

SUBMISSION BY SLTSA
CHE LLB Curriculum Project
Introduction:

The Society of Law Teachers of Southern Africa (SLTSA)/ Regsdosentevereniging van Suiderlike Afrika (SLTSA) has for some time been concerned about the effectiveness of the 4-year LLB to deliver graduates of the desired calibre. So much so, that the SLTSA initiated its own investigation into the LLB degree which was suspended in favour of the current CHE project. The SLTSA was thus grateful to receive an invitation to make submissions. Council members were invited to extend the invitation to members of their institutions and to send these to the President for inclusion in this submission. Sadly there were few responses. **The following submission** is thus possibly not representative of the views of the majority of legal academics but merely **reflects the views of those who responded**. The views of other legal academics will be revealed through their responses to the questionnaire distributed by CHE.

Purpose of the LLB programme:

It is the view of the majority of respondents that the purpose of the LLB degree is to produce well-rounded graduates who are capable of dealing with legal concepts in a meaningful way and, thereby, contributing to law and society. As a generic legal qualification, it is not the sole purpose of the LLB to produce LLB graduates suited to the legal profession as such, but to equip graduates to select from a variety of career paths. To this end it must cover a very broad spectrum.

Knowledge, skills and abilities of law graduates:

- Graduates must be capable of engaging with a variety of legal materials (Statutes, case reports, textbooks, journal articles, legal documents, etc) in a meaningful way. They must thus be able to read, understand, analyse critically and apply the contents of these materials in an appropriate manner.
- Graduates must master an extensive body of legal knowledge across a broad spectrum of legal disciplines. They must develop an understanding of the historical and jurisprudential underpinnings of the law in order to fully comprehend the operation of the legal system.
- Graduates must develop oral and written communication skills. Language is of paramount importance.
- Thinking skills are also a prerequisite for law graduates. They must learn how to identify legal problems and issues, to consider and analyse them critically and to think innovatively around possible solutions that are socially and culturally sensitive.
- Research skills are essential for law graduates both for ensuring their knowledge remains current and in developing solutions to legal problems.
- Numeracy skills are also vital.

To what extent does the 4-year LLB facilitate the acquisition of the above skills?

The 4-year LLB is facilitating acquisition of these various skills. However, the extent to which it is successful in this differs from institution to institution and is subject to a number of factors including available resources, both financial and human, the caliber of students entering the programme, the size of classes, etcetera.

Challenges and difficulties faced by LLB students in acquiring skills:

The overriding problem encountered by students is their under-preparedness for university studies. They encounter academic barriers posed by the language of learning, the size of the classes, the challenges of achieving academically while struggling with financial difficulties, etcetera.

Challenges facing universities in preparing LLB graduates for professional career paths:

Faculties of Law are faced with students who are under-prepared for further studies and cannot, given the scope of the content of the LLB programme and the limited human and financial resources, dedicate sufficient time to bridging the gap between the secondary school system and the University system. Large class sizes prevent the individualized teaching that many students require to perform at the expected level.

Many students do achieve the desired skills levels and go on to enjoy success in postgraduate study or in their various career paths. The Universities are not, however, exclusively focused on supplying graduates to the profession and rely on the profession to supply the further practical training required to suit the graduate to the specific demands of the legal profession itself.

Recommendations:

There does not appear to be unanimity on what the LLB programme should look like. Many support the view that the LLB should revert to a postgraduate Bachelor's degree, while others support the call for the extension of the LLB programme for a further year. There is little consensus on what should be taught in the extended period. Many legal academics support the need to widen the exposure of law students to non-legal subjects while others support the view that the first year should be dedicated to bridging the gap between secondary school and university. Still others see no difficulty with the 4-year LLB and would call for increased resource allocation to increase its efficacy. Should this CHE project reveal a need to extend the LLB programme widespread consultation will be needed in order to determine the form the extra year should take.

About the SLTSA:

The Society of Law Teachers of Southern Africa (SLTSA)/ Regsdosentevereniging van Suidelike Afrika promotes research and teaching in the field of law, furthers the professional interests of its membership and acts as the mouthpiece of legal academics. Should you require more information relating to the Society please contact the Secretary on tebogo.morajane@up.ac.za or the President on caroline.nicholson@up.ac.za.