

The student-led qualitative institutional study

This research was carried out by a group of A-level law students and the respondents were clearly impressed with the origins and nature of this ambitious research project, led by Zaki Ahmad of Coulsdon College.

The research targeted the 91 higher education institutions offering the M100 LLB course and asked, on behalf of A-level law students, for university admissions tutors to 'clarify' their position with regard to the subject. I have been supplied with copies of 48 considered written replies from university administrators and academics, including Professor R. Baldwin of LSE, Professor Richard Stone of Lincoln, Professor Roger Kay of Chester, Professor David Bonner of Leicester and Professor Roger Brownsword of King's College London.

I do not have space to do justice to the wealth of material generated (full results can be obtained from Morgan Kelly at Morgan.KELLY@coulsdon.ac.uk) but the findings are summarised in Table 1.

The research findings show, once again, that the vast majority of law degree-awarding institutions are happy to accept A-level law and that many institutions see it as expressly advantageous. As Professor Roger Brownsword commented in his response: 'I agree that it should seem odd that some should advise against taking A-level law. We would not advise prospective students of, say, English, history or mathematics that they should not take these subjects at A-level... It seems to me that the obvious positive about taking A-level law is that you arrive in the university law school with some knowledge of the legal landscape together with some basic principles of English law.' Many other respondents praised those who chose the subject for expressing their interest in it, for seeing whether they would enjoy law at degree level and preparing the way, in terms of skills and commitment, for a further three years of exacting study.

The research also confirms that there are small pockets of resistance to A-level law in higher education, based either on a preference for subjects perceived as 'more demanding' or the view that students with a law background will coast in their first year degree studies, relying on superficial A-level notes. However, these comments are by far the exceptions rather than the norm.

Table 1 Research findings of Zaki Ahmad and others, Coulsdon College (2009)

Institution	A-level law considered advantageous	A-level law treated the same as other A-levels	A-level law not preferred
Anglia Ruskin University		☑	
Birmingham City University		☑	☑ (personal view expressed)
Birmingham University		☑	
University of Bolton	☑	☑	
BPP Law School	N/A Offer not based on UCAS points but on BPP test/interview		
Bradford University	☑	☑	
University of Buckingham		☑	
University of Central Lancashire		☑	
Chester University		☑	
City Law School	☑	☑	
Coventry University		☑	
Croydon College	☑	☑	
University of Cumbria		☑	
De Montfort University, Leicester		☑	
Derby University		☑	
East Lancashire Institute		☑	
University of East London	☑	☑	
Edinburgh Napier University	☑	☑	
Edgehill University		☑	
University of Gloucestershire	☑	☑	
Grimsby Institute	☑	☑	
King's College London	☑	☑	
Kingston University	☑	☑	
Lancaster University		☑	☑ (personal view expressed)
University of Leicester		☑	
Lincoln University	☑	☑	
Liverpool University	☑	☑	
LSE			☑
University of Manchester			☑ (need two preferred subjects)
University of Northampton	☑	☑	
Northumbria University		☑	
Nottingham University		☑	
Oxford University		☑	
Queen's University, Belfast		☑	
University of Reading		☑	
Salford University		☑	
University of Sheffield		☑	
Sheffield Hallam University		☑	
University College London		☑	
University of Teesside		☑	
University of Ulster		☑	
University of Warwick		☑	
University of the West of England		☑	
University of Winchester	☑	☑	
Wolverhampton University		☑	
Worcester University	☑	☑	
University of York		☑	