# INTRODUCING GROUP WORK AND PROFESSIONAL WRITING IN A BRITISH LAW SCHOOL: A PRACTICAL ASSIGNMENT AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS INSIDE THE LIBERAL V VOCATIONAL LAW DEGREE DICHOTOMY*.

*Introduciendo el trabajo en equipo y la escritura profesional en los estudios de Derecho en el Reino Unido: una experiencia práctica y su valoración por los estudiantes en la dicotomía grados liberales vs. grados vocacionales*

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## ABSTRACT

The requirement of producing employable graduates is arguably well established now in Higher Education. However, academics are resisting the idea of transforming Universities on factories that will deliver work-ready graduates. The dangers of overdoing the employability bid may entail Universities betraying their role of just forming better citizens. In this liberal v vocational degree resistance plane is where we want to situate our assignment, which introduces employability skills. In any case, we back this kind of assignment only as part of a liberal education and being aware of the criticisms that introducing skills brings as a sign of siding with the industry and the government. Our assignment promotes two employability skills to students: group work and professional writing. This project also involved collaboration with professional Careers services and a London based Law firm. The research presented on this paper wanted to identify through our students' perceptions what they felt about this kind of assignment on the first year of their Law degree. Using qualitative data based on interviews from six focus groups, we were able to analyse the data and discuss the results. Students reflects on the assignment design, the employability skills' experienced and the subject knowledge applied in practice. The positive outcomes from the data gives encouragement about presenting this activity as a worthwhile project to other tutors that want to embark on the design or adapt assignments, which involve employability skills. Furthermore, as a result of this study we want to commence similar projects in years two and three of the Law degree; in order to help our students to become effective learners, skillful professionals and better people.

## KEYWORDS

Employability skills, group work, professional writing, vocational degrees, liberal degrees, marketisation of Higher Education

**RESUMEN**

La necesidad de formar graduados preparados para el empleo parece hoy una cuestión plenamente asumida en la educación superior. Sin embargo, el mundo académico se muestra reticente a la transformación de las universidades en fabricas productoras de graduados listos para el trabajo, en la medida en que exagerar el empeño por la empleabilidad podría conllevar que aquellas traicionasen su función de formar mejores ciudadanos. En este clima de oposición entre grados liberales y grados vocacionales hemos querido situar la actividad práctica de la que damos cuenta en el presente artículo, actividad que tiene por objeto introducir habilidades de empleabilidad en los estudios universitarios, siempre y cuando ello forme parte de una educación liberal y aun siendo consciente de que tal objetivo pudiera ser visto como un signo de alineamiento con el gobierno y el mercado. La actividad, llevada a cabo en el primer curso del grado en Derecho, ha perseguido la promoción en concreto de dos habilidades de empleabilidad: el trabajo en equipo y la escritura profesional, y su desarrollo ha contado con la colaboración del servicio de empleabilidad de la Universidad y de una firma de abogados con sede en Londres. En nuestra investigación hemos querido conocer las impresiones de nuestros estudiantes, para lo que nos hemos servido de un análisis cualitativo a través de entrevistas realizadas a seis grupos de estudiantes, tras las que hemos efectuado el correspondiente análisis y discusión de los resultados. Los estudiantes reflexionaron sobre el diseño de la actividad, las habilidades de empleabilidad que experimentaron y su aplicación en la practica. Los resultados positivos de esta experiencia nos animan a recomendarla a otros profesores universitarios que quieran abordar el diseño de este tipo de actividades o, simplemente, adoptar otras en las que se introduzcan habilidades de empleabilidad. Por nuestra parte, nos proponemos llevar a cabo proyectos similares en los cursos segundo y tercero del grado en Derecho, para ayudar a nuestros estudiantes a convertirse en alumnos eficientes, profesionales habilidosos y mejores personas.

**PALABRAS CLAVE**

Habilidades de empleabilidad, trabajo en grupo, escritura profesional, grados vocacionales, grados liberales, mercantilización de los estudios universitarios

**Summary:** 1. Introduction. 2. The Liberal *versus* Vocational Dichotomy in Higher Education. 3. The Assignment in Practical Terms. 4. The Research: Results and Analysis. 4.1. Views on the Assignment Design. 4.2. Awareness Regarding Employability Skills. 4.2.a) Group Work Skills. 4.2.b) Professional Writing Skills. 4.3. Insights into Subject Learning. 5. Looking Ahead. 6. Conclusions. Appendix 1. Appendix 2. Bibliography.

## 1. Introduction.

In November 2016 the Higher Education Academy (HEA), now Advance HE, published that according to the UK Engagement Survey (UKES) just 51% of undergraduates felt that they had developed the skills that 'ready them for the world of work'.[1] This fact may not sit well in a Higher Education (HE) sector in which employability of graduates is gaining importance by the day. It is accepted now that HE students cannot be contemplated just as knowledge recipients anymore.[2] The sector expects law graduates supplied with some ideas about professionalism[3] and skills by the time they complete their degree; in order to gain employment.[4] This idea is also endorsed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA); for example in its Subject Benchmark Statement for Law (2015) it asserts: '(that) a law graduate is far more than a sum of their knowledge and understanding and is a well skilled graduate…'.[5] As expected, the employer is behind the idea of skilled graduates; the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) (2016)[6] recognized some recent improvement with graduate skills, but stressed that skills are particularly important now as 'the UK carves out a new economic role in the world and begins the process of leaving the European Union'.[7] In any case, the actual HE climate in which 'skills' are seeing as part of the package Universities should offer graduates is the backdrop for the presentation of this research. This paper shows a group work assignment that introduces professional writing and our students' perceptions on it. We believe it is the right time to stimulate conversations about introducing employability skills in the University's curriculum. However, since the introduction of skills and ideas of employability are resisted by some academics, we thought it would be fair to start this paper looking at the debate around the pursue of

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[1] UKES 2016 – undergraduates engaged on their courses but only half feel equipped for the world of work, HEA (3RD November, 2016):
https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/institutions/surveys/uk-engagement-survey-2016#section-2 [accessed 15/8/2019].

[2] JACKSON, D. (2015) "Employability skill development in work-integrated learning: Barriers and best practice" in *Studies in Higher* Education Vol. 40 nº 2, p. 351; (2) 350 at 351; GULIKES, J., BASTIANENDS, T. and KIRSHNER, P. (2004) "A Five dimensional Framework for Authentic Assessment" in *Educational Technology Research & Development* Vol. 52 nº 3, p. 67.

[3] DAGILYTE, E. and COE, P. (2014) "Professionalism in Higher Education: Important not only for Lawyers" in *The Law Teacher* Vol. 48 nº 1, p. 34; BARON, P. and CORBIN, L. (2012), "Thinking like a Lawyer, acting like a Professional: Communities of Practice as a means of Challenging Orthodox Legal Education" in (2012) *The law Teacher* Vol. 46 nº 2, p. 100.

[4] TURNER, J., BONE, A. and ASHTON, J. (2016) "Reasons why law students should have access to learning law through a skills-based approach" in *The Law Teacher* Vol. 52 nº 1, p. 1.

[5] ' QAA Benchmark for Law, 'A law student's skills and qualities of mind' in:
http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/SBS-Law-15.pdf [accessed 8/8/19].

[6] CBI/Pearson Education and Skill Survey (2016), The Right Combination, in:
http://www.cbi.org.uk/cbi-prod/assets/File/pdf/cbi-education-and-skills-survey2016.pdf [accessed 10/8/19].

[7] Ibid; foreword by Josh Hardie, deputy director general of CBI [accessed 10/8/19].

liberal *versus* vocational degrees.[8] Then we will present the assignment and its practicalities. After which, we will describe the research and data analysed and collected from the students' perceptions on the assignment. Finally, we will arrive at our conclusions and report on the consequent future' plans derived from this research.

## 2. The Liberal *versus* Vocational Dichotomy in Higher Education.

A challenge for many HE institutions, nowadays, is to encourage the design of teaching activities that encourages subject learning and employability for students,[9] and which is practical.[10] We think our assignment can fit into that blueprint. However, before we start describing our activity, as explained above, we will illustrate some opposition in academia towards pushing employability and employability skills as being part of the University's goals.[11] In fact, using employability as an indicator of quality performance for higher education, is causing distress to many academics in the front line.[12] This narrow view of a University,[13] where students are seen as future workers instead of good citizens is being resisted.[14] There is tension, as the industry and academia will have different ideas regarding what should be the attributes for graduates. In any case, the pendulum seems to swing towards the need for more practicalities in education.[15] Arguably, we can see how academic institutions are moving towards a curriculum that is responding to the market, the legal profession, parents and students' demands.[16] Unfortunately, the more theoretical side of academia is portrayed by non-academics as 'irrelevant and pretentious.' According to some authors, the danger sits on ignoring the role Universities

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[8] This expression is borrowed from the following phrase: '…arguments around the purpose of law degrees have crystallised into a liberal versus vocational dichotomy' in GUTH, J. and ASHFORD, C. (2014), "The Legal Education and Training Review: Regulating socio-legal and liberal legal education?" (2014) 48 (1) *The Law Teacher* Vol. 48 nº 1, p. 5.

[9] PEGG, A. et all (2012), "Pedagogy for employability" HEA 2012:
https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/pedagogy_for_employability_update_2012.pdf, p 11 [accessed 13/7/19].

[10] 'It is clear that people learn through mainly doing it' in UK COMMISSION FOR EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS (CES) (2008) 'Employment Skills Project. Review of Evidence on best Practice in Teaching and Assessing Employability Skills'.
http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140108132755/http://www.ukces.org.uk/assets/ukces/docs/publications/employability-skills-project.pdf, p.7 [accessed 26//6/19].

[11] WILLIAMS, G. (2003) *The Enterprising University: Reform, Excellence and Equity (*Buckingham: SRHE/Open University Press), p. 122.

[12] CANTO-LOPEZ, M. (2018) "New Challenges in the UK Legal Education landscape: TEF, SQE and the Law Teacher", in *Revista Jurídica de Investigación e Innovación Educativa (REJIE Nueva época)* nº 18, p 12.

[13] TROSTEL, P. (2015) 'It's Not Just the Money: The Benefits of College education to Individual and to Society' (Lumina Issue Papers, 2015) https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/its-not-just-the-money.pdf; SLAUGHER, S. and LESLIE, L. (1997) *Academic Capitalism: Politics, Policies, and the Entrepeneurial University* (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1997) p 9; PARKER, M. and JARY, D. (1995), 'The McUniversity: Organisation, management and Academic Subjectivity' in *Organization* Vol. 1, p. 319.

[14] KNIGHT, P.T. (2001) 'Employability and Quality', Editorial in *Quality in Higher education* Vol. 7 nº 2*,* p. 93*;* MORLEY*,* L. (2001) 'Producing New Workers: Quality, Equality and Employability in Higher Education" in *Quality in Higher Education* Vol. 7 nº 2, p. 136; LEONARD, D. (2000), 'Transforming doctoral studies: competencies and artistry" in *Higher Education in Europe* Vol. 25 nº 2, p. 182.

[15] CLINEBELL, S.K and CLINEBELL, J. (2008), 'The Tension in Business Education Between Academic Rigor and Real-World Relevance: The Role of Executive Professors." in *Academy of Management Learning & Education* Vol 7 nº 1, p. 99.

[16] SYMES, C. and MCINTRYRE (2000), *Working Knowledge: the New Vocationalism and Higher Education (*Buckingham, Open University Press).

play on helping build a better society.[17] Legal education cannot escape from the pressures depicted above. Law institutions are used to external demands; and they have been going through reviews of their curriculums for the last 50 years,[18] based on pressure from the legal profession.[19] In the 90s, academics did not want to be seen as being 'captured' by the profession; and some indicated dislike towards an idea of 'legal skills' that would only serve the profession and not society in general.[20] The administration was also on the side of industry, pushing law departments towards skills needed for the profession, more than towards theory, critical analysis or reflections.[21] Actually, some law schools, more vocational orientated, offered at that time to help reform the academic curriculum and restore a 'a sense of ethic and professionalism' that would supply better lawyers for society.[22] Afterwards, the millennia arrived with neoliberalism and globalization affecting legal education and the idea of knowledge economy as the driver of changes in education in general.[23] Internationally at this time, some governments in the OECD started pressure to transform universities into generators of work-ready graduates in a 'knowledge-based economy'.[24] Again, in the UK there were talks and debates regarding the purpose of Law Schools and their curriculums;[25] and resistance by academics to stop legal education becoming legal training:[26]

> *'The law school does not exist to service the needs of the legal professions…utility does not validate research in the university law school nor does the degree of utility increase the importance of research.'[27]*

In any case, after 2012 and the 'fee-based funding' system in English Universities[28], the new 'buzz' words came to be 'value for money' degrees.[29] As with other HE

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[17] CLINEBELL, S.K and CLINEBELL, J. "The Tension in Business Education", op. cit. 104.

[18] 'Omrod Report 1971; Benson Report 1979; Reports by the Committee on Legal education and Conduct (1992-1999) , and the Legal Education and Training Review (2013).

[19] HAND, J. and SPARROW, C. (2015) 'Crumbling, creeping or enduring – the foundations of legal knowledge at a time of training reform' in *Amicus Curiae, Winter* nº 104, p. 10.

[20] TODDINGTON, S. (1994) 'Skills, Quality and the Ideologies of Managerialism', in *The Law Teacher* Vol. 28 nº 3, p. 256.

[21] BRIGHT, S. (1991) "What, and How, Should We Be Teaching" in *The Law Teacher Law Teacher* Vol. 25 nº 1, p. 19.

[22] MAYSON, S.W. (1992) "The future of the Legal Profession' in *Nottingham Law Journal* Vol. 1, p. 8.

[23] THORNTON, M. (2001) "The demise of diversity in legal education: Globalisation and the new knowledge economy" in *International Journal of the Legal Profession* Vol. 8, p. 37.

[24] TOMLINSON, M. (2018) "Conceptions of the Value of Higher Education in a Measured Market" in *Higher Education* Vol. 75, p. 711*;* CLARK, B. (1998) *Creating entrepreneurial Universities: Organizational Pathways of transformation* (Oxford: Pergamon Press); CURRIE, J. and NEWSON, J. (1998) (eds.) *Universities and Globalization (*London, Sage).

[25] COLLIER, R. (2005) "The Liberal Law School, the Restructured University and the Paradox of Socio-Legal Studies' (Review Article) in *the Modern Law Review* Vol. 68 nº 3, p. 477; THOMASSER, C. and LAPERRIERE, R. (19999) "Faculties under influence: the infeudation of law schools to the legal professions", in F. Cownie (ed.) *The Law School – Global Issues, Local Questions.* (Routledge).

[26] COATE, K. et al. (2000) *Academic and Academic related staff, involvement in the Local, regional and National Economy* (London, Association of Law Teachers).

[27] BRADNEY, A. (2003) *Conversations, Choices and Chances: The Liberal Law School on the Twenty-First Century.* (Oxford, Hart Publishing), p. 125.

[28] 'The government raised the cap on tuitions fees for new students to £9,000 in 2012/13 and cut most ongoing direct public funding for tuitions in England in 'HE in England from 2012: Funding and Finance' HOUSE OF COMMON LIBRARY (3 April 2017):
https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN06206 [accessed 15/8/19].

[29] UNIVERSITIES UK (2017) 'Education, Consumer Rights and Maintaining Trust':
https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2017/education-consumer-rights-maintaining-trust-web.pdf  [accessed 15/8/19].

institutions in general, legal education saw providers of law degrees compelled to make changes to their services by requests of students, employers, legal services regulators and other stakeholders.[30] Incidentally, the Solicitors Regulation Authority is not helping the situation with the controversial new proposed Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE)[31] fueling the profession *versus* academy debate again.[32] Against the pressure from those pushing for a more vocational degree, we have those academics supporting the idea of a liberal education, 'education for education sake' instead of just endorsing the idea of exclusively preparing students for the world of work.[33] Liberal degrees teach students to ask the relevant questions: '…they are about thinking about "stuff" rather than knowing "stuff"'.[34] Preparing students to think about what the law 'ought' to be not just what the law 'is'.[35] It would impoverish legal education if it became just about training students for work and not for the 'pursuit of knowledge'.[36] In truth, at this point in time, legal education in the UK seems drifting towards the goals of employability and students' consumer satisfaction; both are aims that should not be considered the only way to value law degrees.[37] However, it is clear in the terms of reference for the recent 'Augar Review' that it refers to degrees as 'value for money'.[38] Unfortunately, this 'degree valuation' is demoralising law teachers.[39] Some academics are feeling that the 'raison d'etre' of Universities, which is to train future citizens to question the institutions that dominate our lives is disappearing; they fear that Universities will become places in which students will actually learn to endorse the agenda of those powerful institutions.[40] There is however a middle ground, in which the learning of skills and professional knowledge are welcomed as long as they fit in the bigger picture of what a liberal education means.[41] In this middle ground is where we would like to situate this group work and professional writing assignment, we are presenting in this publication. Hence, the design was based on an idea of employability, which should be understood as encompassing the teaching and learning of 'knowledge, skill and attributes to support continued learning and career

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[30] GUTH and ASHFORD, "The Legal Education and Training Review", op. cit., p. 5.

[31] SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY (2019) 'Solicitors Qualifying Examination: What are we trying to do' https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitorexam/ [accessed 24/6/19].

[32] MASON, L. and GUTH, J. (2018) (Guest Editors), 'Special Issue: From LETR to SQE: Reforming legal education and training in England and Wales' in *The Law Teacher* Vol. 52 nº 4, pp. 379-526.

[33] GUTH and ASHFORD, "The Legal Education and Training Review", op. cit., p. 6.

[34] Ibid. p. 7.

[35] THORNTON, M. "The demise of diversity", op. cit., p. 46.

[36] WHEELER, S. (2013) 'Dangerously, Outrageously, Elitist, - A Solution to Law Graduate Unemployment' in *Journal of Law and Society* Vol 40 nº 4, p. 670.

[37] NICHOLSON, A. (2019) 'The value of a law degree' in *The Law Teacher*.
DOI: 10.1080/03069400.2019.1633117.

[38] DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION (2018) 'Review of Post-18 education and Funding: Term of Reference':
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-post-18-education-and-funding-terms-of-reference [accessed 13/8/19].

[39] DEARLOVE, J. (1997) 'The Academic Labour Process: From Collegiality and Professionalism to Managerialism and Proletarianisation? In *Higher Education Review* Vol 30 nº 1, p. 56.

[40] ILGUNAS, K. (2013) *Walden on Wheels: On the Open Road from Debt to Freedom* (Amazon Publishing), p. 244.

[41] BRADNEY A *Conversations, Choices and Chances*, op. cit., p. 3.

development.'[42] A notion of employability that is entrenched and not alien to the aspiration of giving a 'liberal legal education' to students.[43]

## 3. The Assignment in Practical Terms.

Before we look at the methodology and consider the analysis of the data from the research into students' perceptions of the assignment, we thought it would be useful to present an outline on what our project consists on, and some of its practicalities.

*The group work and professional writing assignment:*

- The group work starts on the second tutorial (mid-October) of one of the first-year core subject in Law (Introduction to Law and Legal Reasoning) with an unusually large cohort (469 students for the first semester, 429 for the second semester)[44]; students are placed on their existing tutorial groups (which consist of not more than 8 students per tutorial group).
- The broad aim of this group work assignment is for the learners to develop the ability to work effectively as part of a group in researching, analysing and presenting legal information (professionally) in the form of an advice letter to a client (in the subject of Contract Law).
- The assignment consists of:
    o One lecture by Careers Services from the University[45],
    o One lecture by the Law school staff regarding legal skills, particularly group work and professional writing.
    o A presentation by a top London International Law Firm's Recruitment Director.
    o One tutorial dedicated to discussing with learners the reasons behind a group work assignment: indications about the importance of group rules and other tips to manage group dynamics. (Group rules need to be submitted together with the professional letter – but are not marked.). In the tutorial there is also discussions around the distinction between academic and professional writing and deliberations around the existence of different audiences for communication. (Information about Contract Law is down to the students to find out – while the material on offer and acceptance is taught at the beginning of Contract Law, our students are not allowed to ask Contract Law' teachers)
- Students are given the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) for this activity, together with the rest of instructions to complete the task (APPENDIX 1).
- After the lectures, presentation and tutorial, students arrange independently further meetings to complete the group work assignment and write the letter of advice.
- After the submission date, letters are marked following specific assessment criteria created for this task, (APPENDIX 2). The assessment criteria was given

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[42] UK COMMISSION FOR EMPLOYEMENT AND SKILLS (CES) (closed in March 2017) 'Employment Skills Project. Review of Evidence on best Practice in Teaching and Assessing Employability Skills' (2008): http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140108132755/http://www.ukces.org.uk/assets/ukces/docs/publications/employability-skills-project.pdf , p. 7 [accessed 28th September 2017]

[43] RIGG D (2013) "Embedding employability in Assessment: Searching for the balance between academic learning and skills development in law: A case study" in *The Law Teacher* Vol. 47 nº 3, p. 405.

[44] The rest of the students are part of Forensics and Politics that only take the first semester of this course.

[45] Career Development Service: https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/careers-new

to students at the start of this assignment, with the rest of the instructions to complete the activity.
- The group that generates the best letter is sponsored, by the Legal Firm, to an exclusive and tailored open day (including some training) in their offices in London, all inclusive.

The goal with this assignment was to design an activity that would help students interact with skills such as group work and professional writing; and to do this in a way that would be sustainable for all involved, using relatively little resources,[46] and limited class time.[47] This assignment, however, requires lots of preparation and work before hand, by thoroughly communicating and discussing openly with the whole team in charge of this assignment the reasons behind it; and also liaising with Careers Services at the University and with the Employer. These collaboration with different stakeholders is essential for this assignment to work well.[48] Previous studies that have engaged with employability have missed involvement with a real employer.[49] The Employer will bring the industry's view on employability skills, which does not have to be the same one that academics hold. Apart from having external bodies participating to improve this assignment, we have some practical tips more centred on the actual design and running of the activity. Firstly, after years of running this assignment, we believe that the requirement for each tutorial group to draft their own group rules is fundamental for the smooth workings of the group. The rules need to be written before they start working as a team (APPENDIX 1). The rules will help them decide how to communicate between them, how to deal with problems and how they are dividing tasks. Nordberg stated the importance of 'making the groups work well' as the most important on any kind of group work activity.[50] Secondly, while the letter of advice produced by the tutorial group receives feedback; the assessment is formative, this means that the mark received by the group does not count toward the final mark on the subject.[51] Students, therefore are more relaxed as they do not have the pressure of thinking that the work of others will affect their marks, or that other peers will get a good mark without working,[52] as 'free-loaders'.[53] Finally, as explained above the motivation is not coming from an assessed mark,[54] but from the prize offered by the Law firm. The prize is very desirable for all our students and the participation is always extremely high, (60 groups participated out of 62

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[46] BERRY, E. (2007) "Group work and assessment-benefit or burden? In *The Law Teacher* Vol. 41 nº 1, p. 36.

[47] 'It is difficult if we have to take time from input on the subject matter' in SLEAP M and REED H (2006) 'Views of sport science graduates regarding work skills developed at University' in *Teaching in Higher Education* Vol. 11 nº 1, p. 47.

[48] DONALD, W.E., BARUCH, Y. and ASLEIGH, M. (2019) "The undergraduate self-perception of employability: human capital, careers advice, and career ownership' in *Studies in Higher Education* Vol 44 nº 4, p. 609.

[49] On their study students missed involvement with industry in SLEAP, M. and REED, H. (2006) 'Views of sport science graduates", op. cit., p. 50.

[50] NORDBERG, D. (2008) "Group projects: More learning? Less fair? A conundrum in assessing postgraduate business education" in *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* Vol. 33 nº 5. p. 491.

[51] Summative assessment count towards the final marks in the subject.

[52] BERGER, D. and WILD, C. (2016) "Enhancing student performance and employability through the use of authentic assessment techniques in extra and co-curricular activities (ECCAs)" (2016) *The Law Teacher* DOI :10/1080/03069400.2016.1201745, p.10.

[53] HALL, D. and BUZWELL, S. (2013) "The Problem of Free-riding in Group Projects: Looking beyond Social Loafing as Reason for Non-Contribution' in *Active Learning in Higher Education* Vol. 14 nº 1, pp. 37-38.

[54] Which is the common starting point, see PRINCE, S. and DUNNE, E. (1998) "Group development: The integration of skills into law" in *The Law Teacher* Vol. 32 nº 1, p. 75.

groups in total), for a formative assessment. Students are aware that Law firms, as the one involved in this assignment, are looking for prime access to 'top talent' when they sponsor this kind of activities.[55]

## 4. The Research: Results and Analysis.

Once we have explained the assignment in practical terms, we would like to talk about the research. The main aim was to find out how our student felt about the group work and professional writing assignment. As established before there is a lot of debate around the role of Universities in preparing students for the world of work; we wanted to research the perception our students had on our assignment that introduces them to skills. The main research question to start with was regarding our students' awareness on the importance of employability skills through this assignment, and their reflections in general about the whole design of the activity. After getting ethic approval we started to collect data for the project. The method used was a qualitative one through interviews in the form of focus groups. Six focus groups (ranging from 4 to 9 students) participated in the conversations extending from 45 to 55 minutes. [56] The interviews were taped and transcribed. The data obtained was used to illustrate and understand at a deeper level what students perceptions were about this assignment. The transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis;[57] specifically, Braun and Clarke thematic analysis.[58] There were limitations to this data, as we have to admit that these focus groups are self-selected, and were formed by students that are motivated in general to participate in this kind of group work activities (as opposed to those not keen on group work). While the themes around employability skills were the main object in conversations, students also commented on subject learning and on the design and timings of the assignment. [59] In sum, we established three general themes: firstly on students' views on the design of the assignment; secondly, on their awareness regarding employability skills; and finally, on their insights on subject learning.

## 4.1. Views on the Assignment's Design.

The focus groups generated free flowing conversations and while there was an interest on their experience with employability skills, we left them talk spontaneously about many things regarding the activity. Many of the comments recorded stated how they felt about the design of the activity, which are helpful in order to reflect and improve this kind of assignments.

Firstly, it was encouraging to record that our students found positive that there was an involvement from a real employer:

[55] TEICHLER, U. (2009) 'Internationalisation of Higher education: European Experiences' in *Asian Pacific Education Review* Vol. 10 nº 1, p. 95.

[56] OMNI (2013) 'Toolkit for conducting Focus Groups':
http://pages.stolaf.edu/2014psych-230/files/2013/08/focusgrouptoolkit.pdf [accessed 4/7/19];
KRUEGER, R.A. (2002) "Designing and Conducting Focus Group Interviews":
http://pages.stolaf.edu/2014psych-230/files/2013/08/focusgrouptoolkit.pdf [accessed 4/7/19].

[57] PRINCE and DUNNE, "Group development", op. cit., p. 77.

[58] BRAUN, V. and CLARKE, V. (2006) "Using Thematic analysis in Psychology" in *Qualitative Research in Psychology* Vol 3 nº 2, pp. 77-101.

[59] REID, N. (2006) "Getting started in Pedagogical Research in the Physical Sciences" (HEA Publication):
https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/getting_started_ped_research.pdf [accessed 27/6/19].

STUDENT A: '(Employer) talk was so good, really good tips and made the whole thing so real. I knew then, this is it, I want to do this for a living…I really wanted to win the challenge and go to London for the day'.

Particularly if we consider that the employer's presentation was not timetabled on their schedule; however, the Employer's presentation was highly promoted by tutors and by Careers in lectures and in tutorials.

Another interesting point made by four of the six focus groups on the interviews was to do with the timing of this assignment. In the words of one of the students, this activity was conducted 'too early in year':

STUDENT E: 'We literally just started Uni. We did not know each other. We had to do this on our own and outside tutorial time, it was so hard.'

STUDENT S: 'It was too much, too soon, I thought this is not going to work. I can't believe it worked!'

This nervousness and hesitation down to doing something different is being already recorded in other studies;[60] however, the outcomes from this research did not show any real reason to postpone the date of this activity for future cohorts. Moreover, many studies recommend starting with group work skills as soon as possible in HE. [61] In any case, from our own students' observation we can see the advantages on conducting this activity this early in the year; like helping the tutorial group to bond:

STUDENT S: 'I think our group would be talking about 50% but because of this group work we went up to talking about 95%'.

Another advantage is that they start to develop study skills such as independent research that are crucial for the successful completion of the rest of their Law degree:

STUDENT D: 'We all learnt from an early start where to find the cases and books, I know now where and how to get my information'.

The final point to mention on this section about the design of the assignment, is that of the significance of the tutorial as a teaching tool for this activity. Students unanimously, in all the six focus groups, referred to the one-hour tutorial as the place/time in which they understood the goals and workings of this group activity. They all needed this space to discuss and understand the task ahead. They had already in their possession the instructions and assessment criteria (APPENDIX 1 and APPENDIX 2), plus the information emanating from the lectures and the Employer's talk; but they needed reassurance and the safe place to ask questions as a small group.

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[60] PRINCE and DUNNE, "Group development", op. cit., p. 68.
[61] TURNER, N.K. (2014) "Development of self-belief for employability in HE: ability, efficacy and control in context" in *Teaching in Higher Education* Vol. 19 nº 6, p. 592; HOLMES, L. (2013) "Competing perspectives on graduate employability: possession, position or process?" in *Studies in Higher Education* Vol. 38 nº 4, p. 538; BOURNER, J., HUGHES, M. and BOURNER (2001) "First-year Undergraduate Experiences of Group Project Work" in *Assessment and Evaluation in H.E.* Vol. 26 nº 1, p. 21; GARVIN, J. et al. (1995) "Group projects for first-year university students: an evaluation" in *Assessment and Evaluation in H.E.* Vol. 20, p. 279.

STUDENT P: 'I liked the lecture and the talk by Careers but up until we had the tutorial, I think we did not really understand what we needed to do, why we were doing it and how to deal with the group and if we were on the right track'.

The above data reinforces the idea that preparation and a variety of inputs motivated students to see the whole assignment in a positive light,[62] and helped with the 'group performance'.[63] According to Gibbs, students understanding the reasons behind groupwork and a proper atmosphere created by the tutors, is the best way to aid with motivation and to avoid problems. [64] After the ideas regarding the practical design of the activity the other two main themes brought into conversation were regarding the two big employability skills and subject knowledge.

## 4.2. Awareness Regarding Employability Skills.

It was expected that one of the main themes emerging from the transcripts would be one concerning group work and professional writing skills. Both skills have been repeatedly drummed into students in this assignment, not only by the academics, but Careers services and the Employer; moreover, these employability skills are visible on the I.L.O.s of this activity. (APPENDIX 1). In Gibbs and Simpson's study it was stated that the 'quality of the group product … may be less important than the qualities of the learning process that created it';[65] however, it is clear from the students' responses in the interviews that the they have given the process (working as a group) and the product (writing professionally) the same importance.[66]

### 4.2.a) Group Work skills

There is a rich literature stating the advantages of group work skills; including the enhancement of interpersonal skills;[67] benefits in the students' learning, such as:[68] encouraging independence from teachers,[69] facilitating the exposure to other ideas o ways of learning by peers[70] and collaborative learning.[71] Our focus groups picked up on all of those gains:

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[62] BRAVO, R., LUCIA-PALACIOS, L. and MARTIN, M.J. (2016) "Processes and outcomes in student teamwork. An empirical study in a marketing subject" in *Studies in Higher Education* Vol. 41 nº 2, p. 314; RYAN, R.M. and DECI, E.L. (1997) 'Self-determination theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic motivation, social Development and Well-Being' in *American Psychologist* Vol. 55 nº 1, p. 68.

[63] KAMAU, C. and SPONG, A. (2015) "A student teamwork induction Protocol' in *Studies in Higher Education* Vol. 40 nº 7, p. 1287.

[64] GIBBS, G. (2010) "The Assessment of Group Work: Lessons from the Literature' in Assessment Standards Knowledge Exchange: https://www.brookes.ac.uk/aske/groupwork-assessment/ [accessed 10/8/19].

[65] GIBBS, G. and SIMPSON, C. (2004), "Conditions Under Which Assessment Supports Students' Learning" in *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education* Vol. 1 nº 1, p. 72.

[66] BOOTHBY, C. and SYLVESTER, C. (2017) "Getting the fish to see the water; an investigation into students' perceptions of learning writing skills in academic modules and in a final year real client legal clinic module" in *The Law Teacher* Vol. 51 nº 2, p. 126.

[67] WATKINS, D. and CANTO-LOPEZ, M. (2015) 'Working with law students to develop legal literacy materials' in *The Law Teacher* Vol. 50 nº 2, p. 198; MELLO, J.A. (1993) "Improving individual member accountability in small group work settings" in *Journal of Management education* Vol. 17 nº 2, p. 253.

[68] PRINCE and DUNNE, "Group development", op. cit., p. 65.

[69] Ibid., p. 66.

[70] CLARKE, S. and BLISSENDEN, M. (2013) "Assessing student group work: is there a right way to do it?" in *The Law Teacher* Vol. 47 nº 3, p. 372.

[71] MARKS, M.B. and O'CONNOR, A.H. (2013) "Understanding Students' Attitudes About Group Work: What Does This Suggest for Instructors of Business?" in *Journal of Education for Business* Vol. 88, p. 147.

STUDENT E: 'We all sat together and discuss the points and really figure out what we were going to answer.'

STUDENT P: 'It was a positive step towards working together it definitely made us stronger as a group.'

STUDENT F: 'I met people in this group that if I wasn't in it, I would never have met. We phone each other to ask how our essays are going. It's kind of supportive.'

And there was even space to reflect upon what will happened if group activities do not go well[72]:

STUDENT E: 'We were lucky we got along, but I think in some groups people may not get along and they can see that sometimes you need to work with people you do not like. And you have to deal with it and stay professional.'

*4.2.b) Professional Writing.*

As with group work skills, 73 professional writing is one of the skills employers are expecting graduates will be equipped with.[74] Studies have confirmed that it is better to start with this skill at undergraduate level, as this will ease the transition from academic to practice writing since students will remember previous experiences in writing.[75] Learners will reflect on the need to be more brief and clear if they write to a client, for example.[76] This transition between academic to professional writing and the connections made between different types of audiences, help students in their future careers;[77] as professional writing helps students make connections with what they have learnt 'across contexts',[78] from a theoretical to a more practical context.[79] As a point of contention regarding professional writing, studies advise of the need for employers and academics to adapt to the diversity of student population, and the new types of communication.[80] In any case, our learners participating in the focus group appreciated the opportunity to write **'**professionally':

STUDENT L: 'Very original, I really did not expect we were going to write professionally like this in our first year. More to the point, I went to an assessment centre in a Law Firm and apart from me, nobody knew how to write a letter of advice'.'

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[72] WEINSTEING, J. et al. (2013) 'Teaching Teamwork to Law Students' in *Journal of Legal Education* Vol. 63 nº 1, p. 59; BERRY "Group work', op. cit., p 36.

[73] HANNAFORD, L. (2016) "Motivation in group assessment: a phenomenological approach to post-graduate group assessment" in *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher education* Vol. 42 nº 5, p. 824; BERRY "Group work', op. cit., pp .31-32; MUTCH, A. (1998) "Employability or Learning? Groupwork in Higher Education" in  *Education and Training* Vol. 40 nº 2, p. 50.

[74] LILLIS, T. and TURNER, J. (2001) 'Student Writing in Higher Education: contemporary confusion, traditional concerns' in *Teaching in Higher Education* Vol. 6 nº 1 p. 65.

[75] BOOTHBY, C. and SYLVESTER, C. "Getting the fish", op. cit., pp. 123-137.

[76] MOORE, T. and MORTON, J. (2017) "The myth of job readiness? Written communication, employability, and the 'skill gap' in higher education" in *Studies in Higher Education* Vol. 42 nº 3, p. 602.

[77] RAI, L. and LILLIS, T. (2013) 'Getting it Write' in social work: exploring the value of writing in academia to writing for professional practice' in *Teaching in Higher Education* Vol. 18 nº 4, p. 354.

[78] 'Graduates are increasingly aware that they need additional skills and attributes for career success' in TYMON, A. "The student perspective on employability" in *Studies in Higher Education* Vol 38 nº 6, p. 841.

[79] KOWALSKI, T. (2010) 'Towards a Pedagogy for Teaching Legal Writing in Law School Clinics" *in Clinical law Review* Vol. 17, p. 352.

[80] LILLIS and TURNER 'Student Writing in HE', op. cit., pp. 65-66.

STUDENT N: 'If you go into practice or other into other industries, they will expect you to write a letter from day one. And if we did not do this then they can through us on the deep end.'

STUDENT F: 'It is really good to have a different type of writing, at "Uni" it is all about how to write essays or exams, just what you academics like'.

After presenting the theme on reflections regarding employability skills, the final theme emerging is one concerning subject learning.

## 4.3. Insights into Subject Learning.

It was positive to record that our learners reflected upon the subject knowledge and not just employability skills, while thinking about this assignment.

STUDENT T: 'This exercise cleared for me what offer and acceptance 'really' means in Contract Law.

Remarkably, a good proportion of the students in the focus groups found the problem stated for this activity (on the fictitious emails between the client and the other party), (APPENDIX 1) too easy:

STUDENT E: 'It was too easy, I did not find it interesting, maybe if the letter instead of two pages limit could have been five or six pages long.'

It is reassuring to see that the experience of generic employability skills is not eclipsing the 'curiosity-driven research' graduates need to have; in any case it is still a scenario in which students still look at the law as it 'is' and not as how it 'ought' to be.[81] In fact, we wanted them to face a feasible scenario for a very junior member of staff in a Law firm; so the scenario is not going to be too complicated. Another recurrent point extracted from the transcriptions was not on subject learning but how they learn better on the subject. The concept of learning style was quite alien for the focus groups, it almost made them uncomfortable.[82] In any case they were talking about their way of learning during the focus groups:

STUDENT Y: 'There were points I did not understand and by discussing them in the group, I did.'

STUDENT R: 'It was god because when you try to explain it, is when you know if you understood the concept, and to put it in simple words in a letter to a client, it was so hard.'

After reviewing the themes emerging, we have some general concluding points regarding this assignment.

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[81] TYMON "The student perspective on employability", op. cit., p. 847.

[82] The discussion of the skills descriptors provided the students with a vocabulary through which to discuss their learning' in LUCAS, U. et al. (2004) "Who writes this stuff?: Students' perceptions of their skills development" in *Teaching in Higher Education* Vol. 9 nº 1, p. 57; GIBBS and SIMPSON 'Assessment Support', op. cit., p. 62; HOLMAN, D. (1995) "The Experience of skill development in first year undergraduates: a comparison of three courses" in *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher education* Vol. 20 nº 3, p 265.

## 5. Looking Ahead.

With the recent increase and importance given in HE to employability and employability skills, many studies have emerged interested on knowing students' perspectives on employability and skills. [83] Our assignment seems to have allow our students to get a practical experience which they found valuable:

> STUDENT S: 'The only way to learn is to do it. And doing this is better than someone just talking about skills that we need.'

The data collected on this study confirms the fact that students value this type of experience.[84] An experience that made them reflect and experience group work and professional writing skills, but also gave them insights into subject learning and how they learn best; finally, their ideas about the design of the assignment help us think as teachers about the value of students participation in the design of teaching-learning activities.[85] However, there are two points to be made; firstly, we do not pretend that we can generalise the results of this assignment to other groups of students in other institutions with different settings; but we at least hope that the overall satisfaction of students, shown in this particular case, can inspire other colleagues to try something similar projects in their institutions and their subjects, and collect their own data to compare with this study. Secondly, we are very aware of the need to be careful with increasing vocational experiences as part of the curriculum in Universities. It would be a narrow approach towards University education if there was more vocational than liberal elements on a degree. But as we stipulated from the beginning of this study we are set to situate this assignment in a middle ground, and there are plenty of opportunities for our students to experience critical analysis of the law and to write 'academically' about what the law 'ought to be' in the remainder of the Law Degree. We know we cannot produce job ready graduates, it would be impossible to foresee which different professional future our students would pursue and what unique and tailored skills each job organization out there is going to require.[86] The goal now for the future will be to create a similar exercise with group work and professional writing, and involvement of Career services and the Employer on core subjects (as opposed to optional subjects) on years 2 and 3 of the Law Degree;[87] based on the positive insights and learning from the students' responses to this research. In sum, the results of this research take us to recommend this assignment as one that help students to experience and reflect on employability skills and subject learnings, which will drive them we hope to become better learners, professionals and people.

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[83] DONALD, BARUCH and ASLEIGH "The undergraduate self-perception of employability', op. cit., p. 2; SLEAP and REED 'Views of sport science graduates', op. cit., p. 47

[84] MARANVILLE, D. (2001) "Infusing passion and contest into the traditional curriculum through experiential learning in *Journal of Legal Education* Vol. 51 nº 1, p. 52.

[85] HEALEY, M., FLINT, A. and HARRINGTON, K. (2014) 'Engagement through partnership: students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education' (HEA Publication, July 2014), p. 2: https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/resources/engagement_through_partnership.pdf [accessed 19/8/19].

[86] MOORE and MORTON "The myth of job readiness?", op. cit., p. 602.

[87] 'The opportunity for more than one attempt is important… There is little point in revealing student's difficulties in managing discussions unless opportunities for improvement are available' in MARTIN D and CAMPBELL, B. (1999) "Managing and Participating in Group Discussion: a micro training approach to the communication skill development of students in HE" in *Teaching in Higher Education* Vol. 4 nº 3, p 327.

## 6. Conclusion.

On an environment in which H.E. is being clear about producing graduates with subject knowleadge and employable; it is the right time to look at activities that can help equipped students as learners and workers and make them more confident in the process. However, we understand this assignment as part of a liberal law degree, and in no way trying to tip the balance towards a vocational degree. This study aimed to present a group work assignment that produces a letter of advice to a client. The data collected empirically, out of a large first year Law degree cohort, shows students positive perceptions about this assignment; not only the mechanics of the assignment but what participating in this activity meant for them as students and people. The positive outcome from the research shows an assignment that can be used, modify and compared by other tutors that want to embark into start equipping their learners with employability skills and subject knowledge. Tutors need to be ready to spend time on the preparation of the activity and in collaborating with Careers services in their institutions and Employers out there. In our institutions this assignment is planning to grow into years two and three of the degree, in a bid to help our students to be better professionals and learners for the rest of their lives.

## APPENDIX 1

## Introduction to Law and Legal Reasoning

## Tutorial 2 – Group Work Assignment

## Learning Objectives.

This exercise is designed to help you to:
- Develop an understanding of the need for the thorough investigation of all relevant factual and legal issues involved in a research task;
- Develop the ability to undertake systematic and comprehensive legal research;
- Develop the ability to analyse research findings effectively;
- Develop the ability to reference sources in a manner appropriate to the task;
- Develop the ability to work effectively as part of a team in researching, analysing and presenting legal information in a professional way.

## Assignment.

You are a trainee solicitor at the city law firm Strad, Storey and Catenari LLP. One of the partners, John Betts, has asked you to draft a letter of advice to a client. At the same time, John Betts gave you the email correspondence that gave rise to the issue, and a note, taken from a phone call between John Betts and the client.

You are required to ascertain all the facts and your instructions and draft a letter of advice accordingly. The draft letter is for the partner's approval. The letter should be in an appropriate tone and will be signed by John Betts.

## Please note the following:

- You are expected to refer to the relevant case law when answering this assignment. You should draw on the law in those cases, being fully aware of any issues of precedent. You may also refer to other sources, if relevant.
- The issues relate to the topic of offer and acceptance, **you need not consider contract terms in any other sense** (i.e. conditions, warranties, unfair terms).
- You will not be provided with email attachments – **all the relevant information you need is contained in the email correspondence and the note of the phone call**.
- You should not use footnotes in a letter but you should acknowledge (in broad terms) where information you give is outside your own common knowledge (e.g. "I have carried out some research and…").
- The letter should be no longer than two sides of A4 in length (minimum font size Times New Roman 11).   There is no minimum length.
- Although you are preparing only a draft for the partner's approval at this stage, you are expected to set out the letter correctly and to check grammar and spelling very carefully.
- You are advised to **refer to the assessment criteria** for this assignment prior to commencing work on it (see below).

## Group Rules.

- It is expected that in the course of **tutorial 2** your group will agree and write up its **own group rules** for this assignment.
- These rules should set out **what is expected of group members** and set out a **process for dealing with problems** that arise (e.g. poor or no contribution by member/s of the group).
- There is **no prescribed format** for these rules
- Although they will **not form part of the assessment**, your **group rules need to be submitted with your letter**.

## Note of phone call between StandOut Ltd (George Craske) and John Betts.

July 20th XXXX

StandOut Ltd are a start-up company who manufacture display stands for trade shows etc. Our contact there is George Craske. They want to know where they stand regarding recent correspondence with Digital Forum Ltd. (a digital marketing company), who placed an order for 20 varied sized display stands in time for the industry's major trade show at NEC, Birmingham.

In July, Digital Forum Ltd cancelled half the order (within 20 days of placing the order), but StandOut have already laid out a lot of money on making the 20 stands and want to claim costs. They want to know whether they can do this, given the amount of correspondence about the contract terms.

There is also a dispute about who should pay delivery costs for the remainder of the order.

Secondly, StandOut want to ensure that they contract on their own terms in the future, even when a buyer attempts to incorporate different terms. Advise as to how they can make sure that they do this.

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## Email Correspondence.

To: John Wilkinson (Digital Forum Ltd.)
From: George Craske (StandOut Ltd.)
Date: April 10th XXXX  5.45pm

Dear John,

I have pleasure in confirming your order.

Kind regards
George

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

To: George Craske (StandOut Ltd.)
From: John Wilkinson (Digital Forum Ltd.)
Date: April 10th XXXX  4pm

Dear Mr Craske,

Thank you very much for your email. We are happy with your quoted price and delivery. Please take this as a formal order. I attach our terms and conditions, please acknowledge by return.

Many thanks
John

ATTACHMENT: Includes the following terms:
•       The price of the order shall include the cost of delivery to Digital Forum Ltd.'s nominated premises.
•       The buyers shall be entitled to cancel an order within 20 days of placing the order without incurring any costs.

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

To: John Wilkinson (Digital Forum Ltd.)
From: George Craske (StandOut Ltd.)
Date: April 7th XXXX

Dear Mr Wilkinson,

Many thanks for your enquiry. Yes we could do this for you and deliver – it all seems pretty standard. I attach our quotation.

I also attach our standard terms and conditions. I would draw your attention to three particular conditions:

•       An order cannot be cancelled for any reason without the written consent of StandOut Ltd. In the event of any cancellation, the buyers are required to indemnify StandOut for loss arising from the cancellation.
•       The buyers are responsible for delivery costs.
•       StandOut Ltd's terms shall prevail in any contract, notwithstanding any attempt by the buyers to impose other and contradictory terms.

We look forward to your response

Kind Regards
George Craske

ATTACHMENTS

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To: StandOut Ltd. (George Craske)
From: Digital Forum Ltd. (John Wilkinson)
Date: April 3rd XXXX

Dear George Craske,

We are a company specialising in digital marketing services. Would you be able to supply us 20 display stands to the attached specifications? We require them for the November show at the NEC.

Please let me know whether you can deliver.

Best wishes
John Wilkinson

## APPENDIX 2

### Assessment Criteria.

| CRITERIA | First | 2.1 | 2.2 | Third | Fail |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Research**<br>• Identification of relevant sources<br>• Exclusion of irrelevant sources. | Identifies precisely the relevant case law.<br>The letter excludes completely sources that do not concern the applicable law. | Identifies mostly the relevant case law.<br>The letter mostly excludes case law that is not applicable to this case. | Identifies some of the relevant case law.<br>The letter does not exclude all the case law that is not relevant to the case. | The letter cannot distinguish properly between the case law that is relevant and the one that is not relevant. | The case law used is not relevant for this assignment.<br>The letter uses case-law that is unrelated to the client's question. |
| **Analysis**<br>• Relevant issues identified.<br>• Issues with direct relevance to the client's question are discussed and analysed. | Avoids all irrelevant issues.<br>The analysis is perceptive because considers the impact of the leading case law to the client case and in the context of other identified case-law. | Mostly avoids irrelevant issues.<br>The analysis to the client considers the leading case-law. But some points may not be fully explored and some minor points missing in the overall context of other relevant case-law. | Will use some case law that is not relevant to the question the client raised. The letter will identify the most relevant issues. But it will show more description of case-law that impact on the clients' case. | While there is some mention of the relevant issues, they are not used to answer the client's question.<br>Important issues are not fully explored and there is confusion between relevant/irrelevant issues. | The relevant issues are not identified.<br>The letter does not answer the client's question there is no discussion of relevant issues. |
| **Presentation**<br>• Correct tone and layout of the letter; right salutation and sign off.<br>• Grammar and spelling have been considered in the assignment.<br>• Sources are acknowledged in the letter. | Clear, confident and engaging tone.<br>All aspects of the letter set out correctly (faultless salutation and sign off).<br>No grammar or spelling errors.<br>Appropriate acknowledgment of sources in the letter. | Good written communication but the tone needs improvement.<br>Near faultless grammar and spelling,<br>Minimal errors in the set out of the letter; and in salutation and sign-off.<br>May not always acknowledge the sources (case law, book…) in an appropriate manner. | Letter presents a poor structure, too many descriptive statements not evidenced with case-law, wrong tone.<br>Some grammar and spellings errors.<br>Letter not set out correctly, some salutation or sign-off problem<br>Sometimes not acknowledgment of sources. | Writing style incoherent, difficult to follow the answer to the client, and inappropriate tone.<br>Letter not set out correctly.<br>Grammar and spelling errors.<br>Problems with salutation and sign off.<br>No acknowledgment of sources. | Unsuitable writing style and tone for a professional letter.<br>The letter does not relate to the assignment.<br>Significant amount of grammatical and spelling errors.<br>Letter is not set out properly and choice of salutation and sign off is very wrong.<br>No sources acknowledged. |

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