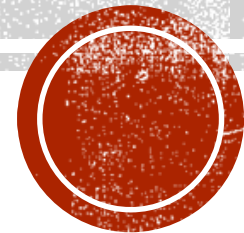


LAW AND THE NEW ORDER

Widening Participation and The Model Law
Commission

Dr Michael Fay

m.fay@keele.ac.uk



OVERVIEW

- Law & WP Context:
 - Auger Review
 - Single Qualifying Exam
- The Model Law Commission
 - What is it?
 - The Life of an MLC Commissioner
 - Developing Skills
 - Networking
 - Engaging with Parents / Supporters



**Model Law Commission 2019:
Reforming the Mental Health
Act 1983**

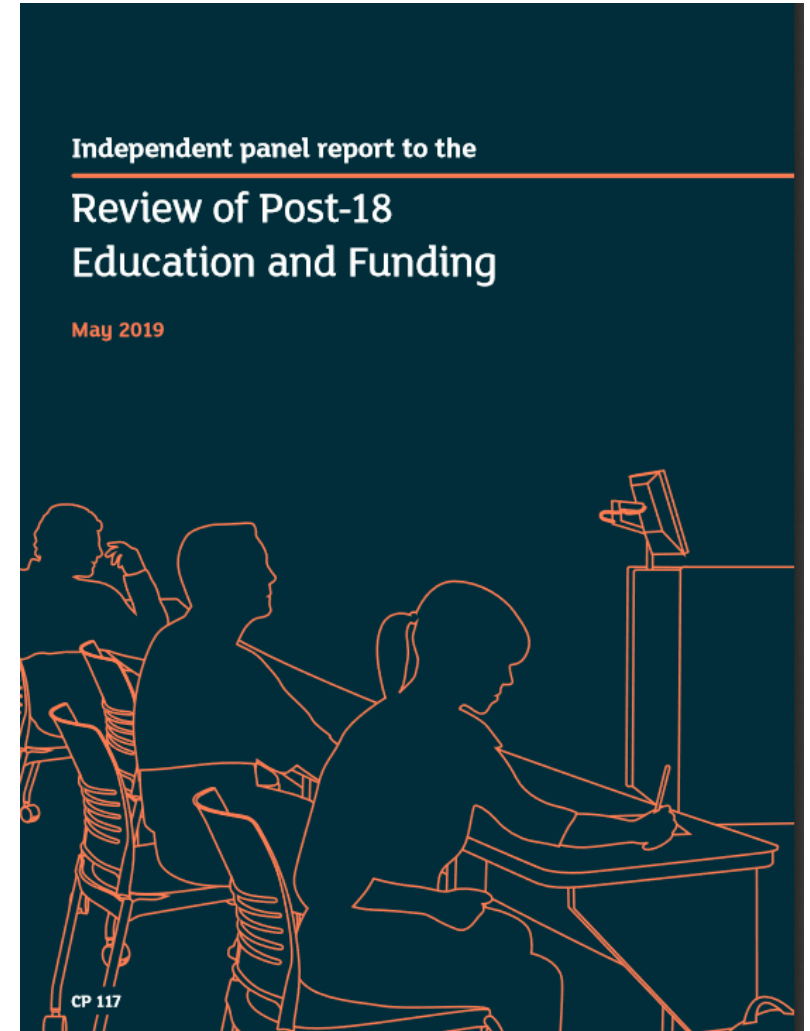


*Keele School of Law
Newcastle-under-Lyme College
Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College*



LAW & WP CONTEXT

- Auger Review
 - ‘quality, accessibility and direction of study’
 - ‘[recommendations] encourage universities to bear down on low value degrees’
 - What is ‘value’?
 - Economy's needs?
 - Value for money for taxpayers / students(?)
 - Earnings not societal value of jobs?
 - Social mobility as increase in earnings?
 - Proposes re-introduction of maintenance grants
 - Ignores disadvantages such as lack of networks



THE SINGLE QUALIFYING EXAM

- Change to way students qualify as solicitor:
 - Old way:
 - qualifying law degree (or degree and graduate diploma in law)
 - legal practice course (£10,000 - £15,000)
 - two year training contract
 - The New Order:
 - degree (not necessarily law)
 - SQE 1 (Functioning Legal Knowledge and Practical Legal Skills Assessments); 3 x MCQ exams
 - SQE 2 (Practical Legal Skills Assessments); role plays + written work
 - Costs: £3,000 - £4,500
 - two years' qualifying work experience
 - pass character and suitability requirements



THE SQE: A BARRIER TO WP STUDENTS?

- SRA
 - SQE will 'level the playing field' and improve social mobility
- Junior Lawyers' Division:
 - SQE could disadvantage WP students by increasing employers' focus on 'A level grades/UCAS points, first (or second) year undergraduate degree results and the **completion of work experience** ... those candidates from low and middle socio economic backgrounds are known to be disadvantaged by this approach to recruitment and their **lesser ability to access informal work experience** opportunities.
- Guth & Dutton:
 - 'inequalities caused by socio-economic background, type and location of school attended and opportunities afforded during school impact on A-level results'
 - 'law firms are willing to recruit people who look different as long as they behave and act in the "right" way and are seen to "fit"'



THE MODEL LAW COMMISSION

- Aims

- Improve the transition from A-level to degree by providing real insight into the university experience
- Increase employability through developing skills beyond the A-level curriculum
- Develop sustainable partnerships between local schools and colleges, NCOP officers and the Law School
- Provide a platform and guidance to enable WP students to develop networks that would lead to work experience opportunities and improve both short and long-term outcomes



WHAT IS THE MLC?

- Four month project modelled on actual Law Commission process
- Five interactions
 - 2 x day-long campus events
 - 3 x two hour classes at school / college
 - Celebration and Networking Event



Law
Commission
Reforming the law



THE LIFE OF AN MLC COMMISSIONER: DEVELOPING SKILLS

1. Session 1: day-long uni-level introduction to mental health law exploring legal topics / key debates / controversies
 1. task: research mental health
2. Session 2: debated research & identified key themes & ideas for reform
 1. task: come up with question on their theme
3. Session 3: created questionnaire for public consultation; working with case reports and literature
 1. task: complete consultation exercise
4. Session 4: analysed consultation data; networking training; academic writing training
 1. task: start write up
5. Session 5: supported write up
6. Celebration and Networking Event



THE CELEBRATION AND NETWORKING EVENT

- Held at end of project
- Creates networking opportunities with
 - Current UG law students
 - University academics
 - Legal professionals
- Also engages with parents & supporters:
 - ‘we never get to see what [student] does’



IMPORTANCE OF NETWORKING

- important not only to shine light on pathways into university but to enable students to network and gain skills and knowledge around the Law profession
- vitally important to build confidence of the learners
- create opportunity / challenge 'classist' narrative of legal profession:
 - I don't fit in at work and I now don't fit in back at home either ... Obviously, when I'm here I play the middle-class version of me to fit in. I can see the cultural dominance. You have to consciously work at not assimilating, but that's hard and also may count against you for progression (Bridge Group)



2019 ATTITUDINAL OUTCOMES

- 8.4% rise in the cohort feeling that they had enough information to make an informed decision about applying to University,
- 25% of the cohort initially said they had no information on hand to make an informed decision, and after the programme, this dropped to 0%
- 41.7% stated they were worried about future career progression. After the programme this fell to 33.3%
- Whilst 66.7% were still worried about financing university, this dropped from 75% beforehand
- 58% stated before the programme they were worried about getting in to university. This dropped to 33% post-programme
- 66.7% of the cohort confirmed that after the programme they had had all their questions and concerns about university answered.



2019 FEEDBACK

- Both the most 'important element' and 'most enjoyable' element to the programme was the chance to network with Law students, Law professionals and Law Academics
- An 'important' and 'enjoyable' element to the programme was "experiencing & learning how to behave at university"
- A key learning outcome was the chance to see "detailed case reports" and having the chance to experience what Law professionals do once in the role: how to "actually write legal documents"



THE MLC: CURRENT STUDENTS' VIEWS

- MLC 'is more involving and showing that they can actually do it; I think that makes a real difference.'
- 'I think that it gives them an idea of what they would be doing in a Law Degree ... it all links to psychology, sociology. So I think that that's the main thing, it makes people think well actually, that's quite interesting.'
- 'it's making you think differently.'
- 'And I think as well it's important like some people think oh law you've got to be really intelligent to do it, but not all Uni's have really high thresholds for grades. You can still go and study law and you can still do really well in law and it lets people know that you can do law.'

