



Consultation on Admission Policies of the Legal Professions

UCD Sutherland School of Law welcomes this consultation on admissions policies of the legal professions.

Following Brexit, the Sutherland School is now the largest common law university law school in the EU. It is also currently ranked the number one Law School in Ireland by [The Times Higher Education university subject rankings](#).

Under the [statutory quality assurance scheme](#), we are subject to regular, rigorous [quality assessment](#) by a team that includes international assessors leading to a publicly available report. Many Faculty hold a graduate Higher Diploma in University Education and/or are Fellows of the UK Higher Education Academy and have published on legal education in peer reviewed international academic journals.

The School provides seven different entry routes in Ireland into its undergraduate degree programmes accommodating candidates with a disability, mature students, and those who, for socio-economic reasons, might find the traditional application process difficult. The School runs several information sessions each year for students interested in progressing through one of these alternative entry routes. Once admitted to an undergraduate law programme, students are offered the opportunity for career mentoring by alumni who are established in their careers. A substantial number of scholarships are available to students on the basis of need and bursaries are offered to ensure students can avail of e.g. international exchanges, fieldwork, graduate study and internships at NGOs. These scholarships and bursaries are offered by the University, the School and private philanthropy from alumni and others through [UCD Sutherland Opportunity supported by Mason Hayes & Curran](#).

We are proud of the many alumni who have gone on to take leading positions in the legal professions in Ireland and many other jurisdictions around the world, and on the judicial bench. Today our undergraduate degrees are recognised in the England, Northern Ireland and India with exemptions being offered for several subjects by the Kings Inns.

We offer continuing professional development both through single day events and professional diplomas (one of which we run with the Law Society of Ireland).

The School response is limited to those proposals that are relevant to our mission.

3. The standard of education and training for persons admitted to practise.

4. The extent to which the admissions policies of the legal professions are consistent with the public interest in ensuring the availability of legal services at a reasonable cost, taking into account the demand for services and the need to ensure adequate education and training standards for persons admitted to practice.

The School is of the view that opening up to competition in the provision of professional training would improve quality and facilitate increased innovation and investment; more

responsiveness to the changing needs of legal consumers; enhanced skills and standards; and better value for money in professional legal education and ultimately in provision of legal services.

The Final Examination – First Part (FE-1) for qualification as a solicitor and the Entrance Examination in qualification as a barrister, results in unnecessary duplication, delay, and significant costs for those who have already obtained a law degree.

5. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020 and Brexit on the above matters.

Covid-19 required an abrupt switch to online learning. A well-established virtual learning environment, extensive online library sources and supports from the university ensured a relatively smooth transition with Faculty adjusting materials and delivery to new formats to facilitate online learning.

Covid 19 also necessitated a change from the traditional timed, unseen examinations (undertaken in very large numbers in the RDS). Our systems ensure the integrity of the assessment process irrespective of format. We had expertise, even prior to the pandemic, in many other forms of assessment closely aligned with course objectives and best pedagogic practice as informed by scholarship on legal education.

The pandemic highlights the need to move away from prescriptive rules regarding how universities assess students in order for their degrees to qualify for entry to the profession.

Under Brexit, UK qualifications, including professional legal qualifications, are no longer recognised under EU Law (subject to a grandfather clause). At the same time, under the [Common Travel Area](#), which covers the UK and Ireland, both governments acknowledge the importance of the recognition of qualifications, including professional qualifications and have committed to introducing measures to ensure that recognition.

Working in the EU, in particular as in the EU institutions, will be of growing importance as Ireland adjusts to the long term impact of Brexit. An awareness of continental legal systems (the civil law) will be of greater importance for legal education post-Brexit.