



From The Honorary Secretary
Professor Richard Taylor, Professor of English Law
Lancashire Law School, University of Central Lancashire, Preston PR1 2HE
Tel 01772 893069/893060;
rdtaylor@uclan.ac.uk ; www.legalscholars.ac.uk

Response of the Society of Legal Scholars to the Draft Strategic Plan 2012-15 and Draft Business Plan 2012/13 of the Legal Services Board

1. The Society of Legal Scholars is a learned society whose members teach law in a University or similar institution or who are otherwise engaged in legal scholarship. Founded in 1909, and with approximately 3,000 members, it is the oldest as well as the largest learned society in the field. The great majority of members of the Society are legal academics in Universities, although members of the senior judiciary and members of the legal professions also participate regularly in its work. The Society's membership is drawn from all jurisdictions in the British Isles and also includes some affiliated members typically working in other common law systems. The Society is the principal representative body for legal academics in the UK as well as one of the larger learned societies in arts, humanities and social science.
2. The Society welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Draft Plans and, as with previous plans, the open and co-operative approach which is evident. We are supportive of the ambition in the Chief Executive's letter of "enabling a market for education and training which is similarly diverse in the provision offered and the students and practitioners it attracts." Whilst we also agree with the internal logic of the statement that "[t]here is little point in trying to liberalise the legal services market if we continue to recruit and train lawyers for practice in a bygone age" we would not want the many changes made in recent years to legal education and training, and the further changes already in train or being contemplated, in what is an increasingly diverse and innovative sector, to be lost sight of. We therefore welcome the commitment to developing "strong partnerships with all with an interest in these issues" including "academics and commentators", a category which the SLS is uniquely well placed to represent.
3. In terms of the strategic plan, we think the priorities outlined, and the continuity of approach involved, are appropriate, including the intention "to make sure that regulation is only in place where it can be justified against real risks" (para 15). We also welcome the intention to build up the evidence base relating to the extent to which intended outcomes are being achieved, including the highly relevant one that "Education and training of the legal workforce supports the delivery of high-quality legal services" (paras 17 -18). We look forward to seeing the evaluation of impacts to date in the Board's forthcoming Annual Report.
4. In relation to the Business Plan, paragraphs 63-68, "*Developing A Changing Workforce For A Changing Market*" are of most direct relevance to the Society and we remain keen to be involved, and to be able to provide the expertise of our membership, in the discussions which are already underway under the auspices of the Legal Education and Training Review and in other contexts. To this end the Society's Legal Education Sub-Committee through its Chair, Professor Fiona Cownie, is

organising a one day conference on June 12th focussing on the way forward for the academic stage of legal education (which representatives of the Board are being invited to attend). We also applaud the commitment in para 68 to “hold seminars with stakeholders to highlight specific areas of the education and training review” and as ever we remain keen to be invited to take part in, and to be able to contribute to, any such events.

5. We have already noted the desirability of improved diversity and, in our past responses, the commitment of the HE sector in promoting this aim. We are therefore supportive of the Board’s plans to focus on the diversity data available from regulators, to analyse it and provide appropriate support to regulators where needed and to identify specific areas for policy development from the data. Again, the Society is keen to be involved in any discussions concerning these matters and to be able to contribute to the formulation of strategies to meet the challenges in this area which it is recognised are part of a wider set of challenges for HE relating to Equality and Diversity.

6. In summary we remain keen to work collaboratively with the Board in pursuing its regulatory objectives which chime quite naturally with the values inherent in the critical and evaluative approach to legal scholarship and legal education which has underpinned the work of the Society for many years.

Richard Taylor
Hon Secretary, Society of Legal Scholars
February 2012