Feedback Form: Review of practical legal training

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RMIT SCHOOL OF LAW

Submission to the Legal Admissions Consultative Committee

Review of Practical Legal Training

In response to the Consultation Paper of April 2026

May 2026

Submitting institution	RMIT University School of Law
Jurisdiction	Victoria
May be published	Yes
Scope of submission	Questions 1.1–1.3 (law courses) in full; Questions 2–22 where they directly affect the experience, interests, or obligations of RMIT graduates.

Executive Summary

RMIT University supports reform of the practical legal training pathway to admission. The current PLT framework is too long, too costly, and too disconnected from the realities of early career practice.

RMIT does not, however, support Proposal 1 as framed. Four concerns are identified and developed in this submission.

Concern	Summary position
1. Authority	LACC does not have power to require practical skills to be incorporated into academic programs as a condition of accreditation. The accreditation power in rule 7(1)(a) of the *Uniform Admission Rules* goes to the academic knowledge prerequisite in rule 5 and Schedule 1. Skills are the subject matter of rule 6 and Schedule 2. Implementing Proposal 1 requires legislative amendment, not an amendment to the Accreditation Standards.
2. Educational coherence	Appendix F is not suitable as an accreditation criterion for an academic qualification. It conflates admission standards with degree-completion standards, mixes performance and cognitive descriptors without taxonomic principle, omits First Nations cultural capability, and understates the significance of emerging technologies.
3. Feasibility	Genuine compliance with Appendix F — beyond the skills already embedded in law degrees — requires dedicated resourcing, staffing at AQF+1, and curriculum restructuring that cannot be achieved by 2028. The table at paragraph 28 identifies the Appendix F skills that genuinely add to existing requirements.
4. Constructive alternative	Law schools could, through self-accreditation, demonstrate substantive engagement with the Threshold Learning Outcomes (TLOs) — the existing national standard for law graduate competency. This mechanism is achievable within current regulatory authority, is calibrated correctly to degree completion, and would deliver the skills accountability the Committees seek.

On questions 2–22, RMIT's positions are set out at Part 4. RMIT's principal concerns beyond Question 1 are: the equity impact of removing AQF qualification status (and with it FEE-HELP eligibility) for PLT; the evidential inadequacy of the case for a blanket mandatory in-person delivery requirement; and the importance of retaining Supervised Workplace Training for JD cohorts.

Part 1 — Context and Scope

1. RMIT School of Law operates accredited LLB and JD programs and several dual-degree programs incorporating the LLB. RMIT is not a PLT provider. This submission addresses questions 1.1–1.3 in full, and questions 2–22 in respect of matters directly affecting the experience, interests, or obligations of RMIT graduates.
2. RMIT's programs already embed some practical capability development and opportunities for work-integrated learning. RMIT is currently revising both programs to deepen that integration. It is from this position — of genuine commitment to practical skills development, and direct operational experience of the challenges involved — that RMIT advances the concerns set out below.
3. RMIT takes no issue with the national survey data or with the case for a shorter, more practically oriented, and more affordable PLT pathway. The question is whether the mechanism chosen for Proposal 1 is within power, educationally coherent, and operationally feasible.

Part 2 — Questions 1.1–1.3: Incorporating Practical Skills in Law Courses

RMIT does not support Proposal 1. The four grounds for that position are set out below.

A. Regulatory Authority

The structure of the Uniform Admission Rules

4. The *Legal Profession Uniform Admission Rules 2015* establish the prerequisites for admission under separate and structurally distinct heads. Rule 5(1) requires demonstration of appropriate understanding and competence in each element of the academic areas of knowledge set out in Schedule 1 — the Priestley 11. Rule 6(1) separately requires acquisition and demonstration of appropriate understanding and competence in each element of the skills, values, and practice areas set out in Schedule 2 or as determined by the Admissions Committee. These are not overlapping domains.
5. Rule 7(1)(a) empowers a designated local regulatory authority to accredit a law program *for the purpose of providing the academic qualifications prerequisite* in rule 5(1). The purpose of the accreditation power is calibrated to rule 5 and Schedule 1. Practical skills are the subject matter of rule 6 and Schedule 2. The Consultation Paper itself acknowledges that the skills identified in Appendix F 'may not fit neatly' with the Schedule — that observation understates the difficulty. The more fundamental challenge is that skills are assigned to a different rule, a different schedule, and a different phase of the admission pathway.
6. A condition of accreditation requiring law schools to teach, assess, and certify competence in the Appendix F skills appears not to be an exercise of the rule 7(1)(a) power for its proper purpose. It appears to be a deployment of that power to achieve a

regulatory outcome — skill certification — that the Rules assign to PLT under rule 6 and Schedule 2. This appears to be a structural constraint inherent in the legislative scheme.

LACC's authority

7. Despite the important role of LACC in generating a consensus standard of legal education, it has no inherent statutory authority. It is a consultative body that provides a consensus-based framework of standards for use by designated local regulatory authorities. Those authorities take LACC's standards into account when accrediting courses and providers: they are not obliged to adopt them verbatim, and LACC cannot itself issue binding requirements. We suggest that LACC's power to amend the Accreditation Standards does not expand the accreditation purpose fixed by rule 7(1)(a) of the Rules.
8. RMIT's submission is therefore that LACC does not have the power to require skills to be incorporated into an academic program as a condition of accreditation; and that if the Committees intend to impose such a requirement, the proper course is legislative amendment of the Admission Rules rather than an amendment to the Accreditation Standards. That requires a foundational redrafting of the admission qualification structure, not a cosmetic adjustment.

B. Educational Coherence

Calibration to the wrong standard

9. The Appendix F preamble states that the practical knowledge and skills identified are those 'expected of persons seeking admission *after* they have completed their law degree'. Academic qualifications are calibrated to graduate competencies at the completion of the degree — not to a standard that follows from it. Appendix F therefore cannot straightforwardly function as a criterion for an academic program without first resolving how degree-completion attainment and admission standard relate to one another. That resolution is absent from the Consultation Paper.
10. The existing national consensus statement of what law graduates should know and be able to do at degree completion is the Threshold Learning Outcomes (TLOs) — the Discipline Standards for Law for both the LLB and JD. The TLOs are conspicuously absent from the Consultation Paper. Almost all of the substantive territory that Appendix F seeks to occupy is represented in the TLOs, which are calibrated correctly to degree completion and framed at the appropriate level of abstraction for an outcomes-based accreditation standard.
11. The Appendix F language compounds the calibration problem. The repeated formulation that certain skills 'should also be capable of development' in a law degree, and that others are 'inherent in obtaining a law degree', generates regulatory uncertainty. 'Should' is not a standard against which a regulator can assess compliance or a law school can design curriculum. It neither empowers a regulator to require the skill nor imposes an obligation on the academic qualification to include it.

Taxonomic incoherence

12. Appendix F conflates performance descriptors ('ability to draft a simple contract') with cognitive descriptors ('understand the importance of organising a file') without any principled rationale. These map to different levels of educational taxonomies and require different assessment instruments. A standard that does not distinguish between comprehension and demonstrated performance cannot function as an accreditation criterion.
13. Appendix F also adopts 'exposure to' as a threshold for certain items — for example, 'exposure to techniques to build resilience'. Exposure is not an assessable standard; it

does not require anything of a student that can be measured. Its presence highlights the fundamental difficulty: Appendix F was developed as a practitioner-facing skills schedule, not as a curriculum design and assessment standard. It does not translate directly to either purpose.

First Nations cultural capability: endorsement of FNLPSWP submission

14. Appendix F is silent on First Nations cultural capability. Communication sensitivity toward clients from diverse cultural backgrounds — covered by the audience-awareness provision at Communication (vi) — is not a substitute for substantive cultural competency in legal practice. In Victoria, the *Statewide Treaty Act 2025* and the Yoorrook Justice Commission's final reports of July 2025 are generating institutional obligations that will extend to tertiary education providers. A nationally adopted skills schedule that is silent on First Nations cultural capability is institutionally anomalous for Victorian law schools in particular, and inconsistent with the trajectory of legal practice obligations nationally. RMIT endorses the submission of the First Nations Legal Professional Standards Working Party, which provides a comprehensive and well-recognised and accepted basis for integrating Indigenous Cultural Competency into the qualifying law degree and beyond.

Technology: inadequate treatment

15. A single cognitive outcome — 'understand the appropriate use and limits of AI and other technologies to serve the client's best interests' — is not adequate to address what the Consultation Paper itself identifies as a transformative and growing professional risk. The comments column acknowledges that 'addressing the appropriate use of AI is also inherent in modern higher education': if that is so, the entry adds nothing. If, on the other hand, the Committees consider digital and emerging technology capabilities to be a substantive admission requirement, they require a more developed and forward-looking articulation than the current entry provides.

'Inherent' requirements

16. Of the practical knowledge and skills characterised in Appendix F as 'inherent' in obtaining a law degree, the majority are knowledge-based and assessed through instruments to which established reasonable adjustment practices already apply. One item, however, creates a structural rather than incremental difficulty under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) and the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*. Time management is identified as a skill to be taught and assessed with an ethical dimension — ensuring costs are reasonable and proportionate. Extended time is the most commonly applied reasonable adjustment for students managing ADHD, anxiety disorders, and processing conditions. Where time management is itself the competency being certified, extended time as an adjustment is in direct logical conflict with the assessment's purpose. That tension does not arise from doctrinal assessment and cannot be resolved through alternative format adjustments. RMIT submits that this item requires specific attention to assessment design before it can function as a degree-level accreditation criterion, and that the resolution consistent with both the TLOs and the Disability Standards is to address time management as a dimension of TLO 6 development rather than as a discrete assessed competency.

C. Feasibility

What Appendix F genuinely adds

17. A significant proportion of the Appendix F skills either already fall within the knowledge domain of the Priestley 11 subjects, or represent established educational practice in contemporary law degrees. The following table identifies those skills that substantively

add to existing requirements and would require dedicated teaching and assessment resources.

Category	Skill requiring dedicated teaching and assessment
Communication	Taking instructions from a client in person
Communication	Interviewing a witness and preparing a witness statement or affidavit
Client relationship	Servicing client needs in a practical way taking account of characteristics and financial position
Record-keeping	Managing time and prioritising tasks effectively at a practitioner standard
Court processes / advocacy	Appearing as a solicitor advocate in a short court application
Negotiations	Participating in a settlement negotiation of a simple commercial dispute
Negotiations	Participating in a negotiation of the terms of a simple contract
Drafting	Drafting a simple contract
Drafting	Drafting a simple Summons or Statement of Claim

18. These skills could theoretically be integrated into existing Priestley subjects. To teach and assess them properly, however, requires time currently devoted to teaching the knowledge areas; staff qualified to both teach the skills and satisfy the AQF+1 requirement for the programs in which they are teaching; physical and scheduling infrastructure to support simulations, role plays, and advocacy exercises; and assessment redesign at scale. None of these requirements is costed in the Consultation Paper.

Staffing: the AQF+1 constraint

19. RMIT, in common with all higher education providers, is required under TEQSA's standards to engage teaching staff who hold qualifications at the level above the AQF level being taught — or to be assessed as holding equivalent qualifications. For the JD in particular, this constraint substantially limits the pool of practitioner-teachers who can be engaged to design and deliver a practical skills curriculum. Where all accredited law schools are required simultaneously to recruit qualified staff for this purpose, a significant supply shortage is foreseeable but not accounted for in the Proposal.

The 2028 timeline is not achievable as described

20. New compulsory units or substantially revised units require a minimum of 18 months of university governance processes from concept to offer. Assessment infrastructure for practical skills delivery at scale — role-play facilities, simulated clients, advocacy observation — represents an additional unresolved institutional challenge for RMIT and likely for most other law schools. A 2028 start date for the full Appendix F implementation is not operationally feasible.

21. RMIT is likely to be able to accommodate modest adjustments to existing units within the 2028 timeframe. It could not implement Appendix F as described within that period — not only because of the ambiguity in its expression but also because of its apparent scope. RMIT submits that the minimum realistic lead time from a *final* report — not an interim report — is three years. That positions substantive implementation in 2029 at the earliest, subject to resolution of the authority question addressed at paragraphs 4–8.

D. Constructive Alternative: TLO-based Self-Accreditation

22. RMIT supports the principle that the academic qualification for admission to legal practice should explicitly develop and assess practical capabilities alongside doctrinal knowledge. The mechanism in Proposal 1 is, for the reasons above, neither within power nor operationally sound as framed. RMIT proposes an alternative that achieves the same accountability objective.

23. Law schools could, as part of accreditation and re-accreditation submissions, be required to demonstrate substantive and evidenced engagement with graduate attainment of the TLOs, providing a portfolio of curriculum design, learning activities, and assessment types directed to producing graduates who meet the TLO standards. This self-accreditation mechanism operates within existing regulatory authority, is calibrated correctly to degree-completion rather than post-degree admission standard, respects institutional diversity in curriculum design, avoids the AQF+1 staffing compliance burden identified above, and would deliver the skills accountability the Committees seek.

24. This approach also positions the academic qualification appropriately within the skills development continuum — as the foundation stage in which practical capabilities are introduced and scaffolded — rather than as a parallel PLT course attempting to certify admission-ready skills at degree exit. The latter is not what law schools do and is not what the *Uniform Admission Rules* require them to do.

25. RMIT notes that it has begun to map TLO skills across its programs as part of holistic learning design. This framework demonstrates, in practice, what TLO-aligned practical skills development could look like at scale — and provides a model for the kind of accreditation portfolio that a TLO-based mechanism would require.

E. Response to Consultation Questions 1.1–1.3

26. **Question 1.1:** RMIT does not support Proposal 1 for the reasons set out at paragraphs 4–21. RMIT supports the constructive alternative at paragraphs 22–25.

27. **Question 1.2:** If the skills schedule is retained in any form, RMIT submits that it should be restructured around the TLOs, calibrated explicitly to degree-completion attainment, and stripped of performance-level descriptors that belong to the PLT or PALT stages. First Nations cultural capability and substantive technology competency should be expressly included. The 'exposure to' and 'inherent in' formulations should be removed entirely.

28. **Question 1.3:** The 2028 timeline is not achievable for the full Appendix F implementation. It may be achievable for modest curriculum adjustments within existing units, contingent on resolution of the authority question. RMIT supports a staged implementation: law degree requirements from no earlier than three years after the final report; PLT and PALT reforms from 2028 as proposed.

Part 3 — Questions 2–22: PLT, Workplace Experience, PALT, Clinical Education, and Implementation

RMIT's positions on questions 2–22 are set out below. As RMIT is not a PLT provider, this Part addresses only those questions directly relevant to the interests and obligations of RMIT graduates.

PLT Reform (Questions 2.1–6.2)

29. **Questions 2.1–2.3 (PLT competency standards):** RMIT supports simplification of the PLT competency standards. The current 146-criterion framework is disproportionate and

misdirected. RMIT supports explicit inclusion of First Nations cultural capability in accordance with the recommendations of the First Nations Legal Professional Standards Working Party, and substantive responsible technology use in the revised standards. The issues addressed in question 2.3 represent diverse categories of knowledge and skill such that each represents its own sphere of inquiry. They might be dealt with according to principles outlined in paragraphs [17] and [18] above.

30. **Question 2.4 (Supervised Workplace Training):** Supervised Workplace Training should be retained. It is of particular value to RMIT's JD cohort, which includes mature-age graduates who often enter legal employment before admission. For those graduates, the supervised trainee pathway provides a more appropriate and efficient route to certification of competency.

31. **Questions 3.1–3.2 (duration of PLT):** RMIT supports a shorter PLT course. Four weeks is appropriate as an initial standard, but only once law degrees have genuinely scaffolded practical skills over the full program. The Committees should not assume that students graduating in 2028 will have completed degrees specifically designed to the new framework. The two-year review mechanism proposed in the Consultation Paper must be a binding obligation, not a discretionary exercise.

32. **Questions 4.1–4.2 (removal of AQF requirement):** RMIT does not support the removal of the AQF qualification level for PLT in its current form. The proposal's most significant consequence — loss of FEE-HELP eligibility — receives insufficient attention in the Consultation Paper. For RMIT's graduate cohort, which includes a significant proportion of students from first in family, lower socioeconomic, and non-English-speaking-background families than some peer institutions, this is not a marginal inconvenience. It is a structural barrier to admission, adding an immediate out-of-pocket cost to graduates already carrying substantial higher education debt who have not yet entered practice income. We note further that the existing cost of PLT can tend to generate distortions in the market where law graduates gravitate to employers who promise to pay PLT costs. This acts as a disincentive to graduates to follow other areas with greater demand for lawyers. Lack of funding for PLT would exacerbate this distortion.

33. RMIT notes the documented funding context and the cost of law degrees, with existing implications for enrolments of low socioeconomic status students in law. Removing FEE-HELP from PLT extends this inequity.

34. If the Committees proceed with removing the AQF requirement, they should impose, as a concurrent condition, that an income-contingent financing mechanism with equivalent eligibility conditions to FEE-HELP be made available to all PLT students regardless of AQF status. Without this, the change amounts to subsidising cost reduction for graduates who can afford to pay upfront while removing the only accessible financing pathway for those who cannot. The loss of TEQSA oversight for non-AQF courses is an additional quality risk that must be addressed through robust equivalent standards in the LACC framework.

35. **Question 5.1 (in-person delivery):** RMIT does not support a blanket mandatory in-person delivery requirement. The national survey demonstrates correlation between in-person delivery and graduate satisfaction; it does not demonstrate that in-person delivery is causally superior to well-designed synchronous online delivery for practical skills acquisition. A two-year in-person trial is currently underway in New South Wales; the results have not been reviewed. Mandating a delivery mode nationally before that evidence is available is not sound regulatory design.

36. The equity argument against a blanket mandate is compelling independently of the evidence question. RMIT's graduate cohort includes a significant proportion of students who work full-time, have primary caring responsibilities, live at a distance from metropolitan campuses, or manage disability or chronic health conditions. For JD

students — who overwhelmingly combine study with employment — a mandatory consecutive in-person block is a structural barrier, not an inconvenience. The exception-by-provider-discretion model is insufficient: it privatises equity decisions to individual providers, creates inconsistency across the sector, and places the burden of proof on the student.

37. RMIT proposes instead that the LACC require PLT providers to demonstrate that their delivery model maximises interactive, active learning and is supported by evidence of skill development outcomes — whether that model is in-person, synchronous online, or a structured blended combination. Providers who wish to mandate in-person delivery should be free to do so; providers who can demonstrate equivalent outcomes through alternative delivery should not be prohibited.

38. **Question 6.1 (assessment):** There is no objection to resubmission of assessments per se, in a competency-based system. In our view, the Consultation Paper's concern is not really about resubmission — it is about resubmission as a substitute for genuine assessment rigour. The survey finding is that assessments are widely perceived as 'hard to fail' template-based exercises that students approach without serious preparation because the stakes of a first attempt are minimal. That is an assessment design problem, not a resubmission problem. RMIT therefore supports resubmission until competency is attained, conditional on the assessment design carrying sufficient rigour that attainment of the standard is meaningful. LACC might require that resubmission is only available after feedback and a defined remediation process, and that assessments are designed so that passing them constitutes genuine evidence of competency rather than persistence.

39. **Question 6.2 (academic misconduct):** RMIT prefers retaining TEQSA aligned processes for academic misconduct reporting to avoid regulatory duplication.

Workplace Experience (Questions 7.1–12.1)

40. **Question 11.1 (workplace experience during law degree):** RMIT strongly supports allowing workplace experience completed during the law degree to count toward the PLT requirement with PLT provider certification after the event. RMIT's existing work-integrated learning and clinical programs provide supervised legal experience integrated into the degree. Requiring students who have already completed this experience to repeat it solely to satisfy PLT timing rules is an unnecessary cost and time burden, disproportionately affecting JD students and others already in legal employment. Implementing recognition of prior learning will require standards for verification of that learning.

41. **Question 12.1 (Workplace experience assistance)**: RMIT notes that placement sourcing is a significant equity issue: graduates without pre-existing professional networks — including first-in-family graduates and graduates from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds — face substantial disadvantage in securing placements without active provider support. It is appropriate for PLT providers to provide support for students to source opportunities.

Post-Admission Legal Training (Questions 13.1–19.1)

42. **Question 17.1 (in-person PALT):** RMIT's position on in-person PALT is consistent with its position at paragraphs 35–37. The same equity analysis applies: a blanket in-person mandate for PALT will exclude working lawyers, carers, and regionally located practitioners from timely access to required training, with direct consequences for their practising certificate conditions. It also ignores the practical realities of many legal practices that operate in hybrid or entirely remote mode. In person and online skills are integral to contemporary practice.

Clinical Legal Education (Questions 20.1–20.5)

43. RMIT strongly supports the inclusion of clinical legal education as a PLT component (20.1) and the establishment of a working group to develop clinical models (20.5). Aligned with a robust literature on the topic, RMIT's clinical programs demonstrate the pedagogical value of supervised, live-client, reflective legal education and its direct contribution to access to justice.

44. **Question 20.2 (mandatory or optional):** RMIT supports an optional model in the first instance, with scope for review to consider whether mandatory introduction is feasible – given that clinical education is contingent on adequate clinical infrastructure across the sector, as well as adequate funding. A mandatory requirement without sufficient *ongoing* placement capacity and appropriately resourced infrastructure, replicates the PLT workplace experience sourcing problem at larger scale. Whether clinical education is scaleable is not at all clear. Credit for clinical legal education completed at law school toward PLT workplace experience requirements is appropriate, consistent with RMIT's position at question 11.1.

45. **Question 20.4 (delivery):** University law clinics are an appropriate primary delivery vehicle. They have established governance, TEQSA-compliant supervision frameworks, existing relationships with the legal assistance sector, and staff who hold both legal qualifications and pedagogical expertise. PLT provider-led clinics are a useful supplement but must meet equivalent governance standards.

46. **Question 20.5**: RMIT supports a working group to explore the feasibility of clinical models for PLT.

Supervision and Implementation (Questions 21.1–22.1)

47. **Question 22.1 (implementation timing):** The 2028 commencement date is not achievable for law degree implementation. Staged implementation is required, and the sequencing matters. The Proposal's rationale depends on practical skills being scaffolded from the beginning of the law degree; a four-week PLT is only adequate preparation for admission if that foundation is in place. Implementing a shortened PLT before the academic qualification has been enhanced (if indeed this transpires) risks reproducing the preparedness gap the reform is designed to close. Adequate transition arrangements are also required for the substantial cohort of students who will have commenced their law degrees before any new requirements take effect — those students cannot reasonably be assessed against a framework their degree was not designed to address. Law degree implementation might occur no earlier than three years after the issue of the final report, with PLT and PLAT implementation to occur following a staged transition period.

RMIT School of Law
May 2026

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