3 cl 5.	The law practice must have a written plan setting out how, over the traineeship period, the supervised workplace experience to be given. See Queensland Rules, r 9I(4).
Competencies	Subject to the coursework requirements, during SLT, the trainee must acquire appropriate understanding of, and competence in, each required element of the skills, values and practice areas set out in sch 2 of the Uniform Admission Rules which (at pt 4)	The relevant competency standards are the PLT Competency Standards. See Queensland Rules, rr 7, 7A and 9AA.

[5] Queensland Legal Practitioners Admission Board, Annual Report 2024-2025 (September 2025) 12-13; Admissions Committee and Law Admissions Consultative Committee, Consultation Paper: Review of Practical Legal Training (April 2026) 22.

Elements of SWT	Victoria	Queensland
	picks up the PLT Competency Standards.	
Coursework	Through a course of instruction and assessment conducted by and accredited provider (90 hours), a trainee must acquire an appropriate understanding of, and competency in, Ethics and Professional Responsibility, Lawyer's Skills and the Risk Management element of Work Management and Business Skills (as set out in sch 2 which picks up the LACC PLT Competency Standards). See Uniform Admission Rules, sch 3 cl 6(1)(c) and 5. Can be done through Leo Cussen, College of Law, or in-house.	A trainee must satisfactorily complete at least 90 hours of programmed training approved by the board. Programmed training must include training in ethics. See Queensland Rules, r 9O. Can be done through QUT.
Diary	A trainee must keep a work diary. See Uniform Admission Rules, sch 3 cl 6(1)(d).	

4. Perspectives on Supervised Workplace Training

There appears to be little academic literature about SWT. However, in 2014, Jeff Giddings and Michael McNamara underlined the need for an enriched understanding of supervision in legal practice generally, calling for greater integration of supervision into the legal education framework and developing the supervisory relationship, including through training supervisors, and structured support around the supervisory relationship.[6]

The National PLT survey (March 2026) received responses from a very small number of graduates specifically on SWT. Those that did respond commonly reported that the employer supervised training was most valuable and highly relevant but found minimal value in the coursework.

In response to the LSC-LACC PLT Consultation Paper question 2.4 about retaining the option of Supervised Workplace Training as a way of completing PLT, the Victorian Legal Services Board responded positively:

> We support retaining Supervised Workplace Training … as a way of completing PLT. It provides structured learning in a real legal workplace, with supervision, practical experience and paid employment, and appears well aligned with the Committees' focus on practice readiness. In Victoria, however, access to SLT positions is limited and competitive, and the costs of supervision and training can be a barrier for some employers, particularly smaller firms. The Committees may wish to consider whether there are ways to better support or incentivise employers to offer supervised training positions.

The Victorian Legal Admissions Board also responded positively as follows:

[6] Jeff Giddings and Michael McNamara, 'Preparing future generations of lawyers for legal practice: what's supervision got to do with it?" (2014) 37(3) UNSW Law Journal 1226.

> Although individual responses to this question differed, with some support being expressed for a nationally consistent model of PLT alone and others seeking to retain SWT, it is the Board's experience as a 'gatekeeper' assessing SWT provider applications that SWT is a small but important part of the pre-admission training landscape. SWT enables medium to large law firms and agencies like the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office to provide a tailored 12-month program, rotating through departments and providing mentoring and professional development opportunities. SWT is also utilised by small suburban and regional law firms, offering graduates an opportunity to develop legal practice skills in their local environment.

The Law Council of Australia has received feedback from both the Law Institute of Victoria (**LIV**) and the Queensland Law Society supporting SWT's retention. The LIV supports maintaining the option for graduates to undertake SLT as a way to complete PLT. Although only approximately six per cent of newly admitted Victorians have the opportunity to pursue this method, the LIV believes it only adds benefit to afford graduates and firms the additional choice of an alternative admission pathway with robust regulatory oversight.

The Queensland Law Society-Bond University The Job Readiness of Law Graduates and Entry Level Solicitors in Private Practice Final Report (2022)[7] (**QLS-Bond Report**) included some reflections from survey respondents about SWT (or Supervised Traineeships). One early career lawyer commented that:

> When I look at the people who I work with, who have gone through that supervised period of, I think it's 18 months of structured sort of traineeship, they're far more well-rounded practitioners by the time of admission than I was… their development is so much more comprehensive than I think people who come through the PLT program.

The QLS-Bond report included suggestions for financial incentives or fee relief to firms who provide placements or Supervised Traineeship to graduates to encourage and support members to take on graduates and undertake training.

Some employers that offer graduate roles including SWT have publicly commented on their choice to offer in-house supervised legal training, providing insight into employer's perspectives on SWT. These indicate that SWT programs can give graduates a strong practical start to their careers without imposing further financial burden.[8]

5. Reform options

Three broad options are apparent in relation to the availability of SWT as an alternative way to complete PLT:

1. availability remains unchanged (i.e. Victoria and Queensland only)
2. availability is expanded nationally or to additional jurisdictions. Notably, the necessary regulation is already available in the Uniform Admission Rules in New South Wales and Western Australia, and would only require relevant Board approval.
3. availability is removed.

If options (1) or (2) are ultimately selected, consideration could also be given to encouraging greater uptake of SWT as an alternative way to complete PLT. The limited available public evidence suggests that SWT is broadly considered by participants and supervisors to be a highly valuable form of training. Therefore, it may be useful to consider whether uptake should

[7] Queensland Law Society, *The Job Readiness of Law Graduates and Entry Level Solicitors in Private Practice: Final Report*, 1 December 2022, 69

[8] See eg, 'Beyond PLT: Why Bennett & Philip Is Investing in Supervised Traineeships', 24 November 2025, <https://www.bennettphilp.com.au/blog/beyond-plt-why-bennett-philp-is-investing-in-supervised-traineeships >.

be promoted. An increase in the uptake of SWT could assist firms in rural, regional and remote (RRR) areas to better recruit and retain graduate lawyers. The option of SWT could also benefit people for whom in-person PLT coursework requirements may not be possible due to remoteness, disability or caring responsibility. Steps to increase additional uptake could include:

- *Raising awareness* through additional materials and communications with legal practices and members of the profession.

- *Providing further support to SWT supervisors.* Consideration could be given to ways to better support or incentivise employers to offer supervised training positions including guidance material, free Continuing Professional Development and other incentives (including as proposed by other PLT Conference Preparatory Working Groups). VLSB+C supervision materials may provide a useful template.[9]

- *Developing options to support take-up by RRR and small firms.* For example, consideration could be given to options to allow supervisees to work across several firms (and additional practice areas) under multiple supervisors.

If SWT uptake is sought to be expanded, consideration should be given to enhancing quality assurance arrangements, including to ensure that relevant Boards are equipped and resourced to oversee the program and assess the quality of proposed SWT arrangements. This is important in ensuring high-quality work experience is provided to participants and avoiding any potential risks of exploitation. To answer this question, further work would be first required to understand how the relevant Board in each state where SWT is available currently oversees the SWT scheme, including approving training plans, accrediting coursework provides, setting requirements and providing guidance and assistance to law firms and trainees.

Recommendation

SWT is already permitted under the PLT Competency Standards. Whether or not it should be made available (and promoted) in practice is a question for regulatory authorities in each jurisdiction.

The recommendation is that SWT be retained as a means of satisfying the PLT prerequisite, and that regulatory authorities in each jurisdiction be encouraged to consider facilitating it occurring in practice.

6. Impact of other PLT reforms on SWT

Further work may be required to understand the impact that other PLT reforms may have on SWT and reforms to it (if any). Notably, consideration will need to be given to the following:

- *Whether the content of the SWT will need to change.* The competencies required to be developed during SWT are currently set out in the PLT Competency Standards which also apply to PLT Courses. Therefore, any change to the PLT Competency Standards will also require consideration of the content of SWT.

[9] Victorian Legal Services Board + Commissioner, Supervision Plan Template.

  - The QLS-Bond report included suggestions for financial incentives or fee relief to firms who provide placements or SWT to graduates to encourage and support members to take on graduates and undertake training.[10]
  - Feedback has been received indicating that small firms, particularly in RRR locations, are dissuaded from offering SWT due to the requirement in the PLT Competency Standards to provide training across five practice areas of legal practice.
  - This requirement could be revisited to enhance take up of this option of admission training.

- *The duration of SWT.* SWT is currently ordinarily completed over the course of 12 months. This is not vastly dissimilar to the length of most PLT programs. Any changes to the duration of PLT, may therefore require reconsideration of the length of SWT. This will also be linked to any changes to the content to be covered and competencies to be developed.

- *PALT requirements.* If PALT is progressed, a question arises about whether SWT students should be required to complete PALT.

- This may depend on any decisions regarding the duration and content of SWT and how comparable it is to PLT.

[10] Queensland Law Society and Bond University, 'The Job Readiness of Law Graduates and Entry Level Solicitors in Private Practice Final Report' (1 December 2022).

DISCUSSION PAPER 5

ENHANCED POST-ADMISSION TRAINING

1. Introduction

In earlier stages of the consultation about reforms to practical legal training (**PLT**), structured post-admission legal training (**PALT**) was proposed. PALT was proposed to include 15 hours per year in addition to continuing professional development (**CPD**), which would replace the practice area study currently incorporated in PLT (as discussed below).

In undertaking its work, this Working Group has taken this opportunity to consider the options for training in the post-admission period more broadly and has not proceeded on the assumption of implementing any previously considered options.

This Paper is intended to support the discussion of options for post-admission legal training at the national PLT Consultation Conference. It sets out the key policy, regulatory and practical issues that would need to be considered before a decision is made about new training requirements for early career lawyers.

This Paper does not ultimately make a recommendation on whether PALT (as originally proposed) or some other form of enhanced training post-admission should be introduced. Instead, it is intended to support further discussion by considering the current post-admission training framework, and various potential ways of enhancing this.

The Working Group notes that any form of enhanced post-admission training will need to take account of any changes to the core PLT course.

2. Background

Current training for early career lawyers

After admission, Australian legal practitioners are required to undertake mandatory CPD.

Generally, this is 10 hours of training per year in the following identified areas (noting that some jurisdictions may have additional requirements):

a) ethics and professional responsibility
b) practice management and business skills
c) professional skills
d) substantive law.

There are no additional training requirements imposed on new practitioners.

Newly admitted lawyers are also subject to a period of supervised legal practice, commonly for a two-year period. The requirements for supervised legal practice and opportunities to enhance that have been considered by a separate working group.

As previously acknowledged, the results of recent surveys of the legal profession show that PLT is not adequately preparing early career lawyers for practice.

In considering how to improve this system, the question arises as to whether there would be value in introducing structured post-admission legal training for early career lawyers,

focused on their area or areas of practice. This may replace all or part of the specific practice area training currently required in PLT.

This training may also provide an opportunity to embed reflective practice across the profession. Reflective practice can assist early career lawyers to identify gaps in their knowledge, recognise ethical and professional challenges, learn from supervision and feedback and apply lessons from experience to future matters.

Developing additional training requirements in the period immediately after admission may also help to address risks that can arise for early career lawyers, their supervisors, clients and the profession more broadly. These may include inconsistent supervision and training experiences, poor ethical or professional decision making, consumer harm arising from inadequate preparation and reduced public trust and confidence in the legal profession and the administration of justice.

In considering the potential role and design of post-admission training, the Working Group considered training in other professions across Australia.

The Australasian Professional Legal Education Community Ltd prepared a comparative analysis of vocational training across medicine, psychology, occupational therapy, accounting, engineering and law. A comparison of Australian professional training pathways is provided at **Annexure A.** It indicates that many professions recognise professional capability as something developed progressively over time, through a combination of formal education, supervised workplace experience, mentoring and assessment. Medicine, psychology and occupational therapy place significant emphasis on authentic workplace exposure under supervision, while accounting demonstrates that professional formation can continue beyond formal study through structured mentoring and workplace development.

Overview of feedback provided to the national consultation

The PALT model that was set out in the Consultation Paper prepared by the Legal Services Council's Admissions Committee and the Law Admissions Consultative Committee (**LACC**) would require newly admitted lawyers to complete 15 hours of PALT in each of their first two years of practice, made up of two specialist 7.5 hour courses, plus reading, each year for two years. The training could be delivered in a single day or split across two or three evening sessions.

This would remove practice area study from PLT and place it after admission, when early career lawyers would be able to undertake training in a practice area that is relevant to them. However, the proposed 15 hours of PALT would be a significant reduction in the length of time that students are currently required to spend studying practice area electives during PLT.

A significant amount of helpful and insightful feedback was received from the profession during the national consultation. The majority of stakeholders who responded appeared to support the introduction of post-admission training, in some form. Larger law firms and government agencies who already deliver tailored graduate programs expressed an interest in becoming accredited providers and considered that their existing programs could likely be adapted to meet new requirements.

Feedback from the community legal sector highlights the importance of ensuring early career lawyers are well prepared for practice, particularly given that newly admitted lawyers in community legal settings may undertake client facing work from an early stage.

Stakeholders also provided feedback on the content that should be taught during post-admission training. For example, some stakeholders considered that post-admission training might provide an opportunity to include important training on cultural competency and trauma-informed practice.

However, some stakeholders raised concerns that the proposed model may impose additional cost and operational burden on law practices, including the time required for compulsory training, pre-reading and assessment.

Other questions and concerns about the proposed model included:

a) the need for the reforms to be evidence-based and for all training to have a clear purpose and learning outcomes

b) whether the proposed duration (15 hours) was sufficient, or whether a longer duration was appropriate

c) whether all newly admitted lawyers would be able to access high-quality PALT, including those living and working in regional, rural, remote and very remote areas, and those with caring responsibilities

d) who would bear the ultimate cost of delivering PALT and whether that would have any unintended negative consequences on career opportunities for newly admitted lawyers

e) whether any face-to-face requirement would create additional travel, accommodation and access barriers, particularly for practitioners in rural, regional and remote locations

f) whether the introduction of PALT would limit the type of work performed by newly admitted lawyers, for example, appearing before courts and tribunals or working directly with clients

g) whether regulators (particularly in smaller jurisdictions) would have the capacity to oversee changes to the scheme and to accredit and monitor PALT providers

h) whether accreditation and administration could be simplified by using existing PLT accreditation bodies and providers

i) the potential need for legislative change to enact any changes to the scheme applicable to practising certificates

j) how PALT requirements would be enforced in respect of the groups of solicitors who are exempt from the requirement to hold practising certificates

k) whether the imposition of PALT would affect Australian legal practitioners' eligibility for registration and admission in other countries (such as New Zealand).

The above feedback has informed the considerations of this Working Group.

3. General principles for post-admission training

This Working Group considers that there are some general principles that might inform plans for any introduction of enhanced post-admission training. They are set out below.

a) Legal education is not a finite task that should be completed by university students or graduates and then never revisited. It is a career-long endeavour. All legal practitioners should be learning and developing their skills as their legal career progresses.

b) The components of legal education are: gaining knowledge, acquiring skills and developing and practising the "know-how" of daily legal practice. There is a significant degree of overlap between these components and they are not necessarily gained sequentially. For example, a practitioner might learn research skills at university and during PLT, but need to update those skills later in their career as technology changes (such as to accommodate the introduction of Artificial Intelligence (**AI**)).

c) Post-admission training ought to be primarily directed at learning and practising the "know-how" of daily legal practice. That is, early career lawyers undertaking post-admission training should be taught how to apply the knowledge and skills that they have learned during their university courses and PLT so that they can deliver legal services to their clients in an ethical and professional way.

d) Like all legal education, post-admission training should incorporate sufficient flexibility to enable a practitioner to learn content that is going to be of practical and meaningful benefit to them in their specific circumstances. Whilst there is some content that all early career lawyers should be required to learn, post-admission training should enable courses to be developed that are future-focussed, meet the changing learning and development needs of the profession, and will be seen by early career lawyers (and their supervisors) as being worthwhile and helpful.

e) Post-admission training should be taught through a practice-area specific lens, where possible. Early career lawyers practising in family law should not be required to undertake post-admission training units that focus on banking and finance, and vice versa.

f) However, the practice areas offered ought not be the subject of a closed list (unlike the practice group electives that can currently be offered during PLT). Post-admission training providers ought have significant freedom and flexibility to design courses that meet the needs of the profession, as long as those courses meet accreditation and delivery requirements.

g) Any post-admission training scheme should be designed and implemented in such a way that new training providers can participate, along with the important role that is expected to be played by existing training providers. It is anticipated that large law firms, legal industry bodies, government agencies, the community legal sector and universities might all be incentivised to obtain accreditation to deliver post-admission training to particular groups of early career lawyers.

h) It is important that everyone can access post-admission training, regardless of individual circumstances such as living in a remote location, living with a disability or having carer commitments. For that reason, post-admission training should not be required to be delivered "face-to-face", although it is acknowledged that this may be preferable for many courses, or at least synchronously (that is, "live") and must be interactive.

i) Post-admission training must be of sufficiently high standard so that the community can be satisfied that lawyers who complete post-admission training are competent to commence unsupervised legal practice. Again, the requirements for assessment should be flexible, as long as they can meet some requirements to ensure academic integrity.

4. Should some form of post-admission training be introduced?

As discussed earlier, the national PLT Consultation Paper proposed a model for PALT, which would require newly admitted lawyers to complete 15 hours of PALT in each of their first two years of practice, made up of two specialist 7.5-hour courses, plus reading, each year for two years. This would remove practice area study from PLT and place it after admission, when early career lawyers would be able to undertake training in a practice area that is relevant to them.

There are benefits and disadvantages to PALT as proposed as described below.

Benefits of PALT as proposed

PALT provides an important opportunity to deliver training that:

a) is specifically targeted to the learning and development needs of early career lawyers

b) is focussed on practice areas of interest, and real-world application, of individual lawyers

c) is closely aligned with a lawyer's actual area of practice, as newly admitted lawyers may be better placed to identify their training needs once they have commenced work

d) immediately applies to real matters and workplace contexts, which may support better retention of skills through practical application

e) is responsive to developments in legal practice, particularly where training is delivered by providers with direct experience in the relevant practice area

f) is delivered by a broader range of providers, including law firms, government agencies, law industry bodies, as well as existing PLT providers

g) is rigorously assessed to identify any challenges or areas of weakness for a particular practitioner at an early stage of their career

h) provides additional guidance and support opportunities for early career lawyers by bringing them into contact with experienced practitioners and mentors (outside of those based in their own firms) during their first two years of practice

i) assists early career lawyers to grow and develop a network of colleagues and peers at their own level within the legal profession generally, and within their particular area of practice.

Disadvantages and implementation risks

The introduction of PALT as proposed would raise a number of disadvantages and implementation risks, including:

a) imposing a disproportionate burden on small law practices, which may have less capacity than larger practices or government agencies to absorb costs and which have recently been affected by other significant regulatory changes

b) impacts on graduate employment opportunities if employers are deterred from hiring newly admitted lawyers who are required to complete additional training

c) broader access to justice implications, particularly if additional costs or restrictions reduce the willingness or capacity of employers to take on early career lawyers

d) regulatory complexity, including how PALT would be imposed, monitored and enforced and consequences for failing to complete PALT, particularly if linked to practising certificate conditions

e) potential risks to consumers and market transparency, particularly if early career lawyers hold a practising certificate before completing PALT and there is no clear way for clients or the public to know that they are completing required post-admission training

f) implementation challenges, including national implementation, who would deliver PALT, how providers would be approved, how courses would be assessed and whether training would be online or in person

g) cost uncertainty, including whether costs would fall on newly admitted lawyers, employers or providers, cost to regulatory authorities and whether any reduction in PLT costs would be offset by post-admission training expenses. Additionally, the cost of regulation may lead to an increase in practising certificate fees.

h) uneven access to high-quality training and supervision, particularly for newly admitted lawyers in smaller workplaces, regional or remote locations, or practice areas with fewer training options.

Alternatives to PALT as proposed

The Working Group offers the following alternatives to the introduction of PALT as proposed:

a) Retain the existing system, within which practice area specific training is delivered during PLT (that is, prior to admission).

   A benefit of this option is that lawyers complete a defined level of practical training before they are admitted and before they are issued a practising certificate. This may reduce consumer protection risks compared with moving additional training into the post-admission period. This would be simpler from a regulatory perspective because it would not require changes to permit the accreditation and monitoring of post-admission training providers or the auditing of whether practitioners have satisfied their requirements.

   However, the benefits of PALT (as outlined above) would not be achieved.

b) Require newly admitted lawyers to undertake enhanced CPD, which could be in the form of additional or different CPD.

   Enhanced CPD would be a new requirement specific to those lawyers in the first two years of practice. It could include additional CPD (e.g. an increase from the current 10-hour annual requirement) and/or different CPD topics with a focus on skills development and pre-reading. It would not be assessed.

However, the Working Group considered this option to be less favourable than PALT as proposed. It was observed that early career lawyers need tailored training and may benefit from assessment as part of the training. If some practical training is moved from pre-admission to post-admission, assessment is an important way to check the quality and effectiveness of the training. Increasing CPD hours alone may not provide the same assurance, because CPD is generally not assessed and is not targeted to the needs of early career lawyers. CPD may also be viewed by many lawyers as a compliance requirement, rather than as a structured learning pathway.

c) Amend the CPD rules and provide a more structured approach to CPD for early career lawyers.

   Under this model, early career lawyers would not simply self-select CPD activities based on availability, cost or convenience. Instead, they would be required to complete structured CPD that aligns with identified competencies and supports the skills, knowledge and professional competencies they are developing through supervised legal practice.

d) Introduce a targeted form of post-admission training, particularly if PLT is reduced in length but continues to include some practice areas of general application.

   Under this model, post-admission training would focus primarily on core legal skills and professional competencies relevant to early legal practice, such as ethics, professional responsibility, supervision, client communication, file management and practical legal judgement. Additional modules directed to particular practice areas or specialised skills could be made available on an optional basis (or mandatory basis), with selection guided by the lawyer's areas of practice or development needs. This approach may preserve some of the benefits of PALT as proposed.

e) Strengthen supervision requirements during the supervised legal practice period, rather than introducing a separate mandatory post-admission framework.

   This could include clearer expectations for supervisors, structured supervision plans. Reflective learning requirements, targeted guidance for early career lawyers and resources to support small firms in providing effective supervision.

   We note that this area has been looked at in more detail by a separate Working Group, and any changes could be done in a way that is complementary to the introduction of other training requirements.

5. Design considerations

Proposed duration and composition of post-admission training

If practice area specific content is reduced or removed from PLT, there is value in requiring early career lawyers to complete structured post-admission legal training during their period of supervised legal practice. PALT (or a form of it) would allow early career lawyers the opportunity to apply the skills and knowledge they have already learned to day-to-day practice of law in their chosen area of practice.

Under the proposal for PALT, early career lawyers would be required to complete 15 hours of PALT per year for two years, in addition to their annual CPD requirements.

In addition to scheduled training hours, early career lawyers would need to spend time completing any required reading, preparation, study and assessment tasks. While this would be dependent on the design, content and assessment requirements of each accredited PALT module, it would be reasonable to estimate that such time could be in the realm of 2-4 hours per year.

Introducing this training into the post-admission period will have an impact on the employer, with time away from practice and lost billing time, and potential direct costs (if employers pay for the cost of PALT for their employees).

One option to reduce the burden of PALT on early career lawyers and their employers is to remove or modify the CPD requirement during the period in which PALT is required. If the existing 10 hours of the annual CPD requirement were removed for newly admitted lawyers while completing PALT, PALT would represent an additional 5 hours of structured training per year (plus reading time).

It should be anticipated that a small number of practitioners will face personal or professional challenges and so will be unable to complete their training requirements within two years. An extended five-year period ought to be allowed to complete PALT requirements, if necessary. However, this would have an impact on the supervised legal practice period.

The Working Group has had detailed discussions about the possible duration and composition of post-admission training but does not express a concluded view on the appropriate length or configuration of any modules. The New South Wales proposal and current family law pilot (discussed further below) provide one example of how a practice area specific model could operate, noting that further consideration would be required before determining a national approach.

Accreditation of providers and content

It is proposed that post-admission training providers would be required to be accredited to provide for quality assurance.

Accreditation could be undertaken by the bodies that are responsible for issuing practising certificates, or by the admitting authorities who already have some expertise in accrediting law courses and PLT providers. The Working Group notes that this work would add new work for the relevant organisations would have resourcing implications for those bodies.

Accreditation standards would need to be developed for such providers. The responsible regulatory body would need to assess proposed providers against those standards for initial accreditation and then on an ongoing basis (e.g. at five-year intervals).

It is proposed that there should be mutual recognition of providers between jurisdictions, which would relieve some of the burden on smaller or more remote jurisdictions (such as the Northern Territory). This could be similar to current provisions for recognition of accredited law courses and PLT providers between jurisdictions.

It would be desirable that providers have a significant degree of flexibility in designing modules to ensure that they can meet the changing needs of the profession.

Early career lawyers should be free to choose between accredited providers, offering a range of modules. It is anticipated that some law firms (particularly larger firms) may mandate or encourage employed solicitors to undertake particular modules (particularly if those modules are offered by the firm or an aligned industry body). Lawyers may wish to

complete modules in different practice areas, depending on the nature of their practice / intended practice.

By way of example, The Law Society of New South Wales is currently piloting a Family Law PALT program structured around the life cycle of a family law file. The pilot provides a practical example of how post-admission training could be delivered through a practice-area specific lens, with sessions addressing dispute resolution, drafting settlement documents, commencing litigation, preparing for a first return date and a mock first return assessment. Initial feedback from participants was positive. Participants indicated that the content was practical and relevant, and they valued both the experienced practitioners delivering the program and its practical teaching approach. Similar practice-area specific programs may also be capable of development in areas such as criminal law, wills and estates, commercial litigation and First Nations law.

Delivery method

As discussed above, the Working Group considers it important that all early career lawyers can readily access quality post-admission training modules, regardless of their location, employment arrangement, caring commitments or accessibility requirements.

Post-admission training should be designed and delivered in a way that supports meaningful engagement, practical skills development and equitable access across the profession.

It should adopt a future-focused and flexible approach to delivery, majority synchronous and interactive, components of an online course may be taught asynchronously when appropriate (where it is knowledge based 'one way' communication of content).

No mandatory requirements should be set regarding when post-admission training should be delivered. That is, providers might offer a module in one block, or might offer it by way of, weekly evening sessions of 1-hour each. It is anticipated that some weekend intensive modules might be offered in appropriate areas, such as interlocutory advocacy (perhaps delivered by members of the Bar or judiciary), or family law mediation.

Similarly to the current Uniform Standards for PLT Courses and Providers,[1] it is proposed that providers must have an adequate and appropriate ratio of teaching staff to students.

Modules would also need to include provision for assessment tasks. For example, the interlocutory advocacy module described above might include an assessed, practical role play exercise at the end of the day.

Assessment

It is considered necessary that post-admission training should not simply be a participation exercise. Early career lawyers should be required, not only to demonstrate that they have attended it, but also that they have acquired the necessary competencies.

The precise mechanism by which content will be assessed is a matter that can be determined by each individual provider, subject to accreditation by reference to assessment standards. However, the Working Group considers that appropriate assessment must exhibit at least the following features:

[1] LACC, Uniform Standards for PLT Courses and Providers, Standard 1.5.

a) meaningful assessment tasks that enable the provider to confirm and certify that the trainee has successfully understood and mastered the majority of the content taught in the relevant module

b) reflective learning practices, being a requirement that a trainee reflect and report on their own learning and development and consider how they will implement what they have learnt in their own practice, such as through a learning journal, short written reflection, supervisor discussion or recorded reflection. This would encourage early career lawyers to think critically about their professional judgement, ethical obligations, communication style, client interactions and areas for further development

c) a high level of academic integrity, including required safeguards to prevent plagiarism, collusion and inappropriate use of AI

d) auditable record keeping and peer-review of marking and assessments.

The precise assessment tasks should be tailored to meet the learning objectives of the specific module. As discussed above, modules should be focussed on teaching skills and know-how, rather than delivering theoretical knowledge or information. Given that, the focus of assessment tasks should be on checking whether the lawyer can demonstrate understanding and mastery of the relevant skill. For example, if a criminal law unit teaches lawyers about bail laws in different jurisdictions, then a suitable assessment task might be for the student to prepare and present a mock bail application based on a supplied factual scenario. A civil litigation unit on pleadings might teach the “do’s and don’ts’ of pleadings, following which students might be assessed on their preparation or review of a supplied draft pleading.

The consequences of non-completion or repeated failure of assessment would need to be clearly addressed in the design of any framework. This is particularly important if practical competency development is moved from PLT into post-admission. Non-completion or repeated failure may raise questions about whether the lawyer should be permitted to progress to unrestricted practice and whether any practising certificate conditions or additional supervision conditions are appropriate.

Cost of PALT as proposed

Cost is a significant factor, and one which was mentioned by many stakeholders in the feedback received during the earlier consultation. The Working Group acknowledges that whilst the proposed changes to PLT may reduce the cost pre-admission, it is possible that the introduction of PALT may then increase the cost of training in early practice.

There are three reasons for concern in respect of cost:

a) The first concern is that whilst current PLT programs can be offered by some existing providers in a way that enables a participant to achieve a graduate diploma of legal practice and access FEE-HELP, shorter, standalone PALT modules would not qualify.

b) The second concern is that employers may face additional costs if they are expected to support newly admitted lawyers in undertaking PALT as proposed, particularly if PALT is undertaken in addition to mandatory CPD. Those costs may include course fees, supervision time and lost productive or billable time.

c) PALT as proposed may shift some of the cost of practical legal training from the pre-admission stage, where it is generally borne by students, to the post-admission stage,

where the cost may fall on employers, regulators, newly admitted lawyers or the profession more broadly.

These costs would arise in an environment where many law practices are already managing significant operating pressures, including compliance obligations, insurance costs, accommodation costs, salary expectations, technology investment and the cost of delivering legally aided or low margin work. The impact may be particularly acute for small practices, which may have less capacity than larger practices or government agencies to absorb training costs, provide supervision time or release employees from client work.

There may also be broader workforce impacts. If the cost and administrative burden makes small firms less willing or able to employ newly admitted lawyers, this could reduce entry-level employment opportunities, particularly in suburban, regional and rural practices. Over time, this may affect workforce renewal, succession planning and access to legal services in areas where recruitment and retention are already challenging.

The broader costs of establishing, accrediting and regulating PALT as proposed also needs to be considered. Those regulatory costs may ultimately be passed on to lawyers, employers or the profession more broadly.

The Working Group has identified the following options that may mitigate the costs of undertaking PALT:

a) excuse newly admitted lawyers from mandatory CPD requirements while they are undertaking PALT. If CPD requirements are to be reduced or removed during post-admission training, consideration may need to be given to ensuring that the mandatory CPD categories are incorporated into content.

b) large law firms and government agencies with existing graduate programs could deliver post-admission training to their early career lawyers at a lower cost than what they currently pay for their law graduates to undertake PLT with existing providers

c) large law firms may could offer places in their courses to participants from community legal centres as part of their community service and pro bono programs

d) existing PLT providers could be encouraged (and would likely be incentivised) to investigate ways to package PLT and post-admission modules in a way that will likely meet the requirements for an Australian Qualifications Framework program that is eligible for FEE-HELP

e) practice-area specific membership bodies could deliver tailored courses with content delivered by experienced practising or retired lawyers at a relatively low cost to attendees

f) existing training providers could provide scholarships and other support or assistance to facilitate participation in post-admission training by economically disadvantaged early career lawyers.

6. Regulatory requirements

Regulatory powers will be required to establish the authorising environment for post-admission training and a range of associated compliance issues. The mechanism for establishing the authorising environment will depend on the scope of the changes but could be amendments to primary legislation and/or rule changes.

Given the training would take place after admission, it could not be required or regulated by amendment to LACC documents. Implementing the framework would likely require either:

a) amendment to primary legislation (to impose a mandatory condition on practising certificates to require completion of post-admission training before an unrestricted practising certificate may be issued).

b) amendment to the CPD Rules. In Uniform Law jurisdictions the CPD Rules are developed by the Law Council of Australia. In non-Uniform Law jurisdictions, these rules are generally the remit of the local law society.

The Working Group notes that moving some legal education requirements into the early years of practice after admission may raise regulatory and licensing issues. Once a person has been admitted and issued a practising certificate, regulators may have limited options to respond to non-completion of required training. Any post-admission training model would need to set out the regulatory and licensing consequences of non-completion.

Regulators (potentially licensing authorities but this could also be admitting authorities, or a combination of both) would need to build new regulatory capability (e.g. accreditation and regulation of providers) or expand current capability for the new requirements which will require additional resources to implement and introduce associated regulatory costs.

One administratively simpler option may be to permit existing PLT providers to deliver accredited post-admission courses, with those courses accredited by the body that currently accredits PLT providers in the relevant jurisdiction. This approach allows jurisdictions to build on existing accreditation processes and expertise, rather than requiring regulators to develop new accreditation infrastructure.

To support this, legal profession legislation may require additional provisions or powers for regulators that:

a) require completion of post-admission training as a condition of practice for newly admitted lawyers (noting there are differing views about the extent to which discretionary conditions can be used to require the completion of this)

b) empower regulators to monitor compliance (for example, auditing requirements similar to those that currently exist for CPD)

c) provide clarity on how completion is recognised and evidenced, including the consequences for practitioners who fail assessments multiple times or fail to complete the training (what does this mean for unrestricted practice and/or suitability)

d) provide additional consumer protection mechanisms to provide transparency to clients where practitioners are still to complete all post-admission requirements.

e) establish links between post-admission training, supervised legal practice requirements and CPD requirements.

Key threshold regulatory questions may include:

a) defining which practitioners are subject to restrictions

b) identifying options to impose the requirement for categories of lawyers who are exempt from the requirement to hold a practising certificate2

c) specifying regulator powers to impose and remove those restrictions, including potential for exemptions and/or recognition of prior learning (if appropriate)

d) establishing enforcement mechanisms and offences for non-compliance, including potentially for employers who do not provide sufficient capacity for employee practitioners to be able to complete their requirements

e) clarifying the impact of assessments on practice restrictions and how those restrictions are communicated to clients.

Compulsory post-admission training will create new regulatory functions around oversight and accreditation that are not currently within the remit of licensing bodies. New legislative powers would likely be needed to:

a) accredit providers

b) approve curriculum and assessment standards

c) monitor provider performance

d) suspend or revoke accreditation where standards are not met

e) clarify licensing implications of accreditation/revocation of accreditation, e.g. what happens if a lawyer is undertaking a course that has its accreditation revoked and any licensing implications.

Other regulatory considerations include:

a) details about the costs of administering the scheme including whether the costs are shared across the profession (e.g. via a surcharge/levy on all practising certificate), borne by individual practitioners through an additional regulatory fee or borne by law practices employing early career lawyers

b) information sharing powers between regulators and providers and between jurisdictions in relation to post-admission training providers across jurisdictions

c) subordinate instruments such guidance, rules, or directions to flesh out further detail

d) administrative decision-making and review rights

e) compliance and enforcement provisions

f) transitional arrangements.

As identified throughout this paper, there is a need to consider options to reduce the regulatory burden of post-admission training, particularly given the potential impact of a structured regulatory model on small jurisdictions such as the Northern Territory. Options that could be explored include: a CPD style post-admission obligation, mutual recognition

[2] See for example: *Judiciary Act 1903* (Cth) s 55E; *Director of Public Prosecutions Act 1983* (Cth) s 16; *Legal Profession Act 2006* (ACT) s 16; Legal Profession Regulations 2018 (Tas) cl 41.

of post-admission training completion, certification by accredited providers and arrangements that support smaller jurisdictions to manage the regulatory impacts.

7. International impacts

Introducing compulsory post-admission training with an additional practising certificate condition may have unintended consequences for newly admitted lawyers seeking to work overseas. In some jurisdictions, overseas qualified lawyers may be required to demonstrate that they hold a current practising certificate or have unrestricted rights to practise in their home jurisdiction. If a lawyer's Australian practising certificate is subject to post-admission training related conditions, they may only be eligible for a practising certificate with equivalent or additional conditions overseas and may face uncertainty in having their practising status recognised.

The requirement may also affect overseas qualified lawyers seeking admission in Australia. Overseas admitted lawyers who are newly admitted in Australia may need to complete post-admission training before being eligible for an unrestricted practising certificate. Further consideration would need to be given to whether this applies to overseas qualified lawyers from other jurisdictions, who are practising in Australia.

8. Discussion questions for the Conference

The following questions are intended to guide Conference discussion.

a) Is there value in introducing a more structured form of post-admission training for early career lawyers? If so, what capabilities should that training be focused on, for example, general professional skills, specific practice area skills or substantive legal knowledge?

b) What do you think would be the best way of delivering post-admission training? What are the potential benefits, barriers and implementation considerations associated with the different delivery options?
   - PALT, as proposed by NSW Legal Profession Admission Board
   - Enhanced CPD (additional and different CPD)
   - More structured approach to CPD
   - Brief or targeted form of PALT
   - Strengthened supervision requirements

   Please take into account the combined impact for students and the combined impact for small to medium firms of whatever option is preferred.

Annexures

Annexure A	Comparison of Australian Professional Training Pathways

Annexure A – Comparative Australian Professional Training Pathways

Profession	Additional Professional Training After Degree	Workplace Experience Requirement	Supervision and Mentoring	Assessment Approach	Professional Status Achieved	Structured Postgraduate Training Required Before Independent Practice
Law (Current PLT)	PLT prior to admission	Limited workplace experience component	Placement supervision where undertaken	Competency-based assessment against entry-level standards	Admission as Lawyer	7-10 months pre-Admission
Medicine	PGY1 Internship + PGY2 Prevocational Training	94 weeks supervised practice	Structured multi-layer supervision (term, clinical and day-to-day supervisors)	Workplace-based assessment, Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs), longitudinal review	General Registration then progression to specialty training	5-10 years
Psychology	Internship or Masters-based professional pathway	44-week internship plus prescribed supervised practice	Approved supervisor mandatory	National Psychology Examination, competency sign-off, case reports	Registration as Psychologist	2-5 years
Occupational Therapy	Embedded within accredited degree	Minimum 1,000 hours supervised placement	Clinical supervision throughout placements	Clinical and placement-based assessment	Registration through AHPRA pathway	Nil
CA ANZ	CA Program (core subjects, electives and capstone)	Minimum 3 years mentored practical experience	Mentor required throughout practical experience period	Capability framework, coursework, assessments and workplace development	Chartered Accountant designation	3 years

Profession	Additional Professional Training After Degree	Workplace Experience Requirement	Supervision and Mentoring	Assessment Approach	Professional Status Achieved	Structured Postgraduate Training Required Before Independent Practice
CPA Australia	CPA Program	Practical experience completed while studying	Supervisor/mentor supported	Professional examinations and competency development	CPA designation	3 Years
Engineering	Generally, none post-degree	Variable according to registration scheme	Limited formal supervision requirements	Competency framework assessment	Professional Engineer registration	3 years

DISCUSSION PAPER 6

SUPERVISION OF EARLY-CAREER LAWYERS

1. Introduction

In approaching this topic, it must be remembered that over the long history of the legal profession, the predominant mode of teaching lawyers was by being supervised by more senior lawyers.

Notwithstanding the advent of law schools offering professional degrees and then structured, intermediate PLT, the supervision of early-career lawyers remains very important.

For many lawyers, the supervision they receive early in their career is both formative and determinative of the kind of practitioners they will become.

Supervised practice, for the most part, cannot be replicated in non-'real world' settings.

It may be readily accepted that high quality supervision supports and fosters confidence, professional competence, wellbeing and ethical practice while, significantly, contributing to the protection of clients.

2. Overview of feedback provided on national Consultation Paper

In feedback to the Consultation Paper, most stakeholders agreed that there was value in reconsidering aspects of the supervision of early-career lawyers.

Most stakeholders agreed that there was a need for additional guidance to supervisors of early-career lawyers as the quality of supervision is inconsistent as to oversight, feedback, mentoring and support provided. There is limited guidance available on the standard, quality or practical features of supervision expected during supervised legal practice. Clear guidance could assist supervisors to better understand their role, manage professional risk, provide effective feedback and support ethical decision making.

Some stakeholders noted that remote and hybrid working has changed the way lawyers work and supervise. Further, some noted a need for cultural change in some workplaces to move supervision from a task allocation or file management exercise, where supervisors did not have capacity to supervise due to billing targets and other pressures.

Stakeholders expressed mixed views on whether additional regulatory requirements or mandatory training requirements should be imposed on supervisors. A concern was that mandatory or additional requirements may affect the capacity and willingness of lawyers to supervise early-career lawyers.

Most stakeholders supported the establishment of a Working Group to develop additional guidance and resources for supervisors of supervised legal practice.

Feedback received indicates support for measures to strengthen the quality and consistency of supervision provided to early-career lawyers. The paper considers potential mechanisms for achieving this through regulatory reform and administrative reform.

3. Overview of the key policy issue and implementation considerations

Key policy issue

The significance of the good supervision of early-career lawyers cannot be gainsaid.

The key policy question may be thought to be two-fold. Firstly, what does good supervision look like? Secondly, what can or should be done to foster such good supervision?

Good supervision is more than the allocation and checking of legal work. It involves regular, active and structured engagement between a supervisor and early-career lawyer, including setting clear expectations, reviewing of legal work, providing timely feedback, guiding ethical and professional judgement, supporting the development of practical skills and paying appropriate attention to wellbeing and workload. It should also include a clear process for escalation where the early-career lawyer is uncertain, at risk of error or requires additional support.

Framing supervision in this way also benefits legal workplaces. High-quality supervision improves the quality and consistency of legal services, supports staff development and retention and helps ensure early-career lawyers are supported to become capable and confident lawyers. Relatedly, supporting and increasing the incidences of good supervision should increase, rather than decrease, the pool of lawyers willing to supervise early-career lawyers.

Further, any changes made need to balance the looked-for benefits with the need to ensure that obligations on supervisors are practical, proportionate and do not discourage suitably experienced practitioners from taking on supervisory roles.

Key implementation considerations

These may be thought to be:

- should there be a minimum time for practitioners to have been unsupervised themselves before being allowed to supervise early-career lawyers
- if further regulation is not thought appropriate or helpful, would supervisors be assisted by further resources, such as: supervision frameworks, supervisor training, practical tools and accountability mechanisms being made available to them and, or, further training to be a supervisor
- how might early-career lawyers gain a better understanding of what good supervision looks like and their role in the process
- will further regulation, such as: mandated prerequisites for supervisors, greater prescription in the monitoring of, and reporting on, supervision assist in the greater delivery of good supervision
- should there be a change to the length of supervised legal practice.

The key implementation considerations inform the reform options discussed in the paper and seek to improve supervision while ensuring that any changes are practical, proportionate and capable of being implemented across different practice settings.

4. Potential options for reform

The reform options considered by the Working Group fall within two categories: regulatory reform that would impose additional requirements on supervisors and administrative reform that would support better supervision through resources and practical tools.

4.1 Regulatory reform

The Working Group considers that the preferred approach is to support improved supervision through guidance, resources and practical tools rather than introducing further regulatory requirements at this stage.

The Working Group considered the desirability of further regulation such as:

- whether there should be mandatory CPD for anyone wishing to be approved as a supervisor and an approval process or course before a person can become a supervisor
- whether supervision should be a mandatory part of qualifying to be a principal, where one is required to complete a course before becoming a principal of a legal practice
- whether there should be a mandated time between finishing supervised legal practice and either becoming a principal or a supervisor
- whether there should be a mandated prerequisite support experience for supervisors and, or, greater prescription in the monitoring of, and reporting on, the supervision of early-career lawyers. The monitoring and reporting on supervision should be more prescriptively provided for.

Consistently with feedback on the Consultation Paper, the Working Group considers that the aim of any changes to supervised legal practice should be the promotion of an understanding, and practices, of good supervision.

The Working Group considers that further regulatory action may be less effective than practical guidance, tools and resources in supporting supervisors to provide good supervision.

The Working Group recognises that there is not an infinite pool of people prepared to supervise early-career lawyers and, consequently, care should be taken before introducing any further regulatory steps which may unnecessarily reduce that pool. The last consideration is particularly important for the supervision of early-career lawyers who are working in a hybrid environment or in remote or regional locations.

Further regulation may well reduce the pool of lawyers willing to supervise early-career lawyers, which, in turn, would reduce their career opportunities. In short, the Working Group took the view that further regulation would not, generally speaking, improve the incidences of good supervision.

Inclusion of supervision in practice management courses

Practice management courses are required in all jurisdictions except Tasmania and Northern Territory before a practitioner can practise as a principal of a law practice.[1] They focus on business strategy and development, succession planning, leadership and people management, practice management, risk management, financial management, Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing (AML-CTF), professional standards and ethics, and trust accounting.

The Working Group considered as a possible regulatory option whether supervision should be a mandatory component of practice management courses noting that effective

[1] Legal Profession Regulation 2007 (ACT) r 10, Legal Profession Uniform Law 2015 (NSW) s 53 and Legal Profession Uniform General Rules 2015 (NSW) r 16(b)(ii), *Legal Profession Act 2006* (NT) s 73, Queensland Law Society Administration Rule 2005 (QLD), Rules of the Legal Practitioners Education and Admission Council 2018 (SA) r 12(3), *Legal Profession Act 2007* (TAS) s 59, Practice Management Course Guidelines for Victoria, Legal Profession Uniform Law 2022 (WA) s 53 and Legal Profession Uniform General Rules 2015 (WA) r 16(b)(ii).

supervision is a core skill for practice principals and enhancing supervision training in those courses could improve supervisory standards within legal practice.

In NSW from 1 July 2026, effective supervision has been included as a core subject in practice management courses accredited by the Law Society of NSW. The accreditation course guideline states "this core subject enables a principal to develop and implement relevant and effective supervision to enhance the sustainability of the law practice and to ensure compliance with obligations under legislation, regulations and rules" and sets out what the course must address including remote and hybrid supervision.

In Victoria supervision is addressed through the Practice Management Course Guidelines.[2] The Guidelines set out the required content for practice management courses and include a supervision requirement focused on building relationships of trust to empower staff to achieve organisational objectives and ensure staff act professionally and ethically at all times.

In Western Australia, supervision is included in the Practice Management Course Guidelines.[3] The Guidelines include: an understanding of the principles of effectively training and managing staff and a requirement to have systems in place for tracking and supervising all client matters and for monitoring the timelines and quality of work.

The Working Group recognises that many lawyers who supervise early-career lawyers are not principals, and supervision occurs across a range of settings where practitioners may not be required to complete a practice management course.

However, effective supervision remains an essential skill for principals, both from an individual and organisational perspective. Therefore, the Working Group recommends strengthening the supervision component of practice management courses.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) on supervision

The Working Group recommends that, following the current round of PLT reforms, further consideration be given to whether additional CPD on supervision would support improved and more consistent supervision of early-career lawyers. This could include consideration of whether practitioners should complete targeted supervision training before, or during, their role as a supervisor.

The Working Group considers that relying on supervision content within a course for practice principals may have limited reach. CPD on supervision may provide a more direct mechanism for supporting a broader set of supervisors across different practice areas.

Legal practitioners have ongoing CPD obligations to ensure that they maintain competence. CPD usually requires the completion of 10 units of training across 4-5 compulsory fields. While the requirements are largely consistent across Australia, there are some minor differences to the content of the CPD obligations between states and territories. Supervisor CPD would likely already be relevant to current compulsory fields, such as ethics and professional responsibility, practice management and business skills and professional skills.

The Working Group has discussed the possibility of introducing an additional mandatory CPD requirement for supervisors. Making this field mandatory for supervisors would have

[2] Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner, Guidelines: Practice Management Course for Victoria (2018).
[3] Legal Practice Board of Western Australia, Practice Management Course Guidelines (2026).

the clear benefit of ensuring that all supervisors undertake training on a consistent basis. However, this may be difficult to implement as identifying which practitioners are supervisors would not be easily apparent to regulatory bodies.

Alternatively, voluntary CPD for supervisors may be more straightforward to implement. The key drawback of this approach is that it would rely on supervisors self-selecting to undertake training. The Working Group has therefore discussed how voluntary CPD for supervisors could be encouraged.

To encourage uptake of voluntary training, legal profession regulatory bodies, including law societies and practising certificate issuers, could consider options such as: member communications encouraging supervisors to upskill and providing free training to members.

Although the Working Group does not recommend mandatory CPD on supervision, it considers that the development of optional supervision focused CPD may assist practitioners to strengthen their supervisory capability. Further consideration of voluntary CPD options may identify a practical and flexible way to support supervisors across different practice types and jurisdictions.

Length of supervised legal practice

The Working Group does not recommend an increase in the time of supervised practice.

Across Australian jurisdictions, the regulatory framework generally requires early-career lawyers to complete a prescribed period of supervised legal practice before practising without supervision. As summarised in the table at **Annexure A,** most jurisdictions require 2 years of supervised legal practice or 18 months where PLT was undertaken, under the supervision of an Australian lawyer, for example via supervised workplace training or a legal traineeship. There is a superficial attraction to the idea that longer supervision would allow for the further development of necessary skills and provide greater protection for clients.

However, on balance, the Working Group considers that extending the statutory period of supervision is unlikely to have a positive impact on poor or ineffective supervision and may, counterproductively, reduce the pool of supervisors and, so, employment opportunities for early-career lawyers.

Generally, the Working Group was of the view that the lengthening of the supervision period is unlikely to deliver more incidences of good supervision across the profession.

Reform should focus not on extending the supervised legal practice period, but on improving the structure, consistency and effectiveness of supervision within the existing period.

Increasing the requirements for supervisory sign off at the conclusion of the supervised practice period

The Working Group considered whether the removal of the supervised practice condition should involve a more qualitative assessment of a practitioner's readiness to practice independently. However, the Working Group does not recommend this as the preferred reform option.

In most jurisdictions, the removal of the supervision condition is generally a quantitative process after a period of two years of supervised practice, unless an exemption or reduced period is applied for, for example, the *Legal Profession Uniform Law* s 49, *the Legal*

Profession Act (QLD) s 56 and *Legal Profession Act* (TAS, s 59). Therefore, in most jurisdictions, there is no qualitative assessment of whether a legal practitioner is able to proficiently engage in unsupervised legal practice.

The ACT provides an example of a more qualitative approach, requiring consideration of whether a practitioner has attained the level of professional skill and experience required for an unrestricted practising certificate. In the ACT, practising certificates may be restricted or unrestricted. A solicitor who holds an unrestricted practising certificate is authorised to engage in legal practice independently and as a principal of a law practice and is authorised to supervise other legal practitioners.

The Legal Profession Regulation 2007 (ACT) section 10 sets out the criteria for the grant of an unrestricted practising certificate. A person is eligible for the grant of an unrestricted practising certificate if they have completed two years of supervised legal practice and *"has attained such a level of professional skill, and gained such professional experience, that it is appropriate that an unrestricted practising certificate be issued to the person."* The ACT Law Society has a proforma statutory declaration for applicants to complete which must include details such as dates of supervised practice, employer, position title and legal tasks performed, for example, areas of law practised, types of matters handled and your specific role in those matters. An applicant must also explain the reasons they are seeking an unrestricted practising certificate. If the applicant has practised for less than five years, they must also include a statutory declaration from a supervisor who can detail the legal duties performed by the applicant and declare that the applicant has sufficient professional skills and experience to warrant the grant of an unrestricted practising certificate.

If a qualitative assessment process for the removal of the supervision condition such as in the ACT was adopted more broadly a range of options could be considered. Providing more detailed certification as to competence, including their ability to manage matter independently, exercise professional judgement and identify and manage risk could provide an appropriate threshold assuming that it would not administratively overburden supervisors, relevant organisations or regulators. There may be benefits to this approach, including greater assurance that practitioners have the requisite skill and knowledge to practice independently as well as greater consistency in supervisory practices. At the higher end of the spectrum, qualitative approaches could include portfolio or competency-based assessments, however it is noted that such an approach would likely impose a substantial barrier for both supervisors and supervised solicitors and regulators.

If a more qualitative model were pursued, consideration may need to be given to mechanisms to support regional and remote practitioners, including ensuring that virtual supervision arrangements are recognised and there is flexibility in demonstrating competence, noting that regional legal service may not provide the same breadth or type of experience of metro practice. Additional assessment or substantial increases in supervisory sign off requirements that require supervised practitioners to have undertaken particular types of work could create an undue burden on regional and remote practitioners, leading to unintended consequences, such as difficulties retaining practitioners in the regions. Guidelines would also need to be developed for circumstances where a supervisor may refuse to certify that a person has the requisite skills and experience to have the supervision condition removed or where a known "poor" supervisor is attesting that it is appropriate that a solicitor has the supervision condition removed.

The Working Group does not support increasing sign off requirements at the conclusion of the supervised practice period. The Working Group's preferred approach is to support supervision through nationally consistent guidance, resources and practical tools.

4.2 Administrative reform

National development of resources

Given the Working Group's concerns about the risks and practical limits of further regulation, the preferred approach is to support improved supervision through nationally consistent resources, guidance and practical tools.

As will be seen below, the Working Group recommends the development of, and making available, further resources to supervisors and to early-career lawyers.

The Working Group strongly recommends that a national approach be taken. This will allow for existing resources to be pooled and drawn upon, while spreading the burden of the development and refining of further materials.

The Working Group has accepted that there is not time within the present consultation window to develop that national approach. In recognition of that, the Working Group recommends the establishment of a national Working Group following this reform process. The purpose of such a (further) Working Group would be to oversee the pooling and development of resources as recommended below.

The Law Council of Australia could be well placed to coordinate and lead the future national Working Group on supervision, and the Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner has indicated it would be happy to participate in any Working Group and share its resources.

The proposed resources should articulate what good supervision looks like in practice. This could include:

- guidance that effective supervision should be regular, accessible and tailored to the early-career lawyer's level of experience
- guidance that supervision should involve active review of legal work before advice or correspondence is provided to clients, create opportunities for feedback, reflection and skill development
- support ethical decision making and professional judgement and provide clear pathways for raising concerns or seeking assistance
- recognise that supervision may look different across practice settings, including private practice, community legal services, government teams, regional practices and hybrid workplaces.

Practical tools to support supervisors and early-career lawyers

The Working Group recommends the development of further, and pooling of existing, resources.

The Working Group has identified existing regulatory guidance that outlines features of effective supervision, as summarised in the table below:

Regulator	Guidance/ expectation of supervision
Legal Practice Board of Western Australia	Expects daily contact for the purpose of review, guidance and instruction. Legal advice should be approved before it is provided to the client and the

Regulator	Guidance/ expectation of supervision
	supervising practitioner should scrutinise and sign off correspondence.[4]
Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner	Describes supervision as involving the monitoring of legal work. Good supervision requires the supervisor to review all legal work undertaken by the supervised practitioner and have a process to direct, amend, override or intervene in relation to that work. [5]
Law Society of NSW	Emphasises the need for strong compliance management systems, guidelines and tools appropriate to the practice. Effective management systems help ensure clients receive a high standard of legal services. The supervisor should have authority over the supervisee's legal work and be able to direct, amend, override or intervene at any time. [6]
The Law Society of Queensland	Provides guidance on reasonable supervision, including that it is insufficient to leave a supervisee to their own devices, even where there is an open door policy, or to delegate the entire conduct of a matter.[7]

The Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner have developed supervision resources: Early Career Lawyer Capability Framework,[8] Supervision Plan Template[9] and Reflective Practice Template,[10] which are being rolled out across the legal profession. These resources can be used to assist with the development of national resources.

To assist in moving the culture for those that consider that supervision is simply about the management of a matter or file, the Working Group considers that the steps to be undertaken should aim to encourage the adoption of a more holistic approach to the question of supervision. In that respect, also providing a greater understanding to early-career lawyers as to what good supervision looks like would be of assistance in the Working Group's view.

Consistently, with its view that imposing further regulations will not likely improve incidences of good supervision, the Working Group recommends the development of further materials such as:

- a supervision framework that sets out clear expectations of supervisors, examples of effective supervision and good practice principles for supervising

- the development of induction packs which would be provided to the early-career lawyer and the supervisor respectively introducing the supervisor to the above resources and, for the early-career lawyer, providing guidance as to what good supervision looks like

[4] Legal Practice Board of Western Australia, Supervised legal practice.
[5] Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner, Supervised legal practice- information for supervisors.
[6] The Law Society of NSW, A quick guide to supervised legal practice.
[7] Queensland Law Society, Guidance statement no 16 - Supervision.
[8] Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner, *Early Career Lawyer Capability Framework*.
[9] Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner, Supervision Plan Template.
[10] Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner, Reflective Practice Template.

- template supervision plans that can be tailored to different practice environments

- practical checklist for supervisors, including suggested matters to discuss at commencement, prompts for file review and feedback, guidance on managing risk and indication that closer supervision or intervention may be required

- resources for early-career lawyers to support reflective practice, including guidance on preparing for supervision meetings, how to seek feedback and identify when additional support may be needed

- guidance on group supervision, peer learning and supervision in small or specialist teams

- guidance notes or case studies of what good supervision looks like in common situations, including remote supervision, high-volume practices, courts or tribunal appearances, ethical issues and working with vulnerable clients

- mechanisms for periodically reviewing and updating resources, including drawing on feedback from supervisors, early-career lawyers, regulators, professional bodies and employers.

These tools would support a shift from supervision as a matter of administrative oversight to supervision as an active, developmental and protective feature of early-legal practice.

Mentorship programs

To encourage peer learning and support and foster collective development of supervisors, legal profession regulatory bodies, including law societies and practising certificate issuers, could consider options to establish mentorship programs or collaboration networks specifically for supervisors.

Mentorship programs and collaboration networks could enable new supervisors, particularly those in smaller practices, to access a support and advice from more experienced supervisors from other organisations. Additionally, these options could provide a forum where supervising solicitors can discuss common issues and share knowledge and expertise.

5. Discussion questions for the Conference

a) Do you support prioritising administrative and practical reforms over additional regulatory requirements to improve supervision across the legal profession? What, if any, regulatory options should be implemented?

b) This Paper proposes developing national resources and establishing a national working group to improve supervision. Do you agree with this recommendation, and are there any other administrative reforms or practical initiatives that could help strengthen supervision across the legal profession?

Annexures

Annexure A	Requirements for Supervised Legal Practice

Annexure A – Requirements for Supervised Legal Practice

Jurisdiction	Requirement	Legislation
NSW, VIC, WA	Statutory condition to engage in supervised legal practice: 18 months where practical legal training was principally under supervision of an Australian lawyer or 2 years where practical legal training was not principally under supervision of an Australian lawyer.	Legal Profession Uniform Law (NSW) s 49(1)(a)-(b) *Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014* (VIC) s 49(1)(a)-(b) Legal Profession Uniform Law (WA) s 49(1)(a)-(b)
ACT	Statutory condition to not engage in unsupervised legal practice and complete a period of supervised legal practice prescribed by the regulations. Prescribed period: 18 months where practical legal training was principally under supervision of an Australian lawyer or 2 years where practical legal training was not principally under supervision of an Australian lawyer.	*Legal Profession Act 2006 (ACT)* s 50*,* Legal Profession Regulation 2007 *(*ACT) s 13
NT	Statutory condition to engage in supervised legal practice: 18 months where practical legal training was principally under supervision of an Australian lawyer or 2 years where practical legal training was not principally under supervision of an Australian lawyer.	*Legal Profession Act 2006 (NT)* s 73
QLD	Statutory condition regarding practice as a solicitor, to engage in supervised legal practice: 18 months where practical legal training was principally under supervision of an Australian lawyer or 2 years where practical legal training was not principally under supervision of an Australian lawyer.	*Legal Profession Act 2007* (QLD) s 56
SA	To hold an unrestricted practising certificate, required to complete a supervised practice period of 2 years.	Rules of the Legal Practitioners Education and Admission Council 2018 (SA) r 11
TAS	Statutory condition regarding legal practice, engage only in supervised legal practice for 18 months, where practical legal training was principally under supervision of an Australian lawyer or 2 years where practical legal training was not principally under supervision of an Australian lawyer.	*Legal Profession Act 2007* (TAS) s 59.

DISCUSSION PAPER 7

A FRAMEWORK FOR IDENTIFYING AND EVALUATING PLT REFORM MODELS

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide a framework for identifying, comparing and evaluating possible models for reform of practical legal training (**PLT**) and the broader legal education continuum. The paper proceeds in four stages. First, it sets out some guiding principles to assist consideration of possible reforms. Secondly, it identifies the key variables within the legal education continuum and the range of options available for each variable. Thirdly, it illustrates how those options may be combined into possible reform models. Finally, it offers criteria by which those models might be evaluated.

Annexure A contains a list of key terms used throughout the paper.

The framework is intended to support discussion and decision making by stakeholders at the PLT Consultation Conference. It is emphasised that the models presented in stage 4 are illustrative only and that alternative combinations of variables will warrant consideration. As far as possible, the options and models presented for consideration in this paper reflect the work being done in the other Working Groups.

2. Guiding Principles

Before considering specific reform options, it will be useful to identify some high-level principles that will assist in evaluating and comparing different models. These principles are not intended to predetermine reform outcomes. Rather, they articulate some of the objectives and values that reform models may seek to advance and provide a common point of reference for discussion.

1. **Maintain a focus on practice-readiness at the point of admission** – Reform should seek to ensure that law graduates are appropriately prepared for entry-level legal practice under supervision. This requires recognising that the practice of law is an applied discipline, a human centric discipline and a professional service. Legal education should therefore equip students not only with legal knowledge, but also with the skills, judgment, professional behaviours and interpersonal capabilities required to practise law safely, ethically and effectively.

2. **Treat legal education as a continuum** – Reform should proceed on the basis that legal education and professional formation occur across a continuum extending from the university law degree through practical legal training, admission, early career supervised practice, and ongoing professional development. On this view, the study of law should equip students progressively for practice, with practical legal skills and professional capabilities developed iteratively across the continuum and supported by 'warm handovers' between law degree, PLT, post-admission professional development for the early career lawyer and continuing professional competence.

3. **Recognise the public purpose of legal education and professional formation** – Any reform model should recognise that legal education serves multiple stakeholders and public interests, including the legal profession, the judiciary, clients, the broader community, access to justice throughout the community, the administration of justice, and the rule of law. It should acknowledge that mechanisms which ensure lawyers are

qualified, competent, ethical and fit for contemporary legal practice are critical in upholding the rule of law, advancing the law's public purpose, maintaining system integrity, protecting consumers of legal services and maintaining public confidence in the profession.

4. **Promote accessibility, equity and inclusion** – Reform should enhance, or at minimum should not impede, access to the legal profession for candidates from diverse backgrounds, geographic locations and circumstances. It should also support and not impede broader access to justice by helping to ensure that the profession is able to serve the legal needs of the whole community, including communities that are underserved or face barriers to legal assistance.

5. **Ensure proportionality and sustainability** – Requirements imposed on students, universities, PLT providers, employers, regulators, and the profession (including peak bodies) should be proportionate to the benefits achieved and sustainable over the long term. Requirements should uphold high professional standards without becoming overly prescriptive and should retain sufficient flexibility to accommodate the contemporary needs and realities of a changing profession and legal services sector. They should be based around workforce planning and evidence of likely demand from one part of the continuum to the next, and an informed understanding of relevant parts of the system.

6. **Recognise the importance of maintaining a nationally consistent approach** – Reform should enhance or at least not undermine national consistency, including interjurisdictional consistency in the rules for admission and post admission education.

7. **Support accreditation and ongoing quality assurance** – Reform should recognise the role of accreditation, regulatory oversight and ongoing quality assurance in maintaining appropriate standards across law degrees, PLT, workplace experience, supervised legal practice and post-admission training. Accreditation and assurance mechanisms should be sufficiently robust to protect the public, promote confidence in admission outcomes and support consistency across providers and jurisdictions.

8. **Ensure sufficient flexibility** – Reform should preserve and where feasible enhance flexibility in the regulation of course design to ensure legal education and training remain contemporary and facilitate preparation of law graduates for a continually changing legal profession and legal services sector.

3. Variables and Options

A reform model can be understood as a combination of decisions about several key variables within the legal education continuum. This section identifies those variables and describes the principal options available in relation to each. The options are intended to illustrate the breadth of potential reform approaches and should not be regarded as exhaustive. Consideration of these options at the Consultation Conference will be informed by the approaches taken by the various Working Groups looking at practical capability mapping, law courses, PLT, post-admission legal training and supervision of early-career lawyers.

Variable 1: The Law Degree

The primary educational purpose of the law degree and the principal outcomes it must achieve prior to graduation.

A. **Knowledge focussed with some skills.** This is the current option. The primary purpose of the LLB/JD is to provide students with a strong foundation in legal

knowledge, legal reasoning, and academic scholarship. The focus is on the Prescribed Areas of Knowledge. There is limited development of practical legal skills beyond those required by the AQF and university learning outcomes. The Threshold Learning Outcomes for Law inform the learning outcomes for many law programs, however these are not prescribed.[1] This option presumes the law degree is primarily an academic qualification, and professional practice skills are better developed after graduation through specialised professional training and workplace experience.

B. **Knowledge and skills focused - enhanced.** The LLB/JD combines the study of legal doctrine with the structured development of a prescribed but relatively light set of practical legal skills relevant to legal practice. The focus remains on the Prescribed Areas of Knowledge, but admission authorities prescribe a simple list of skills to be introduced and developed across the degree in a manner determined by the law school. This option presumes law graduates should possess both legal knowledge and a foundational set of practical legal skills before commencing professional training.

C. **Knowledge and skills focused – comprehensive.** The LLB/JD combines the study of legal doctrine with comprehensive and prescribed development of practical legal skills across the degree. Admission authorities prescribe both the relevant skills and the specific subjects or subject areas in which those skills must be taught, practised and assessed. (The skills are either (1) mapped to specific subjects and taught progressively or (2) taught in dedicated units towards the end of the degree.) This option presumes practice readiness is best supported when practical legal skills are not merely identified at a high level, but are taught and assessed consistently, and quality assured.

Variable 2: PLT – Form

The required form and duration of the PLT program.

A. **PLT as GDLP.** This is the current option for most but not all PLT providers, and it is not mandated by the Standards. PLT is typically delivered as a two-semester Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice (GDLP).[2] The LLB/JD focuses primarily on academic legal education, and PLT is responsible for the development and assessment of practical legal skills. This option presumes practical legal skills are most effectively developed through a dedicated professional training program undertaken after completion of academic legal education.

B. **PLT as GCLP.** PLT is delivered through a shorter, one-semester Graduate Certificate in Legal Practice (GCLP).[3] Practical legal skills development commences during the LLB/JD with foundational practical legal skills embedded throughout the law degree. PLT focuses on applying, integrating and assessing those skills in professional contexts. Responsibility for professional skills development is shared between universities and PLT providers. It may consist entirely of coursework or be a combination of coursework and workplace experience. This option presumes a substantial proportion of practical legal skills training can be undertaken during the law degree, allowing a shorter post-degree PLT program.

C. **PLT as short course.** PLT is limited to a brief capstone or transition course. Practical legal skills development occurs primarily during the LLB/JD, with PLT as a short post-

[1] The Threshold Learning Outcomes (**TLOs**) for the LLB/JD are (1) knowledge, (2) ethics and professional responsibility, (3) thinking skills, (4) research skills, (5) communication and collaboration, and (6) self-management.
[2] There is an option in some jurisdictions for people to alternatively undertake a period of supervised workplace training (**SWT**) with the same competencies as the GDLP.
[3] The option in some or all jurisdictions for people to undertake a period of supervised workplace training (same competencies as PLT) is retained.

degree professional transition program.[4] The PLT program does not include practice areas, training in which is to be undertaken after admission as part of formal post-admission training. This option presumes graduates should complete the majority of practical skills development before graduation, requiring only a brief transition to practice prior to admission.

D. **Integrated PLT.** No separate PLT program is required following graduation. Legal knowledge, practical legal skills, professional values and experiential learning are fully integrated into the law degree. Universities are the primary providers of both academic and professional legal education.[5] This option presumes the distinction between academic legal education and practical legal training is unnecessary, and practical legal skills can be developed through a single integrated qualification.

Variable 3: PLT – Content

The required content of the PLT program.

A. **Mandated practice areas and general skills – detailed prescription.** This is the current option. PLT must cover three mandatory practice areas, two additional practice areas selected from a prescribed list, and specified general skills. The required content of each practice area and general skill is prescribed in detail, limiting provider discretion over curriculum content. This option presumes consistent and comprehensive preparation for practice is best achieved through detailed national prescription of both practice areas and general skills.

B. **Mandated practice areas and general skills – reduced prescription.** PLT must cover nationally prescribed practice areas and general skills, but the regulatory requirements specify the required outcomes at a higher level rather than prescribing detailed content. PLT providers retain discretion to design the curriculum, learning activities and assessments through which those outcomes are achieved. This option presumes national consistency can be maintained while allowing providers greater flexibility to respond to different cohorts, delivery models and developments in legal practice.

C. **Mandated general skills with provider-determined practice areas.** PLT must develop and assess nationally prescribed general skills, but no particular practice areas are mandated. Each PLT provider determines the practice areas or professional contexts through which those skills are taught, practised and assessed. This option presumes entry-level practice readiness depends primarily on transferable general skills, while providers are best placed to select relevant practice contexts and adapt their programs to student and workforce needs.

Variable 4: PLT – Delivery

How practical legal training must be delivered to students.

A. **Diverse approaches.** This is the current option (except in NSW – see below). PLT can be delivered online, in person or via a hybrid model at the discretion of the PLT provider. This option presumes the delivery mode is not of critical importance to learning outcomes.

[4] Note that if PLT is a non-AQF short course it will no longer be regulated by TEQSA in the same manner as currently, for most courses.

[5] There is likely to be an impact on the proportion of the LLB/JD curriculum allocated to elective subjects.

B. **Mandated in-person – full.** The entire PLT course must be delivered in person. This option presumes PLT students learn best when they are learning in person and have the opportunity to build relationships with other students in person.[6]

C. **Mandated in-person – partial.** This is the current option in NSW. Specified components of the PLT course must be delivered in person. The in-person components may be complemented by synchronous online components. This option presumes PLT students learn best when some components of PLT are taught in person due to the nature of the coursework (e.g. advocacy) and have the opportunity to build relationships with other students in person.

D. **Mandated synchronous learning.** The entire PLT course or a specified component of the PLT course must be delivered in synchronously and interactively, whether in person or online. This option presumes PLT students learn best when they are instructed in real time, with opportunity for engagement and interaction, regardless of whether the program is delivered in person or online.

Variable 5: Workplace Experience

The extent to which workplace-based learning, supervised practice, and experiential training are required before admission.

A. **Minimum of 15 days post-degree.** This is the current option. Workplace experience is required during PLT, with a minimum of 15 days. Workplace experience is concentrated in PLT, and workplace experience during the LLB/JD is encouraged but not required. There is no maximum duration with some PLT providers requiring 60-90 days. This option presumes a relatively short period of workplace experience between graduation and admission is sufficient, with professional competence continuing to develop through ordinary practice.

B. **Minimum of 15 days during or post-degree.** A minimum of 15 days of workplace experience is required as part of PLT, but workplace experience acquired during the LLB/JD can be used to contribute to the 15 days. A maximum duration may be imposed. This option presumes workplace experience prior to admission is important but the minimum requirement should not be imposed during PLT for those who have acquired equivalent workplace experience during the LLB/JD.

C. **More than 15 days during or post-degree.** The minimum duration of workplace experience is increased (e.g. 30 days) and can be completed during the LLB/JD or during PLT. A maximum duration may be imposed. This option presumes practice readiness is best ensured by requiring a significant exposure to legal workplaces before admission.

D. **Significantly more than 15 days pre-admission.** A lengthy period of workplace experience is required prior to admission (for example, two years). This option presumes professional competence is best developed through sustained workplace learning and supervision throughout the entire legal education continuum up to admission.

[6] Note that where in person attendance is mandated, adjustments will need to be made to accommodate students with disability under the Disability Discrimination Act and the Disability Standards for Education. The HESF is likely to be amended to mandate universal design for learning before the changes here proposed take effect, and the requirements must enable PLT training to be available to more diverse cohorts such as LSES, RRR, First Nations and students who share more than one of these characteristics.

Variable 6: Admission Assessment
The mechanism by which an individual's readiness for admission is assessed and verified.

A. **No admission exam.** This is the current option. There is no separate qualifying examination for admission. Eligibility for admission is determined by satisfactory completion of the prescribed academic and professional training requirements. Universities, PLT providers, and workplace supervisors are responsible for assessing achievement of prescribed outcomes or competencies. This option presumes competence is best assessed through multiple assessments conducted throughout the education and training continuum, rather than through a single high-stakes examination.

B. **Standardised assessment pre-admission.** Nationally prescribed assessments are incorporated into the LLB/JD, PLT, and/or workplace experience stages. Assessment is continuous and developmental rather than concentrated in a single final examination. Common standards, assessment tasks, or moderation processes are applied across providers. This option presumes consistency and quality assurance are best achieved through standardised assessment embedded across the continuum rather than through a single qualifying examination.

C. **Discrete admission exam.** This option is similar to Bar Exams or the SQE in the UK. Admission requires successful completion of a separate qualifying examination. The examination is undertaken after completion of some or all educational and training requirements. Successful completion of the examination is a prerequisite for admission. Educational providers continue to deliver training, but readiness for admission is independently verified through external assessment. The LLB/JD and PLT are largely deregulated because of the focus shifting to the admission exam. This option presumes a common external assessment provides assurance of consistent standards and public confidence in admission outcomes.

Variable 7: Supervised Legal Practice (SLP)
The regulation of practice post-admission.

A. **Mandated SLP for first 2 years.** This is the current option. Early career lawyers are subject to a period of SLP during which they must practice under the supervision of a legal practitioner with an unrestricted practising certificate. Generally, this is a period of two years. At the end of the two years, the supervisor must sign off that the SLP period has been completed before the legal practitioner applies for an unrestricted practising certificate. This option presumes lawyers entering practice require supervision for a period of time before they can practice on their own, as both a professional development and a consumer protection measure.

B. **Enhanced SLP for first 2 years.** Additional guidance and support are provided to practitioners and their supervisors to ensure that they are getting the most out of SLP and that practitioners are prepared for independent practice. For example, learning outcomes for SLP are identified and their achievement is assured and reported upon. This option presumes two years of SLP is the right amount of time if supervisors and supervisees are further supported to understand their responsibilities and opportunities.

C. Extended SLP. The period of SLP is extended to a longer period (e.g. 3 years) to allow practitioners additional time to develop the required level of competence. This option presumes a longer period of SLP will ensure that legal practitioners are ready to work independently.

Variable 8: Post-admission Training
The regulation of post-admission, early career education and training.

A. **CPD only.** This is the current option. Early-career legal practitioners are subject to the usual CPD requirements applicable to all lawyers. There is no additional training or professional development mandated. This option presumes training in specific practice areas (e.g. criminal, family law) should occur in the PLT phase prior to admission, and professional competence post-admission can be sufficiently developed through supervised legal practice and the usual CPD requirements.

B. **Replace CPD with mandated training.** Mandated, accredited and assessed post-admission training is required in the two years after admission, when most legal practitioners are required to engage in supervised legal practice. The mandated training is delivered and assessed by approved providers and covers specific subject matter areas (e.g. criminal law, family law) and/or practice types (e.g. small law practices, community legal centres, government). This option presumes training in specific practice areas is better learned post admission and in the workplace, and obviates the need for CPD during that period.

C. **Enhanced CPD.** Current CPD requirements are replaced with new requirements specific to those lawyers in the first two years of practice. This option could include additional or different units with a focus on skills development and pre-reading but is not assessed. Enhanced CPD is regulated in the same way as existing CPD. This option also presumes training in specific practice areas should occur in the PLT phase prior to admission, and professional competence post-admission can be sufficiently developed through CPD supported by (potentially enhanced) supervised legal practice

D. **Supplement CPD with mandated training**. Mandated, accredited and assessed post-admission training is required in the two years after admission, alongside existing CPD requirements. This option presumes training in specific practice areas is better learned post admission and in the workplace alongside the usual CPD.

Variable 9: PLT – Accreditation and Quality Assurance
The approach to accrediting PLT providers and programs, monitoring compliance and assuring the quality of PLT outcomes.

A. **Standards-based accreditation.** This is the current option. PLT providers and programs are accredited against national competency standards and baseline requirements for training, workplace experience, assessment, staffing and student support. Providers retain discretion over course design and teaching methods. This option presumes common standards and baseline requirements provide assurance of consistent PLT outcomes while permitting some provider flexibility.

B. **Predominantly outcomes-based accreditation.** This option sees a reduction in the level of regulation. Accreditation focuses principally on nationally agreed competencies and credible evidence that students achieve them, with reduced prescription of program structure and delivery. This option presumes clear outcomes and reliable assessment can protect admission standards while allowing greater innovation.

C. **Outcomes- and risk-based accreditation with continuous quality assurance.** This option sees an increase in the level of regulation. Initial accreditation is supplemented by ongoing monitoring proportionate to provider risk and performance, with targeted review where concerns arise. This option presumes continuous and proportionate

oversight can identify emerging risks earlier and focus regulatory effort where it is most needed.

4. Possible Models

The above variables and options can be combined in numerous ways.[7] This section presents five of these ways as illustrative models, including the current model.

	Current Model	Capstone PLT	Core PLT Skills model	Enhanced Training Model	Admission Exam
The Law Degree	Knowledge-focussed with some skills	Knowledge and skills focussed - comprehensive	Knowledge and skills focussed - enhanced	Knowledge and skills focussed - enhanced	Knowledge-focussed with some skills
PLT - Form	PLT as GDLP / Integrated PLT	PLT as short course	PLT as GCLP	PLT as GCLP or GDLP	PLT as GDLP
PLT - Content	Mandated practice areas and general skills – detailed prescription	Mandated general skills with provider-determined practice areas	Mandated general skills with provider-determined practice areas	Mandated practice areas and general skills – reduced prescription	Mandated general skills with provider-determined practice areas
PLT - Delivery	Diverse	Mandated in-person - full	Mandated in-person - partial	Mandated synchronous learning	Mandated synchronous learning
Workplace Experience	15 days post degree	15 days during or post-degree	More than 15 days during or post-degree	More than 15 days during or post-degree	15 days post degree
Admission Assessment	No admission exam	No admission exam	No admission exam	No admission exam	Discrete admission exam
Supervised Legal Practice	Mandated SLP for first 2 years	Enhanced SLP for first 2 years	Enhanced SLP for first 2 years	Enhanced SLP for first 2 years	Enhanced SLP for first 2 years
Post-admission Training	CPD only	Supplement CPD with mandated training	Supplement CPD with mandated training	Enhanced CPD	Replace CPD with mandated training
PLT - Accreditation and Quality Assurance	Standards-based accreditation	Standards-based accreditation	Predominantly outcomes-based accreditation	Outcomes- and risk-based accreditation with continuous quality assurance	Predominantly outcomes-based accreditation

5. Criteria for Evaluating Models

The identification of possible reform models is only the first step in the reform process. To assist comparison between alternative models, each model should be evaluated against the guiding principles in Part 2. The criteria below translate those principles into practical lines of inquiry, enabling assessment of the extent to which each model advances practice-readiness, supports a coherent legal education continuum, serves the public purpose of legal education, promotes accessibility and inclusion, remains proportionate and sustainable, maintains national consistency, supports quality assurance, and preserves sufficient flexibility to respond to change. The criteria should be considered together: a model may perform strongly against one principle while creating trade-offs against another.

[7] 46,656 different ways, actually.

1. **Practice-readiness at admission.** To what extent does the model prepare graduates for safe, ethical and effective entry-level legal practice under supervision, recognising law as an applied and human centric discipline and a professional service?

2. **Coherence across the legal education continuum.** To what extent does the model treat professional formation as a continuum across the law degree, PLT, admission, supervised legal practice and ongoing professional development?

3. **Public purpose, consumer protection and system integrity**. To what extent does the model serve clients, the profession, the judiciary and the broader community by supporting access to justice, the administration of justice, the rule of law and public confidence in the profession and the law?

4. **Accessibility, equity and inclusion.** To what extent does the model ensure access to the profession for candidates from diverse backgrounds, locations and circumstances, and support a profession capable of serving diverse communities across Australia?

5. **Proportionality and sustainability.** To what extent are the model's requirements and costs proportionate to the benefits achieved, sustainable over time, informed by workforce planning and likely demand, and workable across the system? Does the model deliver sufficient value to justify the cost?

6. **National consistency.** To what extent does the model uphold a nationally consistent approach in regulatory reform, including interjurisdictional consistency in the rules for admission and post admission education?

7. **Accreditation, oversight and ongoing quality assurance.** To what extent does the model recognise the role of accreditation, regulatory oversight and quality assurance in maintaining appropriate standards across law degrees, PLT, workplace experience, supervised legal practice and post-admission training?

8. **Flexibility, contemporaneity and adaptability.** To what extent does the model preserve sufficient flexibility in course design and delivery to remain contemporary and prepare graduates for a changing profession and legal services sector?

Additional questions for each criterion are identified in **Annexure B**. An illustration of the application of these criteria to a specific model – the current model – is set out in **Annexure C**.

6. Discussion questions for the Conference

This paper provides a structured framework for considering reform of practical legal training and the broader legal education continuum. It identifies guiding principles for reform, clarifies key terminology, sets out the principal options available in relation to nine variables, illustrates how those options might be combined into possible models, and proposes criteria by which alternative models can be evaluated. Taken together, these elements are intended to support a coherent and transparent process for determining how legal education, practical training, admission, supervised practice and post-admission development should operate as an integrated continuum.

The models presented in Part 4 are illustrative only. They are not intended to define or limit the models available for consideration, to imply that any particular combination of options is preferred, or to pre-empt the outcomes of stakeholder deliberation. Other combinations

may provide a better response to the guiding principles, stakeholder priorities and practical realities identified through the consultation process

At the Conference, attendees will be asked to work with their tables, having regard to the guiding principles, and identify which option is most appropriate for each the nine variables identified and the strengths and weaknesses inherent in this option. You can identify up to two options.

Those selections should then be brought together and tested as an integrated model, recognising that decisions about one variable may affect the suitability, feasibility or design of choices made in relation to others. The objective is to identify the best possible overall model: one that aligns as closely as practicable with the guiding principles in Part 2 and that performs strongly, in the round, against the evaluation criteria in Part 5. The criteria will assist stakeholders to identify strengths, weaknesses, trade-offs, dependencies and implementation implications, and to compare alternative combinations on a consistent and evidence-informed basis.

Annexures

Annexure A	Terminology
Annexure B	Criteria for Evaluating Models – Additional Questions
Annexure C	Illustration of Model Evaluation

Annexure A – Terminology

To promote clarity and consistency, the following definitions are used throughout this paper. They are intended for the purposes of clarifying the understanding by members of the working group only and do not necessarily reflect the understanding by other working groups or existing regulatory or statutory definitions.

Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)	Australia's national policy framework for regulated qualifications in education and training. The AQF specifies qualification levels, learning outcomes, volume of learning expectations, and qualification types across schools, vocational education and training, and higher education. It provides the framework within which qualifications such as the LLB, LLB (Hons), JD and GDLP are accredited and recognised.
Bachelor of Laws (LLB)	An undergraduate academic qualification in law, typically comprising the equivalent of four years / 8 semesters of full-time study, that satisfies the academic requirements for admission as a legal practitioner in Australia. The LLB is an AQF level 7 qualification. The LLB (Hons) is an AQF level 8 qualification.
Capability	The integrated ability to perform professional legal work in context, drawing on multiple skills, knowledge, judgement, behaviours and workflows. Capability is formed progressively through law school, PLT and supervised legal practice, and demonstrated through actual or simulated performance. Capability includes not only doing the task, but doing it with professional judgement, ethical control, supervision, verification and evidence of performance.
Competence	The demonstrated ability to perform legal work to the standard expected of an entry-level legal practitioner through the integrated application of knowledge, practical legal skills, and professional behaviours in context. Competence is not merely the possession of knowledge or skills, or the completion of educational requirements. Rather, it is the capacity to apply knowledge and skills effectively, consistently, independently, and ethically in real or realistically simulated professional situations.
Graduate Certificate in Legal Practice (GCLP)	A shorter AQF Level 8 postgraduate qualification that could be used as a model for PLT delivery. A GCLP would involve a smaller volume of learning than a GDLP, and be delivered in 1 semester. The GCLP is an AQF level 8 qualification.
Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice (GDLP)	A 2-semester PLT qualification currently delivered by accredited providers and recognised for admission purposes. The GDLP is an AQF Level 8 graduate diploma qualification that combines practical legal skills training with supervised workplace experience. The GCLP is an AQF level 8 qualification.
Juris Doctor (JD)	A postgraduate academic qualification in law, typically comprising the equivalent of three years / 6 semesters of full-time study, that satisfies the academic requirements for

	admission as a legal practitioner in Australia. The JD is an AQF level 9 qualification.
Practical Legal Skills	The skills required for effective legal practice. These skills may include legal research, legal analysis and reasoning, legal writing and drafting, oral communication and advocacy, negotiation and dispute resolution, interviewing and client communication, collaboration and teamwork, critical thinking, professional judgment, ethical decision-making, practice management, digital and technological capability, adaptive capability, Indigenous cultural competence, self-management, and/or reflective practice.
Practical Legal Training (PLT)	A program of professional legal education undertaken after, alongside, or integrated with an academic law qualification, designed to prepare graduates for legal practice through the development and assessment of practical legal skills, professional values, and workplace competence. PLT commonly combines coursework with practical workplace experience.
Practice Readiness	The minimum level of competence expected of a person at the point of admission or commencement of legal practice. Practice readiness does not imply full professional proficiency, but rather sufficient knowledge, skills, judgment, and professional responsibility to undertake entry-level legal work safely and effectively under appropriate supervision.
Prescribed Areas of Knowledge	The academic areas of law prescribed by admitting authorities as a prerequisite for admission to legal practice in Australia. Commonly known as the 'Priestley 11', these areas currently comprise: Administrative Law, Civil Procedure, Company Law, Contract Law, Criminal Law and Procedure, Equity (including Trusts), Ethics and Professional Responsibility, Evidence, Federal and State Constitutional Law, Property Law and Torts.
Supervised Legal Practice	A period after admission where a lawyer is subject to a condition to practise under the supervision of another lawyer.
Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA)	Australia's independent national higher education regulator. TEQSA is responsible for registering higher education providers, accrediting courses where required, and assuring compliance with the Higher Education Standards Framework and the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). TEQSA regulates the quality and standards of the design, delivery and assurance of learning outcomes by higher education providers (including universities and private providers for law degrees and PLT courses) but does not regulate admission to legal practice.
Workplace Experience	An experiential learning activity undertaken as part of PLT (currently regulated by LACC's Standards for PLT Workplace Experience).

Annexure B – Criteria for Evaluating Models – Additional Questions

Criterion	Main Question	Sub-Questions
1. Practice-readiness at admission	To what extent does the model prepare graduates for safe, ethical and effective entry-level legal practice under supervision, recognising law as an applied and human centric discipline and a professional service?	• Does the model develop the legal knowledge, practical skills, judgment, professional behaviours and interpersonal capabilities required at admission? • Are graduates able to integrate and apply these attributes in realistic professional contexts? • Does the model support a safe and effective transition from student to legal practitioner?
2. Coherence across the legal education continuum	To what extent does the model treat professional formation as a continuum across the law degree, PLT, admission, supervised legal practice and ongoing professional development?	• Are the purposes, outcomes and responsibilities of each stage clearly defined? • Are capabilities developed progressively and iteratively across the continuum? • Do the stages build logically on one another and avoid unnecessary duplication or gaps? • Does the model support effective “warm handovers” and information flows between institutions and stages?
3. Public purpose, consumer protection and system integrity	To what extent does the model serve clients, the profession, the judiciary and the broader community by supporting access to justice, the administration of justice, the rule of law and public confidence in the profession and the law?	• To what extent does the model provide assurance that legal practitioners are competent, ethical and fit for contemporary practice? • To what extent does it protect consumers of legal services and manage risks to clients and the justice system? • To what extent does it maintain system integrity and public confidence in the profession and admission arrangements?
4. Accessibility, equity and inclusion	To what extent does the model ensure access to the profession for candidates	• Does the model create or remove barriers to

Criterion	Main Question	Sub-Questions
	from diverse backgrounds, locations and circumstances, and support a profession capable of serving diverse communities across Australia?	education, training, admission or employment? • How does it affect students from rural, regional and remote areas, students with disability, First Nations students, low socioeconomic students and people with caring or work commitments? • Are delivery, assessment, workplace experience and supervision requirements realistically accessible? • What is the effect on student cost, time to qualification and the timing of those burdens? • Does the model support diversity in the profession and broader access to justice? • To what extent does it support access to justice, including the profession's capacity to serve diverse communities across Australia (including rural, regional and remote and under-served communities)?
5. Proportionality and sustainability	To what extent are the model's requirements and costs proportionate to the benefits achieved, sustainable over time, informed by workforce planning and likely demand, and workable across the system? Does the model deliver sufficient value to justify the cost?	• Are the regulatory, educational and administrative requirements no more prescriptive than necessary to achieve the intended outcomes? • Are burdens on students, universities, PLT providers, employers, supervisors, legal professionals, regulators, peak bodies and government proportionate to their circumstances? • Are sufficient teaching, assessment, workplace experience and supervision resources likely to be available? • Are costs, benefits, capacity constraints and cost-shifting across the continuum understood?

Criterion	Main Question	Sub-Questions
		• Is value for money assured? • Is the model financially and operationally sustainable under likely future workforce and demand conditions (e.g in response to the impact of AI)?
6. National consistency	To what extent does the model uphold a nationally consistent approach in regulatory reform, including interjurisdictional consistency in the rules for admission and post admission education?	• Does the model support consistent point of admission standards and post-admission expectations across jurisdictions? • Will qualifications, assessments, workplace experience and supervised practice be recognised consistently? • Does the model avoid unnecessary jurisdictional fragmentation, duplication or barriers to mobility?
7. Accreditation, oversight and ongoing quality assurance	To what extent does the model recognise the role of accreditation, regulatory oversight and quality assurance in maintaining appropriate standards across law degrees, PLT, workplace experience, supervised legal practice and post-admission training?	• Are expected outcomes clear, measurable and assessable? • Are accreditation and assurance mechanisms sufficiently robust, proportionate and appropriately allocated among responsible bodies to be able to support consistent standards? • Can regulators and accrediting authorities effectively oversee compliance, outcomes, quality and value for cost? • Will the accreditation process support confidence in admission outcomes consistently? • Does assessment provide credible evidence of readiness for entry-level practice under supervision?
8. Flexibility, contemporaneity and adaptability	To what extent does the model preserve sufficient flexibility in course design and delivery to remain contemporary and prepare graduates for a changing	• Does the model specify outcomes without unnecessarily prescribing how providers must achieve them?

Criterion	Main Question	Sub-Questions
	profession and legal services sector?	• Can curricula, assessments and delivery modes adapt to technological, professional and community change? • Can the model accommodate different providers, learner cohorts, practice contexts and educational approaches while maintaining standards? • Can reforms be implemented and refined incrementally without undue disruption? • Are transition risks, dependencies and timeframes manageable?

Annexure C – Illustration of Model Evaluation

Model evaluated: Current Model

The Current Model combines a predominantly knowledge-focused law degree; PLT generally delivered as a GDLP, with integrated PLT also available; detailed prescription of mandatory practice areas and general skills; diverse delivery modes; at least 15 days of post-degree workplace experience; no separate admission examination; two years of supervised legal practice; ordinary CPD requirements; and standards-based PLT accreditation. The following evaluation is illustrative rather than definitive and identifies both strengths and limitations against the criteria in Part 5.

1. Practice-readiness at admission

The model provides a substantial body of legal knowledge and a dedicated period of professional training before admission. Detailed PLT requirements expose students to specified practice areas and general skills, while workplace experience provides at least some opportunity to apply learning in a professional setting. Assessment across the law degree and PLT also permits competence to be demonstrated through multiple tasks rather than a single high-stakes examination. However, practical capability is developed relatively late, the minimum workplace experience requirement is brief, and the model does not itself ensure that graduates integrate knowledge, skills, judgment and professional behaviours consistently in realistic contexts. Overall, the model establishes a credible baseline for supervised entry-level practice, but provides uneven assurance that every graduate is practice-ready to the same standard.

2. Coherence across the legal education continuum

The model assigns distinguishable functions to the law degree, PLT and supervised legal practice: academic legal education is concentrated in the degree, practical training in PLT, and further professional development in the workplace. This division can provide institutional clarity. Its principal weakness is that the stages operate more as a sequence than as an integrated continuum. There is no prescribed progression of capabilities across the stages, limited recognition of relevant learning or workplace experience acquired during the degree, and no systematic mechanism for ‘warm handovers’ between universities, PLT providers and workplace supervisors. Gaps, repetition and inconsistent expectations may therefore occur, particularly at the transitions from law school to PLT and from PLT to employment.

3. Public purpose, consumer protection and system integrity

The combination of prescribed academic content, accredited PLT, workplace experience and supervised legal practice provides several layers of protection for clients and the justice system. National competency standards and professional responsibility requirements support confidence that entrants have completed recognised pathways. However, completion of prescribed education and training is an indirect proxy for competence, and the model does not independently verify readiness at admission. Limited workplace exposure and variable assessment and supervision practices may leave residual risks. The model therefore supports system integrity through established institutional safeguards, but its consumer-protection value depends on the effectiveness of assessment, accreditation and workplace supervision at each stage.

4. Accessibility, equity and inclusion

Flexible online, in-person and hybrid PLT delivery supports candidates in regional and remote locations and those balancing employment, disability, caring responsibilities or other

commitments. The relatively short minimum workplace experience requirement also limits dependence on securing a lengthy placement. Against these benefits, a separate post-degree qualification adds cost and delays admission, while access to suitable workplace experience and effective supervision may vary by location and personal circumstances. Detailed input requirements may also make it harder for providers to recognise prior learning or offer tailored pathways. The model is therefore reasonably accessible in delivery, but the additional qualification, placement requirement and associated costs are barriers for some candidates.

5. Proportionality and sustainability

The model is established, widely understood and supported by existing university, PLT, regulatory and professional infrastructure. This reduces transition risk and contributes to operational stability. Nevertheless, a separate GDLP commonly adds substantial time and cost after the law degree, and detailed prescription can generate compliance burdens without necessarily demonstrating equivalent gains in graduate capability. Overlap can occur between skills developed in the degree, PLT content, workplace learning and later CPD. Sustainability also depends on sufficient student demand, affordable provision, access to placements and supervisory capacity. The model is workable, but its value for money and proportionality are uncertain.

6. National consistency

Nationally prescribed academic requirements and PLT competency standards provide a common framework and facilitate recognition and practitioner mobility. The model's long operation also supports shared understanding among admitting authorities and providers. However, differences remain in PLT form, delivery expectations, workplace experience, assessment practices and jurisdictional implementation. National consistency is stronger at the level of prescribed inputs and broad competencies than at the level of demonstrated graduate outcomes. The model supports a national pathway, but does not ensure a fully consistent admission standard in practice.

7. Accreditation, oversight and ongoing quality assurance

Standards-based accreditation establishes baseline requirements for PLT content, assessment, staffing, student support and workplace experience, while higher education regulation provides an additional layer of oversight for relevant qualifications. These mechanisms support confidence and permit providers some discretion over course design. The model is less strong in assuring outcomes continuously across the entire continuum. Oversight is distributed among universities, PLT providers, admitting authorities, regulators, employers and supervisors, with limited coordination and no common measure of admission readiness. Periodic accreditation and compliance with detailed requirements may not identify emerging risks or variations in assessment quality promptly. The model provides baseline assurance, but would benefit from clearer outcome measures, stronger moderation and more continuous, risk-responsive oversight.

8. Flexibility, contemporaneity and adaptability

Provider discretion over delivery mode supports innovation and enables adaptation to different cohorts. The availability of both separate and integrated PLT pathways also provides some structural flexibility. However, detailed prescription of practice areas and general skills can constrain curriculum redesign, reinforce traditional practice structures and slow responses to technological change, emerging service models and evolving community needs. The separation of degree, PLT and post-admission development also makes coordinated reform difficult. The model can accommodate incremental change, but its input-focused regulation and fragmented responsibilities limit its overall adaptability.

Overall assessment

The Current Model's principal strengths are its familiarity, established infrastructure, nationally recognised baseline requirements, flexible delivery modes and multiple layers of education, assessment and supervision. Its principal weaknesses are fragmentation across the continuum, limited workplace experience before admission, uneven assurance of comparable outcomes, and the cost and duration of a separate PLT qualification. Overall, the model provides a stable and credible pathway to admission, but only partially realises the guiding principles.