

**SHORT REPORT ON THE SESSION
ON MANAGING CHANGE IN LAW
SCHOOLS**

**CHULS RESIDENTIAL FEBRUARY
21ST 2008**



Delegates were assigned to six groups and three questions were put to two groups each. There was then a plenary session at which each group reported back.

The short summary below is garnered from my hastily scribbled headline notes on a flip chart. I am painfully aware that this is a shallow and inadequate summary but hopefully it provides some record of the deliberations. Any inaccuracies of reporting are mine and the product of coming back to outline jottings a few weeks later.

Question 1: Should there be any changes to the Joint Announcement?

Both groups thought that the Announcement should be kept in its present form. One group felt that it worked, enabled sufficient flexibility for curriculum design and was a useful tool against management in the fight for resources. They also were concerned to know what the JASB's agenda was and had had some discussion on the purposes of a Law degree.

The second group thought the QLD might not be a burning issue. However, they did think that most Law degrees might become less attractive to employers and that we should all look at a wider constituency than the large firms of solicitors and chambers.

Question 2: Are non-University degree awarding bodies likely to go into the undergraduate market seriously? How should the University sector react?

Both groups were rather pessimistic in their responses to this question. The first felt that the commercial providers would only go into the undergraduate market up to a point. However they felt that this was only one of a number of general threats and they confessed they were rather depressed about future. A positive suggestion was that we should explore the possibility (or greater possibility) of blended learning. However, they felt that University Law Schools were never going to compete with the new "commercial providers".

The second group's responses were in similar vein. They felt that Kaplan should not be underestimated and that they sought degree awarding powers. They were concerned that British HEIs were being used as a Trojan horse and that Kaplan would be a threat in the areas of distance and e-learning. This would result in a threat to the international market.

Possible solutions were to bring together a consortium of universities to set up systems for blended and e-learning and also that robust quality assurance might mitigate any threat.

However there was a further concern in the threat to HEFCE funding.

Question 3: Will all University Law Schools continue with a broadly similar offering of QLD, LLM and/or professional programmes or will there be changes? If so, what changes do you see as being most likely?

The first group felt that the QLD is tried and trusted and is a milk cow. In the end, the nature of Law degrees will be demand led and if students want professional qualification, the QLD will remain popular. It also carries kudos, even for those who do not seek legal professional qualification.

One way of balancing this and developing and diversifying would be to increase graduate schools and research. They suggested that employers should be consulted more widely and stated that degrees needed to be acceptable to employers.

Other possible developments discussed were FDs for paralegals, part-time provision and that more attention should be paid to the needs of smaller and middle range firms. They also felt that two year law degrees might increase.

The second group alluded to the pressure for employer engagement and wondered whether QLDs should become more vocational. They also felt that there might be more variation in the type of degrees offered.

As with one of the groups discussing question 2, they wondered whether HEFCE funding would be reduced or ended as a result of the removal of the cap from tuition fees. Will Law schools justify increases above the cap?

They felt that the QLD drives the market and should be retained and that non-QLDs might not recruit. A possible solution would be to have a more flexible degree that catered for both those who wished to enter the professions and those who did not.

Roger Kay

31st March 2008