

Feedback Form: Review of practical legal training

Respondent details

Name: Professor Catherine Renshaw

Organisation (if applicable): _Western Sydney University School of Law

Contact details: [REDACTED]

Are you responding as (select one):

- ☐ Individual
- ☒ Organisation
- ☐ Peak body / Representative group
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

Jurisdiction (select one)

- ☐ National
- ☐ Australian Capital Territory
- ☒ New South Wales
- ☐ Northern Territory
- ☐ Queensland
- ☐ South Australia
- ☐ Tasmania
- ☐ Victoria
- ☐ Western Australia
- ☐ Multiple
- ☐ Other. Please specify:

Your submission will be shared with the Admissions Committee and the Law Admissions Consultative Committee and may also be shared with the Legal Services Council.

Unless stakeholders advise us otherwise, submissions may be published on the Council's website.

May we publish your response on the Legal Services Council's website (select one)?

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No

Responses to consultation questions

Law courses	
1.1	Do you support the proposal for the LACC to amend the Accreditation Standards for Australian Law Courses to require law courses to demonstrate how they have included practical teaching and training of the practical skills identified at Appendix F, with appropriate assessment? Yes. Western Sydney University School of Law (WSU) supports the proposal to amend the Accreditation Standards for Australian Law Courses to require law courses to demonstrate how they have included practical teaching and training of the practical skills.
1.2	Do you suggest any amendments to the proposed skills schedule (Appendix F) in respect of the knowledge areas and skills to be included in the delivery of law courses, as identified in column three of the table? WSU proposes including specific reference to the development of skills related to cultural competency in respect of First Peoples of Australia.
1.3	Would law schools be able to implement these changes by the beginning of the 2028 academic year, as proposed? WSU will be able to deliver a curriculum that reflects the required changes, from commencement of the 2027 academic year. Reform of the WSU curriculum commenced in 2024, with a review of the legal profession's changing needs, and the nature of our student cohort and its expectations around employability and readiness to practice. In 2025 we undertook a major curriculum review. This year, we are processing the changes needed to implement the Review. We will commence the new, practice-aligned curriculum in 2027.
Reform of PLT – Practical knowledge and skills	
2.1	Do you support the proposal to amend the PLT Competency Standards to reflect the categories and skills set out in the skills schedule at Appendix F as the practical knowledge and skills required at the time of admission? Yes. WSU supports the proposal to amend and update the PLT Competency Standards.
2.2	Do you suggest any amendments to the categories or skills set out in the skills schedule at Appendix F? Yes, in relation to the development of skills related to cultural competency in respect of First Peoples of Australia.

2.3	Do you think that the following areas need to be specifically included in the skills schedule, either as categories or identified knowledge and skills: i. Working with clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds? ii. Preventing and addressing sexual harassment? iii. Awareness of obligations under anti-money laundering/counter-terrorism financing regulations? iv. Awareness of ADR options, or specific skills relating to ADR? v. Negotiation skills in a wider range of settings, or other specific settings? vi. Drafting any other types of legal documents? If so, what types of documents? i. Yes. A large proportion of our graduates (and those of other law schools) practice law in Western Sydney, one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse places in Australia. Skills related to working effectively and ethically with clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds is essential. ii. Yes. Given the documented prevalence of sexual harassment in the legal profession, we believe it would be appropriate to include this area as an independent category. iii. We recognise the importance of this area of practice, but we hold the view that ‘awareness’ cannot easily be translated into a skill. In our view, anti-money laundering/counter-terrorism financing regulations are better taught and assessed as an area of substantive law. iv. Yes. At present, specific skills relating to ADR are taught as part of a compulsory stand-alone subject at WSU. Following the 2025 Curriculum Review, these skills will be taught as part of Civil Procedure and in the compulsory stand-alone subject ‘Legal Practice Skills’ (Final Year). v. Yes. Our view is that negotiation skills are core to legal practice and are appropriately taught, practiced, and assessed as part of the law curriculum. vi. Yes. Students are currently introduced to basic legal documents as they relate to each Priestley area (contracts for the sale of land in Property Law; pleadings in Civil Procedure etc).
2.4	Should the option for graduates to undertake Supervised Workplace Training as a way of completing PLT be retained? Yes.
2.5	If the option of Supervised Workplace Training is to be retained, what aspects of the skills schedule should be delivered by an approved provider or as approved programmed training?

	This question is best addressed by PLT providers.
2.6	Should there be any other amendments to Supervised Workplace Training? This question is best addressed by PLT providers.
Reform of PLT – Delivery of PLT	
3.1	Do you support the proposal for the LACC to amend the PLT Standards to reduce PLT courses to be a minimum of four weeks in length, together with up to one week of pre-reading and viewing of preparatory materials? Our consultations with alumni and students suggest there is strong support for this proposal.
3.2	Do you think that a four-week period is too short or too long for a PLT course, taking into account the other proposals in relation to law courses and post admission training? We hold the view that if foundational practice skills are successfully delivered by law schools, a four-week period is appropriate for a PLT course.
4.1	Do you support the proposal for the LACC to amend the PLT Standards to provide that a PLT course may be, but does not have to be, delivered at a graduate diploma level or equivalent? Yes.
4.2	If you support this proposal, would any additional safeguards be required for PLT providers (given they would not necessarily be regulated by TEQSA)? For example, should new quality assurance measures be required in the LACC framework documents? What should those additional measures be? This question is best addressed by PLT providers.
5.1	Do you support the proposal that the LACC amends the PLT Standards to require that PLT coursework is to be delivered in person or, in exceptional cases (as determined by the PLT provider), by synchronous online delivery? Our support for the in person requirement depends on how the ‘exceptional cases’ criterion is applied. Many of our students have caring responsibilities, live long distances from public transport, and lack means to easily travel. An in person requirement would jeopardise their ability to complete PLT and enter the profession, with highly negative implications for a diverse and representative legal profession.

6.1	Do you support a review of the PLT Standards to ensure that assessments are rigorous in measuring whether students have developed the required knowledge and skills? If so, do you have any suggestions on how the Standards should be set to ensure rigorous and effective assessment? This question is best addressed by PLT providers.
6.2	Do you think that there is a need for the LACC to amend the PLT Standards to provide guidance on how incidents of academic misconduct should be recorded and reported to the admitting authorities in student conduct reports? This question is best addressed by PLT providers.
Workplace experience	
7.1	Do you support the LACC retaining the requirement for a minimum of 15 days of workplace experience prior to admission? Yes, in principle we support a requirement for workplace experience prior to admission.
8.1	Do you support the LACC updating the Standards on PLT Workplace Experience to provide more information on the types of tasks and hours allocated to the development of specific skills for students completing their workplace experience, with regard to the skills schedule at Appendix F? Do you have any suggestions on what this guidance should include? Yes, in principle we support guidance on the types of tasks and hours that should be allocated to the development of specific skills. This would serve to guide the expectations of students and workplaces. Specification of what should be included depends on the final view of what is taught in Law Schools and continuing education.
9.1	Do you support the LACC working with stakeholders to prepare guidance for supervisors on the supervision of workplace experience that addresses the purpose and requirements of workplace experience, the type of tasks to be undertaken and time allocated to them and the ethical standards and expectation of supervisors? Yes.
10.1	Do you think that legal profession regulators should review the training that is offered to lawyers who wish to improve their supervisory skills? This question is best addressed by other stakeholders.

10.2	Do you think that there is a need for additional training for lawyers who wish to improve their supervisory skills? What do you think that training should include? How could it be delivered? This question is best addressed by other stakeholders.
11.1	Do you support the LACC amending the Standards and the Standards for PLT Workplace Experience to allow a PLT provider to approve workplace experience being undertaken while the student is studying a law course? If so, should any additional safeguards or requirements be imposed on such work experience? Should PLT providers play the role of certifying that appropriate work experience has been undertaken? Yes. Allowing students to complete their workplace experience while studying would be a fair and sensible measure. The Workplace Experience should be towards the end of the law degree. PLT providers are best placed to state whether they can carry out certification.
12.1	Do you support the LACC amending the PLT Standards to set out the obligations of PLT providers to assist students in sourcing workplace experience opportunities? This question is best addressed by PLT providers.
Post Admission Legal Training (PALT)	
13.1	Do you support a new requirement being imposed for early career lawyers to undertake 15 hours of PALT in each of the first two years of practice? Is the amount of time proposed for PALT too long or too short? This requirement and time-frame seems reasonable.
13.2	Do you think it is appropriate for this requirement be implemented as a condition on practising certificates? If not, please outline what you consider to be the preferable mechanism to impose the new requirement. Yes.
14.1	Do you support the proposal for lawyers who practise exclusively as barristers to be exempt from the requirement to undertake PALT? Would this pose any issues in your jurisdiction? This question is best addressed by other stakeholders.

15.1	Do you support the proposal that PALT should be delivered in areas identified and developed by PALT providers, subject to the approval mechanisms set out separately below? This question is best addressed by other stakeholders.
15.2	Do you support the idea that lawyers can choose to undertake PALT in one practice area, or up to four different practice areas? Yes, in principle, based on our engagement with alumni, we support the idea that lawyers can choose to undertake PALT in one practice area, or up to four different practice areas.
16.1	Do you support the proposal that lawyers who are undertaking PALT should have further restrictions on their ability to practise? If so, what additional restrictions should apply? This question is best addressed by other stakeholders.
Delivery of PALT	
17.1	Do you support the proposal that PALT should be delivered in person or, in exceptional circumstances (as determined by the PALT provider), by synchronous online delivery? Please see our response at 5.1, relating to the problems of necessitating in person requirements for students with caring responsibilities and logistical challenges.
18.1	Do you support the proposal that the content and providers of PALT should be approved by the regulator that issues practising certificates to solicitors? Yes, in principle we support this proposal.
19.1	Do you support the proposal that PALT should incorporate rigorous assessment? Do you have any views on the parameters for this requirement? Yes, in principle we support this proposal.
Clinical legal education	
20.1	Do you support the Committees considering options for the inclusion of clinical legal education as a component of PLT? Yes.

20.2	If introduced, should clinical legal education be a mandatory component of PLT or an optional extra for students to undertake? If clinical legal education is a mandatory component of PLT, should students be entitled to credit for clinical legal education undertaken as part of a law degree Given the extent of reform that would be required for mandatory clinical legal education to be run at scale, and with emphasis on quality of experience and real client interaction as emphasised in the proposal, our response to this question is no. Making clinical legal education a mandatory component of PLT would create an additional hoop for students to jump through before entering the profession, involving significant time and financial resources. However, if clinical legal education is mandatory, students should be entitled to credit for clinical legal education undertaken as part of a law degree.
20.3	If clinical legal education is optional, should completion of clinical legal education satisfy the requirements for PALT? Yes.
20.4	Who should be responsible for delivering and supervising clinical legal education? It is difficult to form a view on this question without knowing whether CLE would be optional or mandatory, as this has an enormous impact on how such a program might be run.
20.5	Do you support the Committees inviting a working group comprising suitably qualified educators/experts to explore how clinical models of legal education could be employed as part of PLT? Yes.
Supervision of early career lawyers	
21.1	Do you think there is a need for additional guidance to supervisors of early career lawyers, to improve supervision? Yes. We support additional guidance for supervisors.
21.2	Do you support legal profession regulators establishing a working group to develop additional guidance and resources for supervisors of lawyers as part of their supervised legal practice and consider potential regulatory reforms?

	Yes.
Implementation timing	
22.1	Do you support the proposed transitional arrangements and implementation timeframe set out at Proposal 22? As indicated in our response to 1.34, WSU is in a position to meet the implementation timeframe.