

Minutes of CLLS Training Committee Meeting
Thursday 7 March 2024 – 09:00 – 10:30
at BPP, London Portsoken Street and by Teams

Present (Committee members):

Patrick McCann (Chair) (PM)	Kathryn Smith (KS)
Charlotte Wanendeya (vice Chair) (CW)	Nigel Spencer (NS)
Colin Shaw (vice Chair) (CS)	Kirsty Wilkins (KW)
Grace Best (GB)	Julia Robinson (JR)
Peter Carrick (PC)	
Victoria Cromwell (VC)	Camilla Brignall (clerk to the committee) (CB)
Katie Dyer (KD)	
Lindsay Gerrand (LG)	
James Harvey (JH)	
Greg Lascelles (GL)	
Charlie Moore (CM)	
Dominic Sedghi	

Apologies: Joanna Hughes (**JHu**), Rosie Warren-Cafferty (**RWC**), Louisa Mendes da Costa (**LMdC**)
Rachel Wevill (**RW**), Richard Album (**RA**)

Guests: Chris Walsh (the Law Society) (**CWa**), Graham Gaddes (**GG**), Jo Pugh (**JP**) and Caroline Lister (BPP University Law School), Jo Gubbay (**JG**) (City Century)

The chairman opened the meeting.

1. Minutes of 6 December 2023

The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

2. Welcome to new Committee members – PM

PM welcomed Julia Robinson back onto the Committee. Charlotte provided an update on the rules for joining the Committee.

3. Welcome to BPP

CW introduced JP and GG from BPP.

GG thanked the Committee for allowing BPP to host the meeting and for their work on the SQE. He also went on to talk about:

- the growth of the University, (including the School of Business and Technology) and the provision of non-legal professional qualifications;
- the fact that the University is active in a lot of sectors, not just legal, and that it is likely that BPP's clients are the same as the clients of the firms represented by the Committee;
- BPP can make their programmes relevant to not only sectors but the "real world" they are the market leaders of data and sustainability in the Country.

JP talked about SQE and apprenticeships and the ability to widen participation in the profession, including the diversity of pathways and the ability to promote social mobility.

JG added that CW will be leading on production of a guided wellbeing journey through the SQE covering: How do students look after themselves? Using mindfulness to build resilience and how to maintain positivity.

4. 2024 Year Planner – CS and PM

CS touched on some of the key things coming up:

- The upcoming workshop on “learning in law” – request for people to sign up to attend;
- SWSQF;
- City Century;
- Essay Prize – think about publicity campaign to raise depth of applications (JR – last year there was a wider pool – we should all promote it within our firms and encourage people to apply on LinkedIn). PM commented that it is “a bit of an ask” of a trainee/apprentice because of timing, but some firms manage to produce multiple applications. There is a worry that GenAI could be used to write the submissions, but there is an interview process as well.
- Returning to workshops - the next one up is the one on GenAI in June – Nigel and Chris are lined-up to work on that. A CLLS AI committee just been set up – question whether they could be involved? October – it is planned that there will be an online partner learning session. We haven’t identified anyone to run it yet but would anticipate that Greg, James and Katie would be on a panel for that. Thinking about DEI as a topic for a December workshop?

5. Update from practitioners on the “hot topics” they are encountering in practice – CB

CB asked practitioners to comment on hot topics from their practices, the following came up:

KD identified the following themes:

- Firms are increasing spend on bigger ticket items such as BD;
- wellbeing training - delivered by internal faculty rather than by external faculty;
- there is a lot more “user-generated” content. More bespoke practical application;
- It is interesting to see how different firms take a different approach to technical training – some firms have less PSL support, so lawyers need to “stay on top” of law changes etc themselves;
- There is a push for solicitor apprentices (and a move to seat rotations for them rather than remaining in one place);
- some junior people not that interested in AI – you do need champions and the right mindset to get people engaged.

JH identified the following themes:

- Increasing focus on soft skills (particularly for those who have been “pandemic trained”. There is a bit of a lag on social and presentational skills for that cohort;
- focus on “learning by doing” (giving presentations etc);
- focus on “black letter law” training – there is so much drive to be commercial that it is easy to forget you also need the black letter law. We are working with PSLs to get them involved with T&D at an earlier stage. As a result of apprenticeships and SQE we are getting PSLs involved much earlier with helping with prep for apprentices – some things can be taught and developed which are not covered by SQE. Will take first set of apprentices in Sept.

GL made five points:

- for lawyers at a junior level – emphasis on research skills (time saving functions on platforms like Westlaw);
- for lawyers at mid-level – emphasis on lawyers trying to get things into a “client ready state”;
- for senior lawyers – encouragement to develop specialisms (a bit earlier than was previously the case);
- All lawyers - soft skills on career path guidance.
- All lawyers – compliance: how to train people to make judgement calls.

6. Report back from the CLLS Annual Banquet - CB

CB reported back from the annual banquet which she and PM attended with VC, Chrissy Digings (SWSQF), Cassandra Barton and JG (City Century). In particular, mention was made of Sarah de Gay's speech which was very complimentary of the initiatives of the Committee. A copy of Sarah's speech will be circulated.

7. City Century – PM

PM and JG – City Century is in its second year and it feels very different to last year which was a roller-coaster and very experimental. This year has a different vibe and the project has pivoted to concentrate on “user experience”. The team have pulled workstreams into themes around: outreach, recruitment and employer support (supporting firms to get the journey right). They have added a housing workstream and are pulling together data to support the difference the initiative is making. City Century has entered into partnerships with UCAS, Forage (better placed applicants to take up opportunities) and continues to work with Young Professionals and Not Going to Uni, they are also working with Harris Academy who is promoting apprenticeships. Has been thrilling to see the response, almost all the “Year 1” firms have stayed on for Year 2.

City Century has been shortlisted for lots of awards (7) which is very validating.

PM - we are very noticed in the market – PM and JHu are batting away about 10 requests a week to get involved in initiatives. UCAS working on an application process incl school support for predicted grades. Thank you to BPP, ULAW and also to other universities who are innovating in this space (incl. a possible tie up between Queen Mary plus Barbri and Kings Collage London (probably in conjunction with ULaw/BPP/Barbri)) we will know more in a few months.

Currently running a programme: 10 out of 10 (Rachel and Charlie Moore for Year 1 Solicitor Apprentices) covers: attention management, resilience. Each one of those sessions will be run by a Committee member alongside a supervisor. Committee members should expect to get a request for help!

8. SWSQF Update – VC

VC thanked all of those on the Committee who were involved in the screening and interviewing process.

Have now hit over £1m (35 funding organisations) which means over the next 4 years we can support 101 candidates through the course and assessment. As a result of the latest SQE2 results we now have 11 qualified solicitors. In terms of most recent cohort we are going to fund 33 social welfare lawyers.

We are also speaking to the Access to Justice foundation who are going to support candidates with salary top-ups whilst studying.

9. Workshop – Learning in Law (19 March) Update

GB and KS – the workshop is in good shape and we have speakers for each panel session. There are currently 17 attendees so we will be making a push to recruit more. Would like to attract knowledge lawyers. “How we teach law” is one of the single most important things we need to cover

10. Essay Prize Update – CW

CW revealed the title: “How would you describe to a non-lawyer what the rule of law is?” The winner will be announced at the AGM in June. The finalists will be interviewed on 9 May.

11. Optimising LinkedIn and updates on thought leadership – CM and KS

CM had the following pieces of advice for nailing LinkedIn:

- be consistent: prompt algorithm to get your posts noticed;

- post regularly
- be authentic – people buy into people. Authenticity allows for a genuine connection to be built. What sets us apart from other committees?
- Relevancy – understand your target audience – promote content which aligns with your values. Longer posts get more interaction for CM – there is breadth to what is being posted.

CM posed some questions to think about – how often are you posting? What strategy have you used to maintain authenticity? How do you differentiate yourself? What type of content has resonated the most with your audience?

PM's advice is to be human - particularly to address imbalances in society. PM ran through his top ten posts. He doesn't think that attaching PDFs works that well, it is helpful not to write boring stuff and he also likes a bit of controversy!

KS on thought leadership pieces - there is a spreadsheet which sets out what is in the pipeline. We have hit the target of publishing one thing a week. Things where we are reposting don't get very much engagement. Leave a gap between posting and reposting on personal site. Had quite good engagement. Saturday was quite a good day for click through.

12. ESG Diploma Birkbeck – PM

PM - Birkbeck are thinking about doing a diploma for ESG which might be useful for lawyers – awaiting further info.

13. The Oxford Next Horizons – interest – PM

PM - in essence programme aimed at retiring partners.

14. SRA changes to partner/supervisor line management responsibilities – PM

PM checked whether people were aware of changes to the SRA codes of conduct – around how partners are treating employees?

15. Hook Tangaza – Post Graduate University Consortium Conference – CW

CW stated that 4 possible dates had been identified and 3 possible venues. Hook Tangaza has been provided with the options. More of which later for participation and input – they will want speakers.

16. Learning in Law – GB

GB had a meeting with RWC and two members of Learning in Law – Rosie provided a summary of CLLS priorities. The two entities are trying to get to grips on how we can overlap and get support one another.

A theme [for the upcoming conference?] is empowering human innovation. There is a free panel spot (AI focused) want to keep fee earners in the conversation so would like an AI panel member.

17. Fund to support SQE candidates from a socially mobile background – CW

CW is circling back on an agenda item from December, the proposed SQE bursary for socially mobile candidates. CB previously circulated the proposed letter and a background note. CW asked whether the Committee are in agreement with CLLTC signing it? No objections were expressed to signing the letter.

18. AOB

Louisa is interested in hearing from people, at the next meeting, about the approach their firms are taking in the signing off of qualifying work experience.

JR delighted to be back on the committee and spoke about the research-related strand of thought leadership that she's hoping to contribute now she has rejoined the committee. The idea is to connect practitioners with academics who are researching on topics relevant to learning in our firms. This would be through LinkedIn posts highlighting relevant research but also, hopefully, with the occasional event or webinar.

JR is keen to hear from any committee members who have thoughts or ideas as she shapes this (especially any academics you are particularly interested in her reaching out to or topics you'd like her to focus on).

Next month JR will be joining a panel organised by HSM Advisory on the topic of "divides in the workplace" and what we can do, or are doing, to address them. The audience will be large multinational employers and the event will be invite only. The remit is currently quite wide so although generational divides are likely to be a big focus, the conversation may also touch on other divides (geography, hybrid/non-hybrid etc). If you have any examples of things your firm has done around bridging differences or divides, or thoughts you'd like JR to reflect in the discussion on behalf of the committee, then please let JR know.

PM gave an update on 'The LLP!' (Queer Lawyer programme): 12 firms are interested. He is looking for upwardly mobile solicitors of 4+ years pqe. In brief, it is the equivalent of a "women's leadership programme" for queer people.

The chairman closed the meeting.