

Programme Specification: Legal Practice Course/ Diploma in Legal Practice

Date of Publication to Students: September 2011

NOTE: This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the course and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detail on the specific learning outcomes, indicative content and the teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found (1) at <http://www.bcu.ac.uk/elss>, (2) in the Module Specifications and (3) in the Student Handbook.

The accuracy of the information contained in this document is reviewed by the University and may be checked within independent review processes undertaken by the Quality Assurance Agency.

Awarding Institution / Body:	Birmingham City University
Teaching Institution:	Birmingham City University
Interim Awards and Final Award:	Legal Practice Course Post Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice
Programme Title:	Legal Practice Course (LPC)
Main fields of Study:	Core practice areas: Business Law & Practice, Property Law & Practice, Litigation, Wills & the Administration of Estates Course skills: Practical Legal Research, Writing, Drafting, Interviewing & Advising, Advocacy Taxation, Professional Conduct & Regulation Vocational electives (a choice of 3 from) : Advanced Criminal Litigation, Business Transfers, Commercial Property, Commercial Law & Practice, Employment Law, Family Law, Housing Law & Practice, Personal Injury & Clinical Negligence, Private Client, Welfare & Immigration
Modes of Study:	Full time – one year Part time- two years
Language of Study:	English
UCAS Code:	N/A
JACS Code:	

Professional Status of the programme (if applicable):

The programme is designed to enable law graduates (and non-law graduates via the Graduate Diploma in Law route) to complete the last part of the academic stage of training as a solicitor.

The programme is subject to compliance with the regulations of the professional body, the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) for intending solicitors.

Successful completion of the LPC enables students to progress to a training contract, the final stage of training to become a solicitor. It must therefore also satisfy the requirements of the SRA found within the SRA's LPC Outcomes.

For this reason, much of the core content of the programme is dictated by the requirements of the professional body.

Relevant subject benchmark statements and other external reference points used to inform programme outcomes:

- SRA's LPC Outcomes

Programme philosophy and aims

The overarching aim of the programme is to enable successful students to demonstrate achievement of the LPC Outcomes and to prepare them for work-based learning and to provide a general foundation for practise at any type of professional legal practice.

The programme facilitates the accurate and effective research and application of knowledge of the law and legal practice.

To this end, the programme is designed with the following objectives:

- The development of reflective practitioners
- A focus on linking practice with underpinning theory
- Active and participative approaches to learning
- The acquisition and enhancement of independent learning skills appropriate for continuing professional development.

The learning support, learning and teaching strategy and assessment strategy developed specifically for the LPC has been designed to meet the requirements of the SRA's LPC Outcomes but also to meet the requirements of the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy Goals - although it is recognised that this is an organic process which is constantly developing.

Pedagogical approaches adopted throughout the programme include: realistic, transactional, problem based learning, skills practice and development, e-learning support, flexible delivery modes

The aims of the programme are to provide students with:

- A qualification accredited by the relevant professional body.
- A curriculum which provides coverage of the LPC Outcomes.
- The knowledge and skills required to enable him/her to enter a training contract with the aim of becoming a solicitor.
- An opportunity to acquire, or build upon, the self-discipline and self-motivation necessary to maximise his/her continuing professional development after completion of the programme.
- An understanding of principles of substantive law and an ability to apply those principles to legal problems.
- A sound appreciation and understanding of the need to act at all times in a manner which accords with both the letter and the spirit of the Solicitors' Conduct Rules and the Solicitors' Accounts Rules.
- An ability to deal professionally with members of the public, colleagues and officials.
- A sound appreciation and understanding of professional practice and the appropriate professional behaviour and attitudes expected of a practising solicitor.
- An opportunity to participate in teaching and learning techniques which emphasise active and participative education.
- Transferable and marketable skills, leading to employment opportunities in the legal profession and in a range of other careers.

Intended learning outcomes and the means by which they are achieved and demonstrated:

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the LPC successful Student Solicitors, under appropriate supervision, should be able to:

1. Research and apply the knowledge of the law and legal practice accurately and effectively.
2. Identify the client's objectives and different means of achieving those objectives and be aware of:
 - The financial, commercial and personal priorities and constraints to be taken into account.
 - The costs, benefits and risks involved in transaction or courses of action.
3. Perform the tasks required to advance transactions or matters.
4. Understand where the rules of professional conduct may impact and be able to apply them in context.
5. Demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills in the areas of:
 - Professional Conduct and Regulation.
 - The core practice areas of Business law and Practice, Property Law and Practice, Litigation and the areas of wills and administration of estates and taxation.
 - The Course skills of Practical Legal Research (PLR), Writing, Drafting, Interviewing & Advising and Advocacy. Students should be able to transfer skills learnt in one context to another.
6. Demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills in the three areas covered by their choice of electives.
7. Reflect on their learning and identify their learning needs.

Learning teaching and assessment methods used:

The acquisition of knowledge and understanding of the law and legal practice takes place through pre-directed reading, Large Group Sessions (interactive lectures) Small Group Sessions (practical skills based workshops), on line lectures and other directed learning activities, including the use of computer based technologies to direct and support learning.

Problem based learning within realistic, practice based, transactional case studies are developed using:

- Analysis of realistic practice based documentation.
- Small Group Sessions which facilitate experiential learning by the completion of practical skills based activities which simulate (as near as possible) those found in practice.
- Practise of the Course skills in context.

Research skills are developed using:

- Training in practical legal research.
- Technologies to support legal research.
- Dedicated research Small Group Sessions, which facilitate experiential learning and enable the student to develop and practise the skill in the context of a realistic area of legal practice.

The compulsory Course skills along with other transferable skills are pervasive and incorporated into delivery across the programme and assessments as appropriate. There are opportunities to learn, exercise and develop these skills in the context of the subjects in which they are taught. Examples of the development of these skills are seen in:

- Small Group Sessions in the Core Practice Areas and Wills & the Administration of Estates, where the assessed Course skills are delivered and practised in context. These sessions also provide the opportunity for the development of team building skills because of their collaborative nature.
- Dedicated oral skills sessions which enable the development of the Course skills of Interviewing and Advising and Advocacy.
- Personal development sessions with personal tutors for the reflection upon learning and the identification of learning needs.

Assessment methods in all modules:

- Formative assessments throughout the year in accordance with the LPC assessment schedule.
- Informal formative assessments via MCQs on Moodle and mock examinations.
- Summative assessments via examinations and formal Course skills assessments.
- Assessment criteria are published widely.
- Anonymous marking systems are in place.

Programme structure and requirements, levels, modules, credits and awards

On successful completion of the programme, students are awarded the Post Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice with a pass, commendation or distinction.

Both part and full time programmes have special induction timetables. The same compulsory subjects are delivered and assessed within both the full and part time modes of study.

The prescribed compulsory content of the LPC and its structure do not lend themselves to the standard module format of delivery. Consequently individual subject areas within the LPC are not described as modules and are not individually credit weighted.

The credit weighting attaches to the whole programme and is that of a Level 7 programme.

Support for Learning including Personal Development Planning (PDP)

Students are encouraged to identify and, with guidance, to reflect on their own learning needs and are offered the following support as appropriate to meet those needs:

- A reading list circulated before induction with specific guidance to prepare for the programme.
- An induction programme dealing with orientation, dissemination of essential introductory information, introductory sessions in the Core Practice Areas and Course skills, including research (paper and IT based).
- At appropriate points, sessions on revision and examination technique.
- A Student Handbook containing essential reference information relating to the University, Faculty, School of Law and the programme.
- Access to administrative and academic staff, including the Head of School and Programme Director at reasonable times.
- A personal tutor to advise on pastoral, academic and career issues.
- Access to Faculty resources, a range of supported IT equipment, including student email.
- Access to the services of the library, including the dedicated LPC Resource Room.
- Access to careers advice from central University advisors, the LPC Careers Tutor, and individual personal tutors.
- Assistance and support for learning skills from the University's Academic Skills Centre.
- Assistance and support for learning skills from the Faculty's Student Support Tutor.
- Access to the University's Student Services including financial advice, medical advice, disability service, crèche, counselling and chaplaincy services.

Criteria for admission

Candidates must satisfy the general admission requirements of the programme.

The current admission requirements can be found under the 'Entry Requirements' tab of the web page for this course.

Methods for evaluation and enhancement of quality and standards including listening and responding to views of students

The programme team welcomes feedback on the content and processes of the course. The LPC Programme Management team and the LPC teaching team along with the LPC Programme Director are involved in a number of mechanisms whereby the quality of the programme is periodically evaluated and improved. These include:

Committees:

- Board of Studies.
- Examination Board.
- Faculty Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee.

- Learning and Teaching Committee.
- Student Experience Committee.
- Faculty Board.
- Senate.

Mechanisms for review and evaluation:

- Individual subject by subject evaluation by students, staff and, where appropriate, stakeholders.
- Annual review of subjects by subject leaders.
- Annual course evaluation reports and action plans.
- Annual monitoring process.
- LPC Peer Observation of teaching.
- Faculty's Peer review of teaching.
- Individual performance reviews.
- External examiners' comments and formal reports.
- Regular meetings between members of the programme management team and the student representatives.
- Student representatives' feedback to Boards of Studies.
- Student feedback by questionnaire upon the induction, core practice areas and electives elements of the programme.
- Consideration of the minutes of Boards of Studies by Student Experience Committee.
- Approval and review and re-approval events.
- National Student Survey.
- Student Experience Survey.
- Programme Development Day.