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QUALITY ASSURING AN ELECTRONICALLY DELIVERED DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAMME

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Introduction

Within this paper, I seek to explore the quality assurance issues which should be addressed when delivering a distance learning programme electronically. The aim of the paper is to provide the reader with a framework of key issues, to provoke thought and to offer some guidance based upon my own personal experience over the last four years as Course Director of Huddersfield University's predominantly electronically-delivered PgDL (CPE) course. The starting point for providers in the UK are the Quality Assurance Agency's Guidelines on the Quality Assurance of Distance Learning ("the Guidelines").[\[1\]](#)

The QAA has also adopted a Code of Practice consisting of a series of self-contained sections covering the management of quality and standards in all teaching and learning activities, whether the programme is delivered on- or off-campus.[\[2\]](#)

The Guidelines do not have the status of a Code of Practice, but the QAA state that they "will in due course be reviewed and become the starting point for a code of practice for distance learning which will be incorporated into the wider QAA Code".[\[3\]](#) Although the Guidelines were developed in 1997, there has been no consultation with the higher education sector with regard to the adoption of a distance learning Code of Practice. Such prior consultation is set out within the Guidelines as a prerequisite[\[4\]](#), and therefore it can be assumed that there are no current plans by the QAA to incorporate a Code of Practice for distance learning into the wider QAA Code.

The Guidelines are arranged under six headings, each of which contain a number of "precepts" and outline guidance. Each heading deals with a particular theme which necessitates particular attention when the programme is delivered by distance learning. The wider QAA Code of Practice currently in force (which deals with matters such as external examining) will directly underpin the programme; the Guidelines build upon these general principles in a manner specifically targeted at distance learning programmes.

This paper will consider each of the six headings, and will examine those precepts which are considered to be most relevant to electronically delivered distance learning programmes. The discussion will include references to my experience over the last four years, during which I have acted as Course Director of the University of Huddersfield's electronically delivered PgDL (CPE) course.

The University of Huddersfield's PgDL (CPE) electronically-delivered course

Before proceeding to a discussion of the Guidelines, because the discussion will be interspersed with

references to Huddersfield's PgDL (CPE) course, it is useful to provide an outline of the course in terms of structure and delivery.^[5]

The course can be studied over one year full-time, or two years part-time. The course begins with an Introductory Programme. Before formal enrolment, students are issued with a study pack requiring them to undertake reading from two texts and to prepare written exercises on content related to the English Legal System and Legal Method. Following this reading students are required to attend the University for a period of five days for part-time students and six days for full-time students; any student who fails to attend will not be allowed to enrol onto the course. Other than this period of compulsory attendance, students can complete the course completely away from the University. During their time on-campus students will:

- Enrol with the University and receive an induction into the BlackBoard Virtual Learning Environment ("VLE")
- Receive lectures and tutorials on the English Legal System and Legal Method
- Be provided with an induction into use of a law library (traditional and electronic) and complete some library exercises
- Be introduced to legal skills - research; essay writing and problem solving
- Receive a careers talk and be directed to further sources of information
- Meet with their personal tutor

Student performance on the Introductory Programme is assessed by one 2,000 word assignment which is marked on a pass/fail basis. Having successfully completed this element of the course, students undertake the seven core law subjects (for part-time students four subjects are taken in Year One, and three in Year Two). In addition students have to complete a research project; part-time students undertake this in Year Two.

The seven subjects are delivered through the BlackBoard VLE. Students are provided with online lecture materials and directed reading, to furnish them with the fundamental knowledge required to complete a weekly tutorial. The tutorial can be submitted electronically through the VLE for individual marking and feedback, or alternatively the student can attend a face-to-face tutorial on Wednesday afternoons. Students can email their tutor through the VLE for support either before or after the tutorial. What distinguishes electronic from traditional distance delivery is the possibility with electronic delivery of engaging students in interactive tasks with the aim of achieving collaborative student learning.^[6] On this course students are required to participate in an asynchronous discussion board activity (e-tivity) each week; tutors monitor and participate in these discussions.^[7] Students have the option of attending face-to-face study weekends; three each year for part-time students, and six throughout the one year for full-time students. During these sessions, no new material is introduced; they act primarily as a review of material which has already been covered. All core subjects are assessed by one piece of coursework (25% weighting) and one unseen 3-hour exam (75% weighting). In addition, tutorial and discussion board participation is assessed on a pass/fail basis.

The QAA Guidelines on the Quality Assurance of Distance Learning

As stated above, the Guidelines are arranged under six headings (labelled Guidelines 1-6) each of which is divided into a number of precepts. The Headings are as follows:

- System design
- Programme design, approval and review
- Management of programme delivery
- Student development and support
- Student communication and representation
- Student assessment

The Guidelines state that attention to the Guidelines and precepts is intended to ensure total quality and effectiveness:

The strength of the chain of system and programme design, implementation, delivery, support, student communication and assessment, and the matters addressed in more general precepts such as those concerning external examining [which are contained in the wider QAA Code], *lies in its weakest link*. Those responsible for the overall management of a programme of distance learning should monitor all aspects of provision for weakness, and should be able to take timely corrective action at that point. (emphasis added)

This statement sums up the evaluative nature of quality assurance. Ongoing monitoring is essential to ensure that any weaknesses are rectified as soon as possible. The programme will only be as strong as its weakest link and therefore it is essential to eliminate the weakest link. However careful planning of the programme at the design stage, and thorough and appropriate scrutiny at the validation stage, can help in identifying any weaknesses so that corrective action can be taken before the programme is delivered.

We shall now consider each of the Guidelines' six headings, in order:

Guideline 1: System design - the development of an integrated approach

This guideline is directed at the institution. The institution should design and manage its operations in such a way that its distance learning programmes are underpinned by principles relevant generally to higher education, while at the same time taking into account the considerations which are specific to distance learning. An institution should set out its strategy for achieving its stated aims, and distance learning systems should be designed to give effect to that strategy. In other words it should not be alienated, separated and fragmented from the institution's aims, but it should be explicitly incorporated within.

When University approval was sought during 1997 for the delivery of the PgDL (CPE) course by electronic distance learning, this mode of delivery had not been incorporated into the University's strategic plan. No course had been validated by the University for delivery by this mode. The validation panel included a former Open University academic, and an academic from the Law Department who, by her own admissions, was non-IT competent and who had expressed hostile disapproval towards the course. The validation panel refused to validate the course, but the team was urged to resubmit its proposal the following year when some of the panel's key concerns had been addressed. We did return, and 12 months later unconditional approval was granted; this was followed by the professional bodies (through the auspices of the CPE Board), who likewise granted unconditional approval. The validation of the University of Huddersfield's first electronically delivered distance learning programme marked a turning point for the University. During 1999, when others were keen to join the march towards electronic delivery, the University began to question the applicability of its own quality assurance procedures which had clearly been designed for programmes delivered by conventional forms of teaching. I joined a working party to review quality assurance procedures for distance learning programmes. A report was published and subsequently adopted by the University's Teaching and Learning Committee. The University had made its first positive signal that it was ready and willing to embrace electronic delivery, and that in doing so it would safeguard the academic quality and standards of such programmes.

Most institutions which have embarked upon electronic distance delivery, or who are planning to, will now have amended or supplemented their quality assurance procedures to accommodate this mode of delivery.[8]

However, it is worth repeating that Guideline 1 stipulates that these procedures should be consonant with the general aims of the institution, as articulated in its strategic plan. Therefore when addressing

the quality assurance procedure issue, it is necessary to ensure that the institution's strategic plan is also reflective of the new aim of the institution, if in fact an aim of the institution is to be a provider of innovative electronically delivered programmes.

In refining its institutional strategy to accommodate the delivery of online programmes the following issues may be relevant:

- adoption by the institution of a VLE, which is supported centrally by a dedicated team. Central support, rather than individual Schools adopting their own strategy for support, can lead to a more cost effective and high quality service. The economy of scale which flows from central provision can make it feasible for a team to be allocated solely to servicing the VLE, and be responsible for its maintenance and the provision of technical/administrative support. The cost of a backup server can be shared by the whole institution rather than being the sole responsibility of individual Schools. Planned VLE software upgrades can be implemented more smoothly and effectively. Most importantly, a stable VLE is critical to the delivery of online programmes. Instability not only leads to students losing confidence (and motivation), but also to the loss of support among those innovative members of staff who have acted as the pioneers of this exciting mode of delivery.
- a central staff development team to support online tutors in designing materials and delivering the programme;
- a central registry which has in place procedures for the registration (etc) of off-campus students; and
- library and computing services' departments which are supportive of off-campus students.

In summary, this Guideline seeks to provide that the institution has taken the necessary institutional decisions, reflected in its strategic plan, to be able to support electronic delivery and that its quality assurance procedures have been amended to ensure that academic quality and standards are safeguarded and not diluted.

Guideline 2: The establishment of academic standards and quality in programme design, approval and review procedures

This guideline is directed at both the institution (with regard to quality assurance procedures) and the programme designers (the future Course Team).

Designing the programme is naturally a critical issue, and one which will be subject to the institution's quality assurance procedures as applied through the initial validation process. Some of the quality assurance issues which apply within the programme design stage are replicated within subsequent headings of the Guidelines; where such issues are better discussed more specifically under a subsequent heading, then the substance of the discussion will appear later, with a brief mention in this section.

Programme Specification

My recommendation when designing an electronically delivered programme is to draft a Programme Specification. Programme Specifications were adopted by the QAA in response to the Report of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (the Dearing Report).[9]

The purpose of the Programme Specification is to provide 'clear and explicit information for students so that they can make informed choices about their studies and the levels they are aiming to achieve'. Drafting a Specification at the design stage of a programme will focus the provider's mind on issues which are of major importance. These issues include:

- programme aims

- programme outcomes, including the teaching and learning methods which have been incorporated to enable the outcomes to be achieved, and the methods of assessment which have been adopted to ascertain whether or not these outcomes have been achieved by the student
- programme structure
- support for students and their learning
- criteria for admission, including any IT-skill requirements, and computer access
- methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning
- assessment regulations

Although the Programme Specification should be brief and concise, it is normal to refer to other documents where further information can be found (e.g. definitive course document; student handbook).^[10] Its aim is to provide a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided.

When drafting the Programme Specification it is essential that the provider complies with the QAA Qualifications Framework^[11] to ensure that the award conferred on successful students is set at the appropriate level and that there is a consistent use of qualification titles. It should also incorporate any relevant QAA subject-specific benchmark statements, the aim of which are to set minimum standards to be achieved by students for a particular award in a specific subject.^[12]

Guideline 2 makes a suggestion that a distance learning programme could be approved by the providing institution "in stages":

distinguishing *outline approval* of a programme of study and its intended design from *final approval* of a programme, or any component module, once learning materials have been prepared. (emphasis added)

The University of Huddersfield adopts this approach in that it will provide "approval in principle" which may be subject to recommendations and/or conditions, provided the materials of at least two modules have been subject to scrutiny, including external scrutiny by a subject specialist.

Skills and tools

At the design stage, it is important to consider what pre-requisites are required in respect of both staff and students in terms of the skills and tools which are needed to enable staff to deliver the programme and to ensure students can participate.

For an electronically delivered programme a minimum level of C&IT skills is essential. Students on the PgDL (CPE) course are made an offer conditional upon the student having a basic level of competence in the use of a Windows-based word-processing package, together with a familiarity of the Internet and email system. Staff require a structured staff development programme, covering not only C&IT skills and training in the use of the VLE, but also including activities related to material design and the role of an e-moderator.^[13] Minimum requirements and specifications in relation to computer hardware and software, for both students and staff, should be made explicit, together with details of any technical support provided to both parties.

Pedagogy

There should be an elicitation of how the categories of teaching and learning activity have been incorporated into the design of the programme. Categories of teaching and learning activity are quite often referred to as a "taxonomy" of teaching and learning activities. For conventionally delivered face-to-face programmes it would be rare for a validation panel to ask searching pedagogical

questions. However, for an electronically delivered programme it is critically important that the Programme Team articulates the pedagogical rationale which underpins the design of the programme and that the validation panel makes the necessary enquiries of the Team during its discussions.

A useful (and quite straightforward) taxonomy which could be used, is as follows:

- *Orientation* - provide a structured learning experience
- *Delivery* - the learning materials, key text
- *Elaboration* - Clarification based upon the needs of the student
- *Feedback and assessment*
- *Evaluation* - assessment for remediation (formative)
- *Diagnosis* - assessment for grading (summative)
- *Collaborative (active) learning* - through discussion boards and chat rooms
- *Motivation* - important to maximise learning potential

Application of the taxonomy to an electronically delivered programme will be discussed in detail under Guideline 3, below.

Given the need for an examination of the relevant pedagogical issues underpinning an electronically delivered programme, it is essential that the validation panel includes persons who have experience in electronic delivery and understand how a taxonomy of teaching and learning activities should be applied.

Annual evaluation

Once approved, the programme should be subject to an annual evaluation at institution-level. This evaluation should be specifically designed for electronically delivered programmes and should be more extensive than the normal annual evaluation for programmes delivered on-campus. The reasoning for this is that the QAA have thought it necessary to issue the Guidelines which are specific to distance learning programmes; these Guidelines being in addition to the wider Code of Practice which applies to all higher education programmes. Therefore, by implication, the annual evaluation should be considering the specific issues raised in these Guidelines, where relevant, in addition to the wider issues. The University of Huddersfield has not yet addressed this point and the requirements for annual evaluation reports are generic.

Guideline 3: The assurance of quality and standards in the management of programme delivery

This guideline includes a precept that the programme should be delivered in a manner that "provides, in practice, a learning opportunity which gives students a fair and reasonable chance of achieving the academic standards required for successful completion".^[14] The Programme Specification (discussed under Guideline 2, above) will outline the programme outcomes and the teaching and learning methods used to enable these outcomes to be achieved.

Pedagogy

In designing and delivering a distance learning programme, the relevant pedagogical issues centre around *categories of teaching and learning activity*.^[15] On a conventional course, academics are familiar with dividing their teaching into lectures, tutorials, seminars, workshops etc. However, lectures, tutorials etc. are not *categories of teaching and learning activity* and it is necessary to break them down into such categories.

There are many different taxonomies of educational objectives which are used to distinguish categories of teaching and learning activity. There is no such thing as a *correct* taxonomy; no

taxonomy could truthfully claim to cover everything. A taxonomy which I suggested could be used (under Guideline 2, above) would include the following, but not necessarily in this order:

- *Orientation* - providing a structure for learning
- *Delivery* - presentation of materials
- *Elaboration* - based upon the needs of the student
- *Feedback and assessment* - individual assessment and elaboration
- *Evaluation* - assessment for remediation (formative)
- *Diagnosis* - assessment for grading (summative)
- *Collaborative (active) learning*
- *Motivation* - justification of the activity

Pedagogy - electronic delivery

This discussion seeks to illustrate how these teaching and learning activities can be incorporated into an electronically delivered programme.

Structure

A user-friendly virtual learning environment, and a clearly structured programme (e.g. each substantive subject divided into study Units with start and end dates for the completion of each Unit, see below) will provide students with the necessary *orientation* to complete the course to the best of their ability and retain their *motivation*. Motivation is a recurring theme throughout.

Student materials

It is possible to incorporate a variety of different media into the *delivery* of student materials:

- text (including HTML)
- files (word-processed documents, slide presentations etc.)
- audio
- video

Appropriate use of different media can have a positive impact upon a student's *motivation*, however bandwidth problems can make the incorporation of video problematic.

Online library and weblinks

Online libraries and weblinks can add to the student's knowledge base, lead to a deeper learning of the subject matter and increase their *motivation*.

Online tests

Another *motivational* influence is to build in plenty of activities into the *delivery* of the student materials.

The incorporation of Multiple Choice-type Questions can provide students with more interactivity (and therefore aid their *motivation*). Current software packages provide for the creation of automated student *feedback*, thus satisfying the necessity for *formative feedback*.

Tutor support and Tutor Marked Assessments ("TMAs")

An email helpline can be utilised to enable students to obtain individual tutor guidance when problems with the student materials (which would include the online tests) arise, thus providing the student with *elaboration*.

TMAs are the ideal way to provide students with individual *formative feedback*. The face-to-face equivalent of a TMA is a one-to-one tutorial. This feedback will enable the student to know where they have gone wrong and what needs to be done to rectify the situation (*evaluation*). The TMA can be graded or ungraded; if it is graded then it satisfies the *diagnosis* activity, otherwise the formal coursework element (a *summative assessment*) would step into the breach.

Tutor support and TMAs are an important component in providing *motivation*. The University of Illinois Report on electronic delivery[16] states that tutor "attentiveness" plays a key role in *motivating* students:

If a finger can be placed on the "human touch" of teaching, the role of attentiveness in motivating the student could well be it. As we now consider the pedagogy of online instruction, this is a key element that must be kept in the translation, at least for the great many students who need motivation from the instructor. Not only must professors provide teaching over the Internet; they must also be in contact with students to assess learning.

Collaborative (active) student learning

Student interactivity can be incorporated using discussion board (asynchronous communication) and chat room (synchronous communication) features, both of which can promote collaborative student learning.

Academics the world over are divided as to the extent to which technology can be incorporated within education, in particular the extent to which an entire course can be delivered online.[17]

Suitability of a course for online delivery can depend upon the course and the student body. The University of Illinois Report has recognised that "traditional" undergraduate students benefit from '... the maturing, socialising component of an undergraduate college education and this requires on-campus presence.' This is further elaborated on within the Report:

Perhaps the most risky wholly online context is the offering of whole degrees in undergraduate education. While this mode might be justified for some place-bound students, online interconnectivity, as good as it can be, still cannot replace the human interactions of in-class, in-the-hallways, and in-the-pub situations.

In contrast, the Report states that postgraduate students 'have already gained a great deal of socialisation through their first degree, and less of this is needed ...' The PgDL (CPE) course is postgraduate in nature and therefore is *prima facie* suitable for online delivery.

Feenberg[18] has referred to Plato's denunciation of the written medium because of its failure to recreate the spontaneity of oral dialogue. The pedagogical merits of engaging in dialogue between students, and between tutors and students is well documented.[19] In Plato's view,[20] the written manuscript could not instruct a student who misunderstood its message, because of the passive form of the medium. As Feenberg has stated:

Plato holds that the technology of writing has the power to destroy the dialogic relationship which ought to occur between teacher and student. As he sees it, the medium in which we communicate determines the quality of our interactions. But this is a deeply flawed view, as many contemporary

scholars have argued. Rather, the social impact of technology depends on how it is *designed* and *used*. Writing can lend itself to ongoing dialogues between teachers and students, and speech can easily become one-sided.[21]

Plato was speaking in 1961, when the use of technology within education was light years away from what it is today, and therefore it is perhaps not surprising that he held such views as to the passivity of the written medium. It is accepted that in 1961 traditional correspondence courses provided for tutors to provide written feedback to students via snail mail, but Feenberg's rejection of Plato's views is probably harsh when placed in its historical context and in particular given the fact that Feenberg went on to state:

There is something about dialogue, and the active involvement of the teacher, that is fundamental to the educational process ...[22]

Technology was not sufficiently advanced in 1961 to incorporate synchronous written dialogue (through chat rooms) between tutor and student, or indeed between students; it was not even possible to engage in asynchronous written dialogue through discussion boards. Therefore pedagogically, Plato's rejection of the technology of writing would legitimately have carried some weight in 1961, but not now. Feenberg himself accepted that dialogue had to be 'woven into the design of any new instructional tool'.[23]

In a kind of implicit approval of Plato's views, Feenberg castigates the traditional correspondence courses because of the student's isolation:

... the Internet can do more than merely improve the traditional correspondence course; it can also be used to add human contact to an educational model that has always been relatively impersonal. Using email and computer conferencing, groups of students can be assembled in online communities where they can participate in classroom discussion with teachers on a regular basis.[24]

Feenberg stated that in reliance on the current base of experience with interactive forms of online education: '...the evidence seems clear, at least to those who have tried it: written dialogue works.'[25] He acknowledges that written dialogue is not the same as face-to-face interaction but he concludes that the former has advantages over the latter.

Jones R *et al* [26] conducted a review on whether or not Computer Mediated Communication could provide the basis for collaborative learning on the Internet, and noted that conventional face-to-face tutorials could be dominated by students of higher ability to the detriment of students of lower ability, even if the aim of the tutorial is to support collaborative learning. Similarly, other factors could inhibit a student to involve themselves in a face-to-face discussion, e.g. age, sex, ethnicity, social class. They concluded that an electronic learning environment, which incorporated discussion boards and chat rooms, could assist in alleviating this domination and neutralising the other factors.

With regard to tutor/student dialogue, Chickering and Ehrmann stated:

Communication technologies ... can strengthen faculty interactions with all students, but especially with shy students who are reluctant to ask questions or challenge the teacher directly. It is often easier to discuss values and personal concerns in writing than orally, since inadvertent or ambiguous non-verbal signals are not so dominant ... electronic mail, computer conferencing, and the World Wide Web increase opportunities for students and faculty to converse and exchange work much more speedily than before, and more thoughtfully and "safely" than when confronting each other in a classroom or faculty office ... with the new media, participation and contribution from diverse students become more equitable and widespread.[27]

Feenberg has noted that online discussions can provide a richer and deeper dialogue when compared

to face-to-face interaction. Commenting upon his involvement with an online course at the Western Behavioural Sciences Institute:

There the virtual classroom was a place of intense intellectual and human interaction. Literally hundreds of highly intelligent comments were contributed to our computer conferences each month by both students and teachers. The quality of these online discussions surpasses anything I have been able to stimulate in my face-to-face classroom.[28]

The great advantage the electronically delivered course has over its traditional correspondence counterpart is the ability to engage in collaborative learning between students, and tutors/students. However, my evaluation at the end of the first year (1998/99) of delivering the PgDL (CPE) course electronically, indicated that collaborative student learning was not being achieved.[29]. This was replicated the following academic year.[30] It was not until the current (2001/02) academic year that students started to regularly use the discussion boards. Maybe this interactivity was due to the fact that the Assessment Regulations had been amended to compel students to make contributions. A failure to do so would result in the "inactive" student not being allowed to sit the final exams with the consequence that the whole year would have to be repeated. However, all this good work sadly fell apart when we had one month of severe network problems. The compulsory nature of discussion board participation was abandoned, and once the network problems had been resolved only a handful of students (out of 58) were making contributions. We will now have to await the next academic year before a meaningful evaluation can be undertaken.

It should be noted that on this course, the aim of the discussion boards is to *facilitate* collaborative learning between students (rather than to engage in tutor/student dialogue). However, it is necessary for the tutor to be actively involved initially in the activities in order to ensure that collaborative learning is *achieved*. Once students have familiarised themselves with using the discussion boards, the tutor's presence could be less dominant. Bearing in mind what has been discussed above it might be necessary, on pedagogical grounds, for the tutor to be involved in the dialogue at all times.

Where the sole aim is to achieve student dialogue, tutor involvement has been recognised as a pre-requisite to achieving collaborative student learning by Grantham D, who has stated that, in the context of discussion boards:

I had to work quite hard to get students to make initial postings to the electronic legal forum. However, once they had made that all important first step, most of them contributed quite freely ... It is the tutor's role to lead them forward, to be alive to the need for gentle persuasion and to the timing of electronic interventions.[31]

Herberger *et al* have investigated the use of the Internet to support collaborative student learning in legal education. This requirement was also noted by them:

To keep the motivation high, the communication factor has to be emphasised and interaction has to be integrated into the didactic concept as a key factor for a successful on-line course ... To ensure effective organisation, a kind of 'on-line presence' is required - all the more because the asynchronous character of this type of exchange makes communication harder.[32]

If successfully incorporated into the programme design, discussion board and/or chat room features will undoubtedly *motivate* students. If there is tutor participation (as indeed there should be) this can satisfy the *evaluation* and *feedback* activities.

A structured programme

Incorporating all of these teaching and learning activities into a programme necessitates that its structure is planned to be effective and efficient. One of the keys to the successful delivery of a

distance learning programme is organisation and structure. When first designing a distance learning programme, in addition to drafting a Programme Specification (see Guideline 2, above), it is also recommended that a draft student handbook is prepared. This handbook should set out, *inter alia*, the student's entitlements and responsibilities; clearly articulating the teaching and learning activities which have to be undertaken. Once drafted it is sensible to let a non-academic read through it to ensure it is comprehensible.

In structuring the programme, each module (or subject) within the programme should be sub-divided into Units and students should be provided with a schedule of which Units should be completed at which stage. On the PgDL (CPE) course students are issued with a schedule of weekly activities:

Part-time Year 1

START UNIT:	SUBMIT ELECTRONIC TUTORIAL:	ATTEND FACE-TO-FACE TUTORIAL:	SUBJ:	TUTOR:
24 Sep 01 Unit(s): 1	1 Oct 01 Tutorial(s): 1	3 Oct 01 Tutorial(s): 1	Contract	Dave
1 Oct 01 Unit(s): 1	8 Oct 01 Tutorial(s): 1	10 Oct 01 Tutorial(s): 1	Public	John
8 Oct 01 Unit(s): 1 and 2	15 Oct 01 Tutorial(s): 1 and 2	17 Oct 01 Tutorial(s): 1 and 2	Criminal	1 - n/s 2 - Lynne
15 Oct 01 Unit(s): 1	22 Oct 01 Tutorial(s): 1	24 Oct 01 Tutorial(s): 1	EC	Susan
22 Oct 01 Unit(s): 2 and 3	29 Oct 01 Tutorial(s): 2 and 3	31 Oct 01 Tutorial(s): 2 and 3	Contract	George
29 Oct 01 Unit(s): 2 and 3	5 Nov 01 Tutorial(s): 2 and 3	7 Nov 01 Tutorial(s): 2 and 3	Public	Gina
... etc ...				
29 Apr 02 Unit(s): 12	6 May 02 Tutorial(s): 12	8 May 02 Tutorial(s): 12	Criminal	Mel
6 May 02 Unit(s): 10-12	13 May 02 Tutorial(s): 10-12	15 May 02 Tutorial(s): 10-12	EC	Susan

Part-time Year 2

START UNIT:	SUBMIT ELECTRONIC TUTORIAL:	ATTEND FACE-TO-FACE TUTORIAL:	SUBJECT:	TUTOR:
24 Sep 01 Unit(s): 1	1 Oct 01 Tutorial(s): 1	3 Oct 02 Tutorial(s): 1	Equity	Judith
1 Oct 01 Unit(s): 2 and 3	8 Oct 01 Tutorial(s): 2 and 3	10 Oct 02 Tutorial(s): 2 and 3	Torts	Norrie - electronic Martin - Wed tut
8 Oct 01 Unit(s): 1	15 Oct 01 Tutorial(s): 1	17 Oct 02 Tutorial(s): 1	Land	Paul
15 Oct 01 Unit(s): 2	22 Oct 01 Tutorial(s): 2	24 Oct 01 Tutorial(s): 2	Equity	Kate
22 Oct 01 Unit(s): 4	29 Oct 01 Tutorial(s): 4	31 Oct 01 Tutorial(s): 4	Torts	Norrie - electronic Martin - Wed tut
... etc ...				
29 Apr 02 Unit(s): 9	6 May 02 Tutorial(s): 9	8 May 02 Tutorial(s): 9	Land	Viv

A full-time student will complete the two schedules concurrently. The schedule of weekly activities is incorporated into the VLE's task feature so students receive timely reminders of what is required to be done in a particular week. Figures 1 and 2 below represent screenshots of the VLE illustrating the EC Law website, and how this subject has been divided up into Units.



Fig 1: EC Law, Units

monitoring mechanisms to ensure that the level of academic support is achieved and maintained.

Therefore, on the PgDL (CPE) course students are informed that tutorial feedback will be returned within 10 working days. A monitoring mechanism has been established whereby Subject Teams are required to report back (in writing) to the Course Director detailing which students have submitted and whether the feedback was returned within this 10 working-day period. Students have the facility to email individual queries to a Subject Team; these will be replied to within 2 working days. The monitoring form requires the Subject Team to stipulate whether any queries were received and if so, whether the target response time was met.

The monitoring mechanism is not just there to ensure that staff are complying with the expectations of students, but also to ensure that any student who is not participating in the course is identified so that contact can be made by the Course Director. The monitoring forms will also indicate if a student is struggling with the course (we informally grade students on a pass/fail basis) so that if necessary a student can be contacted to ascertain if any further support is required.

In addition to academic support there should be a clear statement of any administrative and/or technical support which is provided to students.

On the PgDL (CPE) course students are explicitly informed that the University does not provide them with technical support. In the handbook there is a statement to the effect that:

The University does not provide off-campus students with technical support. If you have any hardware or software problems you should contact the relevant manufacturer/provider. If you have problems with the Internet/email you should contact your Internet Service Provider.

Occasionally access to the University's server will be interrupted, and there will be no fault with your own equipment. This is a rare occurrence and such interruptions are usually of very short duration. An interruption of this nature should be apparent from the message you receive on-screen. You can telephone Computing Services on 01484 472029 [+44 1484 472029 if dialling from outside the UK] if you wish to enquire for how long the service will be interrupted.

Administration of the course is under the general supervision of the Course Director. Therefore students are advised to contact the Course Director about any administrative issues. Occasionally students may have problems accessing the Virtual Learning Environment because they have mislaid their username or password; or they may have changed their email address and require this to be updated on the system. These would be considered to be administrative matters rather than technical, and therefore they would be referred direct to the Course Director.

Staff support

Given the nature of electronic delivery, staff will require briefing, C&IT training and appropriate staff development activities.

On the PgDL (CPE) course, briefing is undertaken at the Departmental level through the Course Committee. This is the usually the forum in which the C&IT training and staff development needs of staff are initially discussed. At the end of the academic year, once student feedback has been gathered, analysed and evaluated, a Course Review Day is held to ascertain what changes are required to the programme for the start of the next academic year, and what staff C&IT training and development is required.

Throughout the delivery of an electronic distance learning programme, there must be in place sufficient monitoring mechanisms to ensure that any weaknesses are rectified at an early stage - these monitoring mechanisms will be discussed under Guideline 5, below.

Guideline 4: Student development and support

Precept 15 provides that in respect of students taught at a distance, the providing institution should "give explicit attention to its responsibility for supporting and promoting autonomous learning and enabling learners to take control of their own development". Autonomous learning should be an aim of all higher education programmes, both on-campus and distance learning. Furthermore, the QAA Qualifications Framework states that for a Bachelors degree with honours the student should have demonstrated "the ability to manage their own learning".[33]

However, autonomous learning should not be equated to individualistic and isolated learning. The benefits of working with others has been discussed above (under Guideline 3) and pedagogically it is considered essential that for electronically-delivered programmes interaction should be incorporated in the form of discussion board and/or chat room activities (e-tivities).

Online library

To promote deep learning, inquisitive and critical-thinking students a full range of resources must be made available to the student. Library resources, in particular electronic resources, are a key quality assurance issue and must be addressed.

At the University of Huddersfield, there has been a large investment in electronic resources. Law students have online access to, *inter alia*, Lexis, Westlaw, Lawtel, Halsbury's Laws, Eurolaw and a range of journals. In addition the library will liaise with publishers to obtain permission (having paid any copyright fee) to enable online access to individual journal articles, book chapters etc. The library also offers a premium service to distance learning students enabling them to order a fixed number of journal articles by email, telephone or fax. These articles can be faxed or posted to the student. A similar arrangement provides for the posting of books to a student's home address or workplace. The student will incur a fee for this premium service. The UK Libraries Plus Scheme may assist distance learning students. The Scheme is a co-operative venture between UK higher education institutions (over half are now members). It enables distance learning students to borrow materials from other libraries.[34]

Study skills

To support autonomous learning, the University of Huddersfield has developed a study skills website.[35]

It is divided into the following four sections:

- Writing and grammar
- Research methods
- Using data
- Personal skills

Other support services

Support services which are provided to on-campus students should be made available to distance learning students (where appropriate); e.g. counselling; careers advisors. With regard to careers guidance online advice should be provided within the VLE.

All students should be provided with a personal tutor who will be concerned with the student's academic and personal wellbeing throughout their period on the programme, including being the first point of contact for careers guidance. Personal tutors will have gained experience in this role in relation to on-campus students, but the range of problems faced by off-campus students can be of a

different complexity and it can be more difficult to resolve problems by distance communication. Therefore staff development activities need to be provided to ensure that staff are able to perform this new role and are aware of when it is necessary to refer the matter on to the Course Director. The Course Director needs to be aware of all the on-campus support agencies which can be called upon for assistance.

Guideline 5: Student communication and representation

This guideline is divided into two parts: providing students with full and clear information; and student representation.

Student communication

Precept 16 governs information:

A providing institution should meet the need of its students who are studying at a distance for information that is particularly full and clear about the nature of their programme of study; the relationship between achievement and assessment, academic progress and accumulation of credit; the characteristics of the distance learning system and how students interact with it.

The provision of a comprehensive student handbook, written in plain English, as discussed under Guideline 3, above, is essential. The PgDL (CPE) student handbook contains the following information:

- Studying law over the internet and time management
- Staff contact details
- Course structure, including a VLE user guide
- Assessment structure and how this is linked to the learning outcomes, together with a schedule of assignment submission dates (and any penalties for late submission) and exam dates. A "non-binding" guide to the assessment regulations is provided, including the procedure for submission of extenuating circumstances' claims. Details of arrangements for sitting exams overseas is also included.
- Course administration - who is responsible for what (academic, administrative and technical), including quality assurance and student feedback procedures.
- Personal tutor support
- Computing and library services - including details of online library facilities, special arrangements for distance learning students and the UK Libraries Plus Scheme
- Careers advice and support
- Other support services (e.g. counselling; bookshop)
- Extra-curricular activities

The handbook should be provided to students in hardcopy format and also be made available in electronic format within the VLE. The handbook may refer students to a section of the VLE for further information (e.g. the section in the handbook relating to the online library may inform students where within the VLE this is located - the VLE could then have direct links to the resources and include details of usernames and passwords).

Student representation

Precept 18 provides for student representation:

An institution should determine what means of student representation are appropriate and realistic for students on distance learning programmes of study and should provide these students with accurate information about them

The arrangements for gathering student feedback should be explicitly set out within the student handbook. For distance learning students who will never visit the campus, the obtaining of all feedback will have to be conducted by post, telephone, online forms or through a discussion board or chat room.

On the PgDL (CPE) course part-time students have the option of attending three study weekends throughout the academic year (six for full-time students). Students on the course are placed into groups for discussion board activities within each of the substantive subjects. Each group elects one of its number to be their representative at staff/student liaison meetings which are held on-campus during the study weekends. If a representative is unable to attend, then it is the representative's responsibility to find a substitute, and if no substitute can be found written comments can be forwarded prior to the meeting. Prior to the meeting the representative is required to email all group members to elicit comments (good or bad). Following the meeting (which is chaired by the Course Director) the minutes are circulated to the Course Team for comments. These comments are inserted within the minutes to indicate what action (if any) has been or will be taken. The minutes and comments from the Course Team are made available to students through the VLE. Sometimes it may be necessary to refer a key concern to the Course Committee for a policy decision to be taken. With distance learning students in particular, it is important to keep them fully informed.

But we do not just await the formal staff/student liaison meetings. The use of questionnaires (currently in word format but planned to go online later this year) are employed at key stages throughout the academic year. The questionnaires incorporate both closed (for quantitative data) and open (for qualitative data) questions.

Any weaknesses within the delivery of the programme which are identified from these questionnaires are addressed as soon as possible.

The gathering of this data culminates in the publication of the annual evaluation report which includes the minutes of the staff/student liaison committee and a summary of student feedback from their questionnaires.

Guideline 6: Student assessment

There are five precepts underscoring this guideline which are all concerned with student assessment.

Summative

Summative assessment must adequately assess students' achievement of the learning outcomes for the particular subject and/or programme. The procedures applicable to summative assessment must be sound and particular attention should be given to guarding against the possibility of plagiarism and cheating. There must be safeguards in place for students who sit any exams overseas. On the PgDL (CPE) course the University's Central Examinations Office deals with all requests and will only permit an exam to be sat at a recognised institution (e.g. British Council, University). The invigilator in charge has to submit a report with the exam paper. There has to be a careful coordination to ensure that time zone differences do not advantage any student.

The student handbook, as discussed above, should provide full information with regard to summative assessments, including an assignment submission schedule together with procedures for submission, late penalty rules, and extenuating circumstances' claim procedures; and an exam schedule, together with overseas sitting arrangements. The handbook should also include a "non-binding" translation of the assessment regulations to guide students through some of the most important issues for them, as students. Just take, as an example, a common question asked by students: "how many chances do I have to pass a module?". Now take a look at the assessment regulations for another institution and see how long it will take you to answer that basic (yet for students, quite fundamental) question!

Formative

Precept 22 provides that formative assessment should be included within the programme. On the PgDL (CPE) course those students submitting their weekly tutorials electronically for individual marking and feedback are provided with a continuous stream of formative feedback. Those who do not make electronic submissions are required to complete one piece of coursework in each subject before their final exam. Although the coursework mark goes towards the final subject mark, since it is weighted at just 25% compared to the 75% exam weighting it is arguable that the coursework provides the student with formative feedback in preparation for the exam.

I am currently involved in a pilot programme for the incorporation of multiple response type questions, using Questionmark's Perception software, to accompany the delivery of EC Law on the PgDL (CPE) course. Although this software does not provide for students to submit in-depth responses which generate automated feedback, the software is such that subtle and searching questions can be generated to test a student's knowledge and to provide them with instantaneous feedback. Although the pilot of this project has not yet finished and therefore there has been no detailed evaluation of its success or failure, the informal feedback I am receiving from students is encouraging. One student commented that she decided to take the first test while she waited for the kettle to boil; three hours later she was still taking the test. She commented that the time passed by quickly, she did not become frustrated and the test instilled in her mind basic knowledge which she considered essential to enable a successful study of this subject. A detailed evaluation will be undertaken at the end of the academic year, but the early indications are that this method of providing students with formative feedback is particularly suitable for programmes delivered electronically.

Conclusion

While the quality assuring of an electronically delivered distance learning programme has many similarities with that of an on-campus face-to-face programme, more stringent quality assurance requirements are necessary for electronically delivered programmes. Perhaps this is due partially to the fact that electronic delivery is a relatively recent phenomenon. However, conventionally delivered (as well as electronically delivered) distance learning programmes are subject to the more stringent quality assurance procedures as has been acknowledged by the QAA in its adoption of the distance learning Guidelines. This paper has addressed some of the issues raised in the Guidelines, but in no way is it intended to be an exhaustive examination of all the issues which might need addressing ... it is offered simply to provide an overview for institutions, programme teams and individuals who may be contemplating electronic delivery, and also to stimulate discussion amongst current providers of electronically delivered programmes.

APPENDIX ONE

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA IN LAW

(COMMON PROFESSIONAL EXAMINATION)

Please note: This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching, learning and assessment methods can be found in the Definitive Course Document 2001/02 and the following PGDL (CPE)

student handbooks: (i) Course; (ii) Introductory Programme; and (iii) Research Project. The accuracy of the information contained in this document is reviewed by the University and may be checked by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

1. AWARDING INSTITUTION: University of Huddersfield

2. TEACHING INSTITUTION: University of Huddersfield

3. PROGRAMME VALIDATED BY: The CPE Board (the representative body of The General Council of the Bar and The Law Society)

4. FINAL AWARD: Postgraduate Diploma in Law

5. PROGRAMME TITLE: Common Professional Examination

6. UCAS CODE: Not applicable

7. QAA BENCHMARKING GROUP: Law

8. DATE OF PRODUCTION: July 2001

9. PROGRAMME AIMS

The aim of the programme is to:

- Provide students with a systematic and inter-disciplinary understanding of the seven Foundations of Legal Knowledge:
- Contract Law;
- Criminal Law;
- EC Law;
- Equity and Trusts;
- Land Law;
- Public Law;
- Torts;

and an eighth area of law, which will satisfy the requirements set by the General Council of the Bar and the Law Society for the academic stage of legal training for those seeking to enter the legal profession of England and Wales.

- Produce critically aware and deep-thinking students, who will adopt an inter-disciplinary approach to their study of law, and who will acquire the necessary traditional and technological research skills to achieve this aim.
- Equip students with the knowledge and skills to be able to deal with complex legal issues, recognising and providing reasoned arguments in support of potential alternative solutions, sometimes in the absence of complete information.
- Provide students with the necessary intellectual and practical legal skills, such as analysis, problem-solving and legal reasoning, critical thinking and research ability to enable them to independently solve legal problems in any branch of English law not previously studied, which they may encounter in the workplace or in their pursuit of further legal study.
- Produce students with a high level of competence in their written and oral use of the English language and legal terminology.
- Provide students with the necessary key skills to enable them to develop as independent, cooperative, adaptable, reflective and evaluative individuals in preparation for employment or further legal study.

10. PROGRAMME OUTCOMES

Students who gain the award will have demonstrated knowledge and understanding, skills, qualities and other attributes in the areas set out below.

Knowledge and Understanding

A student will be expected to demonstrate:

- a) a sound understanding of English Legal Method and the English Legal System, including the institutions within which the law is administered and the personnel who practice law;
- b) a systematic understanding of the seven Foundations of Legal Knowledge (i.e. Contract Law, Criminal Law, EC Law, Equity and Trusts, Land Law, Public Law and the Law of Torts) and an eighth area of law, and a critical awareness of current issues and new insights, much of which will be at the forefront of these subjects;
- c) a comprehensive understanding of traditional and technological techniques of researching primary and secondary sources for each of these eight subjects, together with a practical understanding of how such research techniques are used to create and interpret knowledge in the subjects;
- d) originality in the application of knowledge in these eight subjects, together with a conceptual understanding that enables a critical evaluation of current research; and
- e) an understanding of some of the relevant social, economic, political, historical, philosophical, ethical, scientific and/or cultural contexts within which these eight subjects operate.

Teaching and learning methods used to enable knowledge and understanding to be achieved

The course begins with an Introductory Programme consisting of two elements:

- (i) preliminary reading and written exercises which are completed off-campus, with student support provided through an email tutor help-line; and
- (ii) on-campus tuition comprising of lectures, tutorials, C&IT induction, and library induction and exercises.

The aim of the Introductory Programme is to expose students to English Legal Method and the English Legal System, the study of law, the layout and use of a conventional law library, and the availability and use of electronic legal materials. Upon completion students will have a sufficient legal grounding to study the seven Foundations of Legal Knowledge and an eighth area of law.

The method of delivery for the seven Foundations of Legal Knowledge is through online lecture materials; tutor-directed online asynchronous discussion board activity (including group work); tutor-led electronic *and/or* face-to-face tutorials; and on-campus study weekends. Students are supported on an on-going basis through the provision of an email tutor help-line.

The method of delivery for the eighth area of law is through a self-directed research project under the supervision of an academic member of staff. Supervision is conducted by email.

Assessment methods used to enable knowledge and understanding to be demonstrated

Achievement of outcome (a) will be demonstrated by one 2000 word essay.

Achievement of outcomes (b) to (e) will be demonstrated by:

i) performance in each of the seven Foundations of Legal Knowledge, measured through:

- tutor-directed online asynchronous discussion board activity, including group work;
- electronic tutorial submission and/or face-to-face tutorial participation;
- completion of one 2000-word coursework (problem based or essay-type); and
- completion of one three-hour unseen examination,

and

ii) completion of a 4000-word research project in an eighth area of law.

Subject-Specific Skills and Other Attributes

A student will be expected to:

- a) deal with complex issues relating to the eight subjects both systematically and creatively, recognising potential alternative conclusions for particular situations and providing supporting reasons for such conclusions, and make informed judgments in the absence of complete information;
- b) communicate thoughts and ideas in writing and/or orally, to both tutors and peers, using the English language and legal terminology with care, clarity and accuracy;
- c) demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems relating to the eight subjects, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks; and
- d) research primary and secondary sources of the eight subjects using both conventional and technological techniques.

Teaching and learning methods used to enable subject-specific skills and attributes to be achieved

The method of delivery for the seven Foundations of Legal Knowledge is through online lecture materials; tutor-directed online asynchronous discussion board activity (including group work); tutor-led electronic *and/or* face-to-face tutorials; and on-campus study weekends. Students are supported on an on-going basis through the provision of an email tutor help-line.

The method of delivery for the eighth area of law is through a self-directed research project under the supervision of an academic member of staff. Supervision is conducted by email.

Assessment methods used to enable subject-specific skills and attributes to be demonstrated

Achievement of outcomes (a) to (d) will be demonstrated by:

i) performance in each of the seven Foundations of Legal Knowledge, measured through:

- tutor-directed online asynchronous discussion board activity, including group work;
- electronic tutorial submission and/or face-to-face tutorial participation;
- completion of one 2000-word coursework (problem based or essay-type); and
- one three-hour unseen examination,

and

ii) completion of a 4000-word research project in an eighth area of law.

Key Skills

A student will be expected to:

- a) work in groups co-operatively, effectively and efficiently;
- b) evaluate or assess his or her own abilities, performance and understanding, to reflect on his or her own learning and to seek advice and feedback;
- c) utilise problem-solving skills in theoretical and practical contexts;
- d) have extensive and highly developed experience in the use of electronic information management tools, including word-processing, email, use of the Internet and electronic information retrieval systems; and
- e) develop the qualities and transferable skills necessary for further study and/or employment, requiring:
 - the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility;
 - decision making in complex and unpredictable situations; and
 - the independent learning ability required to manage further study and/or continuing professional development, including the ability to manage time and prioritise tasks by working to strict deadlines.

Teaching, learning and assessment methods used to enable key skills to be achieved

Key skills pervade every activity within the programme content and assessment:

- Introductory Programme, including C&IT induction and library exercises (traditional and electronic);
- tutor-directed online asynchronous discussion board activity, including group work;
- electronic tutorial submission and/or face-to-face tutorial participation;
- 2000-word courseworks (problem based and essay-type);
- three hour unseen examinations; and
- completion of a 4000-word research project.

11. PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

The programme is available in both full-time and part-time flexible learning modes. The full-time mode is studied over one academic year, and the part-time mode over two academic years. Study is undertaken at postgraduate level. Following the Introductory Programme (which exposes students to English Legal Method and the English Legal System, the study of law, the layout and use of a conventional law library, and the availability and use of electronic legal materials) the programme is divided into seven units of study, referred to as the seven Foundations of Legal Knowledge, with an additional unit of study, the research project. Neither the seven Foundations of Legal Knowledge nor the research project carry any University credit-rating because the programme is not within the University's CATS system.

Full-time students undertake the whole programme within one academic year, whereas part-time students study four of the seven Foundations of Legal Knowledge in Year One followed by the remaining three Foundations of Legal Knowledge and the research project in Year Two.

Each of the seven Foundations of Legal Knowledge and the research project represents approximately 150 hours of student learning, not including revision and assessment.

The innovative feature of this programme is its electronic delivery, enabling students to study flexibly, and incorporating:

- online lecture materials;
- tutor-directed online asynchronous discussion board activity (including group work);
- tutor-led electronic tutorials with the option of attending weekly face-to-face tutorials;
- on-campus study weekends; and
- student support provided through an email tutor help-line.

A distinctive feature of this programme is the incorporation of tutor-directed online asynchronous discussion board activities, the aim of which is to achieve student collaborative learning and group work.

The programme is recognised by the General Council of the Bar and the Law Society as satisfying the academic stage of legal training for those seeking to enter the legal profession of England and Wales. Students who successfully complete the course can apply to proceed onto the Bar Vocational Course (for those seeking to qualify as Barristers) or the Legal Practice Course (for those seeking to qualify as solicitors).

Students who successfully complete the course can proceed onto the University's dissertation-based top-up MA Legal Studies, which is studied over one year, part-time.

12. SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS AND THEIR LEARNING

- Optional pre-programme C&IT skills workshops for those without the necessary skill-level to undertake the programme.
- Introductory Programme (supported by a student handbook) consisting of two elements: (i) preliminary reading and written exercises which are completed off-campus, with student support provided through an email tutor help-line; and (ii) on-campus tuition comprising of lectures, tutorials, C&IT induction, and library induction and exercises.
- Comprehensive Course Handbook.
- Support throughout the course via email access to tutors and the Course Director.
- Optional on-campus weekly tutorials.
- Optional on-campus study weekends.
- Research Project (supported by a student handbook) conducted under the supervision of an academic member of staff, who will be available for email consultation.
- On-campus Library/Learning Centre with the option to use the on-campus libraries of selected UK institutions through the UK Libraries Plus scheme.
- Extensive access to online legal resources.
- User-friendly electronic learning environment (BlackBoard) with a designated area for students on the programme.
- Allocation of a personal tutor to assist in the student's pastoral care with respect to, *inter alia*, personal problems, references and representation at Examination Board discussions.
- University Medical Centre.
- University Counselling Service.
- University Accommodation Office.
- University Student Service Officer.

13. CRITERIA FOR ADMISSION

The general conditions for entry onto the programme are laid down by the CPE Board, as directed by

the General Council of the Bar and the Law Society. Only persons in the following categories, as laid down by the CPE Board, shall be eligible to take the programme:

- a) persons holding a bachelors degree (other than an honorary degree) in any subject conferred by a University in the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland or by the Council for National Academic Awards;
- b) persons holding a degree (other than an honorary degree) in any subject conferred by a University outside the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland which the General Council of the Bar or the Law Society considers to be of a standard at least equivalent to that of a degree under paragraph (a) above, and to whom a Certificate of Academic Standing has been issued;
- c) persons who have attained such academic and vocational qualifications as the General Council of the Bar or the Law Society considers equivalent to a bachelors degree under paragraph (a) above, and to whom a Certificate of Academic Standing has been issued;
- d) persons who have been accepted by the General Council of the Bar or the Law Society for admission as mature students, and to whom a Certificate of Academic Standing has been issued; and
- e) persons who have been accepted by the General Council of the Bar or the Law Society as being exempt from a minimum of four subjects, which have previously been studied within a degree programme, and to whom a Certificate of Exemption has been issued.

C&IT skills

Given the nature of this programme, there is a minimum requirement of basic Windows-based word-processing skills, together with a familiarity of the Internet and email system. Students who do not have the necessary skills are invited to attend pre-programme C&IT skills workshops.

Language requirements

All students must have a sufficient command of written and spoken English to enable them to fully participate in the programme. Overseas students, whose undergraduate studies were not delivered in English, are normally required to obtain a minimum of 6.0 points in IELTS or 550 points in TOEFL.

14. METHODS FOR EVALUATING AND IMPROVING THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Quality is assessed by a process whereby all the different individual elements set out below provide a cross checking of quality. This assessment is drawn together by the annual report for the programme, which is considered internally by the Department of Law and the Business School (within which the Department is grouped), and externally by the CPE Board. At the end of each academic year, before the summer break, a Programme Team Review Day is held to consider changes to programme delivery for the subsequent academic year, and to undertake any staff development activities which are necessary to implement the changes. The individual elements employed to evaluate the quality of standards and teaching, and which contribute to their continued improvement are:

- Programme annual report, prepared by the Course Director and considered by the Department's Programme Committee, the Huddersfield University Business School's Course Monitoring Committee, and the CPE Board.
- Two Programme Committees during each academic year, whose membership includes students undertaking the programme.
- Minutes of Staff/Student Liaison Committees, together with staff responses.
- End-of-year student questionnaires.

- External Examiners' reports.
- Programme Team annual review day.
- Peer observation of teaching.
- Annual staff personal development review.
- Committees responsible for evaluating the quality of the education provision, include:
 - Staff/Student Liaison Committee.
 - Huddersfield University Business School's Teaching and Learning Committee.
 - Huddersfield University Business School's Course Monitoring Sub-Committee.

15. REGULATION OF ASSESSMENT

The Assessment Regulations take into account the criteria set out by the CPE Board in its various policy documents. The University has separate Assessment and Student Regulations which cover, *inter alia*, disciplinary procedures for alleged cheating or plagiarism, and appeal procedures. If there is a conflict between the CPE Assessment Regulations and the University Regulations, the CPE Assessment Regulations will take precedent.

Introductory Programme

Students must pass the Introductory Programme at the start of the programme. This is assessed on a pass or fail basis. Any student who fails at the first attempt is provided with a second attempt. This second attempt must be taken within three months of the start of the on-campus part of the Introductory Programme. A student who fails at the second attempt will be deemed to fail the programme.

The seven Foundations of Legal Knowledge

The seven Foundations of Legal Knowledge have two elements of assessment:

Online discussion board activities and tutorial participation

Discussion board activities are compulsory for all students. This is also the case with tutorial participation, which can be undertaken either by online submission, face-to-face discussion, or a combination of the two. Both online discussion board activities and tutorial participation are assessed on a pass or fail basis. Any student failing this element of the assessment strategy for any of the seven Foundations of Legal Knowledge will not be entitled to sit the final examination in that subject and will be required to re-enrol the following academic year to rectify the failure.

Coursework and examination

The piece of written coursework makes up 25% of the aggregate mark for the subject, and the unseen examination makes up the remaining 75%.

The pass mark in each of the Foundations of Legal Knowledge is 40%.

It is necessary to obtain a pass (i.e. 40%) in both examination and coursework elements. A marginal failure (35% to 39%) in one element may be compensated by performance in the other element, provided the aggregate mark for the subject is not less than 40%. However, the Examination Board is only empowered to compensate students in one subject.

Research project

The pass mark for the research project is 40%.

Final assessment

If a student is completing the course over one year, full-time, and fails one or two of the Foundations of Legal Knowledge/research project, then the student can be referred in those failed. However, if a student fails more than two, then all seven Foundations of Legal Knowledge have to be retaken, plus the research project if the mark for that was less than 40%.

If a student is completing the course over two years, part-time, and fails one of the Foundations of Legal Knowledge/research project, then the student can be referred in the one failed. However, if a student fails more than one, then all Foundations of Legal Knowledge taken that year have to be retaken, plus the research project if the mark for that was less than 40%. In addition, a part-time student cannot go on to Year Two of the course until successfully completing Year One.

A student is entitled to be assessed in the seven Foundations of Legal Knowledge and/or the research project on three occasions. A student who is unsuccessful at the third attempt will fail the programme.

A student undertaking the programme on a full-time basis, over one academic year, must complete the programme within three years from the date the student started the programme. A student undertaking the programme on a part-time basis, over two academic years, must complete the programme within four years from the date the student started the programme, subject to the proviso that such a student is expected to complete the programme over two consecutive years.

The overall mark for the successful completion of the CPE and the award of the Postgraduate Diploma in Law is based on the average mark of the seven Foundations of Legal Knowledge, together with that of the research project combined (equal weighting).

Students obtaining a final overall average mark of at least 70% will be awarded a distinction. If this overall average mark is not achieved, but the student achieves a pass mark of at least 70% in four of the seven Foundations of Legal Knowledge and research project, and not less than 60% in the remainder, then the Examination Board has a discretion to award the student a distinction.

Students obtaining a final overall average mark of at least 60% will be awarded a commendation. If this overall average mark is not achieved, but the student achieves a pass mark of at least 60% in four of the seven Foundations of Legal Knowledge and research project, and not less than 50% in the remainder, then the Examination Board has a discretion to award the student a commendation.

[1] See <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/public/dlg/contents.htm>

[2] See <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/public/cop/codesofpractice.htm>

[3] See Introduction to the Guidelines, under the heading "The form and status of the guidelines".

[4] *Ditto*

[5] A publicity sheet for the course is available on the Internet at:
<http://www.hud.ac.uk/schools/hubs/course/cpe.htm>

[6] Such activities are referred to as "e-tivities" by Salmon G (2000) *E-Moderating: The Key to Teaching and Learning Online*, London: Kogan Page Limited.

[7] When monitoring and participating in these e-tivities Salmon G (2000), *ibid*, refers to tutors as

"e-moderators".

[8] See, for example, the quality assurance procedures of the University of Central Lancashire: <http://www.uclan.ac.uk/quality/vukg/dlthresholdcriteria.doc>

[9] See <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/crntwork/progspec/contents.htm> for the QAA's guidance on Programme Specifications.

[10] The Programme Specification for the University of Huddersfield's PgDL (CPE) course is included in Appendix 1.

[11] See <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/crntwork/nqf/nqf.htm>. The implementation date for the Framework is the start of the academic year 2003/04.

[12] See <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/crntwork/benchmark/benchmarking.htm>

[13] As stated above, Salmon G (2000), *ibid*, refers to e-moderators. Salmon states (at p. 3) that "A moderator is a person who presides over a meeting. An e-moderator presides over an electronic online meeting or conference, though not in quite the same way as a moderator does. Computer mediated conferencing actually requires e-moderators to have a rather wider range of expertise."

[14] Precept 13

[15] The commentary in this section does *not* consider different learning styles of students. For a discussion of the pedagogical issues in relation to this see: Montgomery M., (1998) 'Addressing Diverse Learning Styles Through the Use of Multimedia' <http://www.vpaa.uillinois.edu/tid/resources/montgomery.html>

[16] University of Illinois Report (1999) 'Teaching at an Internet Distance: the Pedagogy of Online Teaching and Learning' http://www.vpaa.uillinois.edu/tid/report/tid_report.html

[17] see, for example, University of Illinois Report (1999), *ibid*

[18] Feenberg A., (1999a) 'Whither Educational Technology', Volume 1 No. 4 *Peer Review* <http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/faculty/feenberg/peer4.html> at page 1

[19] see, for example, Chickering A.W., and Gamson Z.F., (1987) 'Seven Principles of Good Practice in Undergraduate Education' *Faculty Inventory* www.byu.edu/fc/pages/tchlrnpages/7princip.html

[20] Plato (1961) *Collected Dialogues*, New York: Pantheon Books

[21] Feenburg A., (1999a), *ibid*, at page 2

[22] Feenburg A., (1999a), *ibid*, at page 1

[23] Feenburg A., (1999a), *ibid*, at page 1

[24] Feenburg A., (1999a), *ibid*, at page 4

[25] Feenburg A., (1999a), *ibid*, at page 5

[26] Jones R. and Scully J., (1998) 'Effective Teaching and Learning of Law on the Web' 2 *Web*

Journal of Current Legal Issues <http://webjcli.ncl.ac.uk/1998/issue2/jones2.html>

[27] Feenberg A., (1999b) 'Distance Learning: promise or Threat?' <http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/faculty/feenberg/Distance> , at pages 1-2

[28] Feenberg A., (1999b), *ibid*, at page 2.

[29] Fairhurst J., (1999) 'Evaluation of an Internet-based PgDL (CPE) Course' 3 *Journal of Information, Law and Technology* <http://www.law.warwick.ac.uk/jilt/99-3/fairhurst.html>

[30] Fairhurst J., (2000) 'Huddersfield's Electronically-Delivered PgDL (CPE) Course, Part Two' 3 *Journal of Information, Law and Technology* <http://elj.warwick.ac.uk/jilt/00-3/fairhurst.html>

[31] Grantham D., (2000) 'IOLISplus - The Second Chapter' 1 *Journal of Information, Law and Technology* <http://www.law.warwick.ac.uk/jilt/00-1/grantham.html>

[32] Herberger M., Scheuermann F. and Kaufmann I. (1998) 'Collaborative Learning via WWW in Legal Education' 2 *Journal of Information, Law and Technology*, at page 9
http://elj.warwick.ac.uk/jilt/cal/98_2kauf/

[33] See <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/crntwork/nqf/ewni2001/annex1.htm>

[34] See <http://www.roehampton.ac.uk/uklibrariesplus/index.html>

[35] The website has unrestricted access and is located at: <http://www.hud.ac.uk/studyskills>