

Do law graduates perceive that undergraduate assessment has provided them with the skills necessary to succeed in the workplace?

Holly Devlin, Edge Hill University



Introduction:

Undergraduate assessment is a vitally important part of the degree program, and when fully utilised, can successfully build skills that students need post-graduation for employability. A clear link should exist between assessment and employability in all degrees.

This is mirrored by the Quality Assurance for Higher Education, as their fifth indicator of sound practice of assessment states that all examination modes should be ‘informed by’ professional practice. The goal being to boost professional skills of graduates through assessment.

This poster will display notable data collected as part of a small-scale project in partial fulfilment of the PGCTHE.

Participants:

- 8 x Law and Law & Criminology Alumni
- Recent graduates (graduating 2015-2020)
- All graduates in employment and/or further study
- 6 out of 8 graduates working in the legal sector and/or undergoing further legal study.

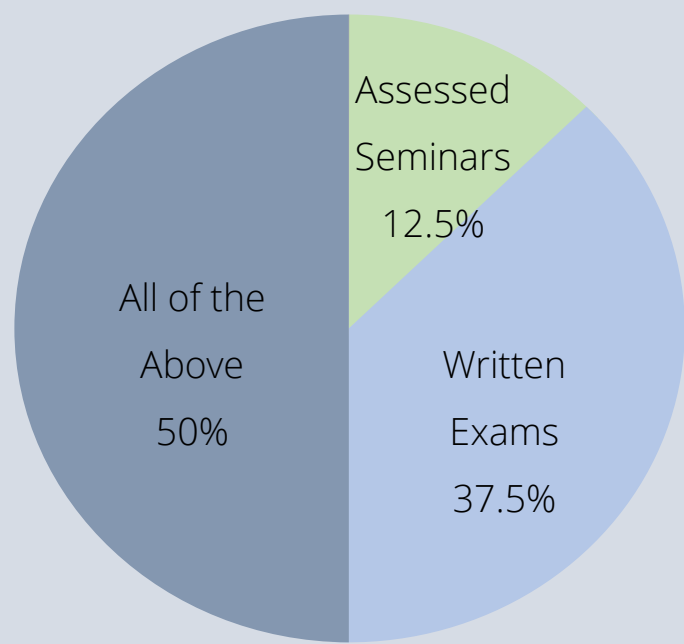
Originality and Impact:

Data analysis & auto-ethnography of current module tutor and former undergraduate student. Impact on future assessment practice of the researcher, the department they work in, and other UK institutions.

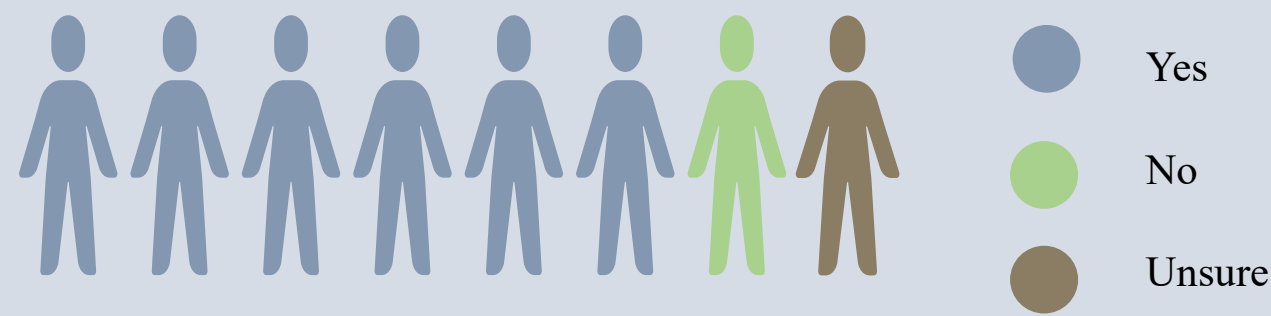
Data:

What type of assessment did you undergo whilst studying at university?

- Assessed seminars
- Formative coursework
- Summative coursework
- Written Exams
- Dissertation
- Portfolios
- Mooting
- Negotiation
- Drafting Legal Documents
- Law Clinic
- Presentations
- All of the Above



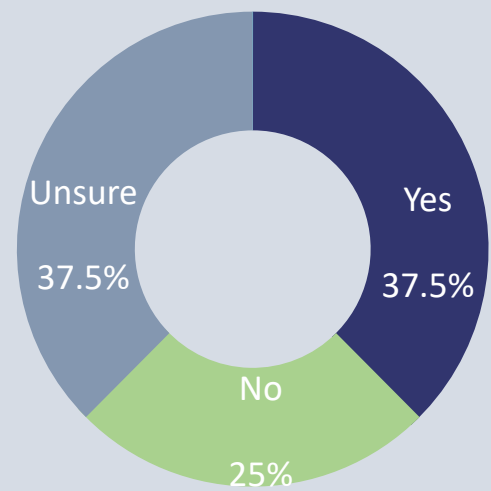
Where there any skills needed to succeed in your job role/course of further study which were not developed at undergraduate level?



If yes, what were these skills?

Participants	Responses
1	‘Understanding the rules that law follows.’
2	‘Commercial awareness, administration skills, communication’.
3	‘Communication’.
4	‘Non-related job role to my degree’.
5	‘Applying the knowledge’.
6	‘Use of case management systems. How to complete legal documents that you will submit to courts / land registry / immigration, etc.’.

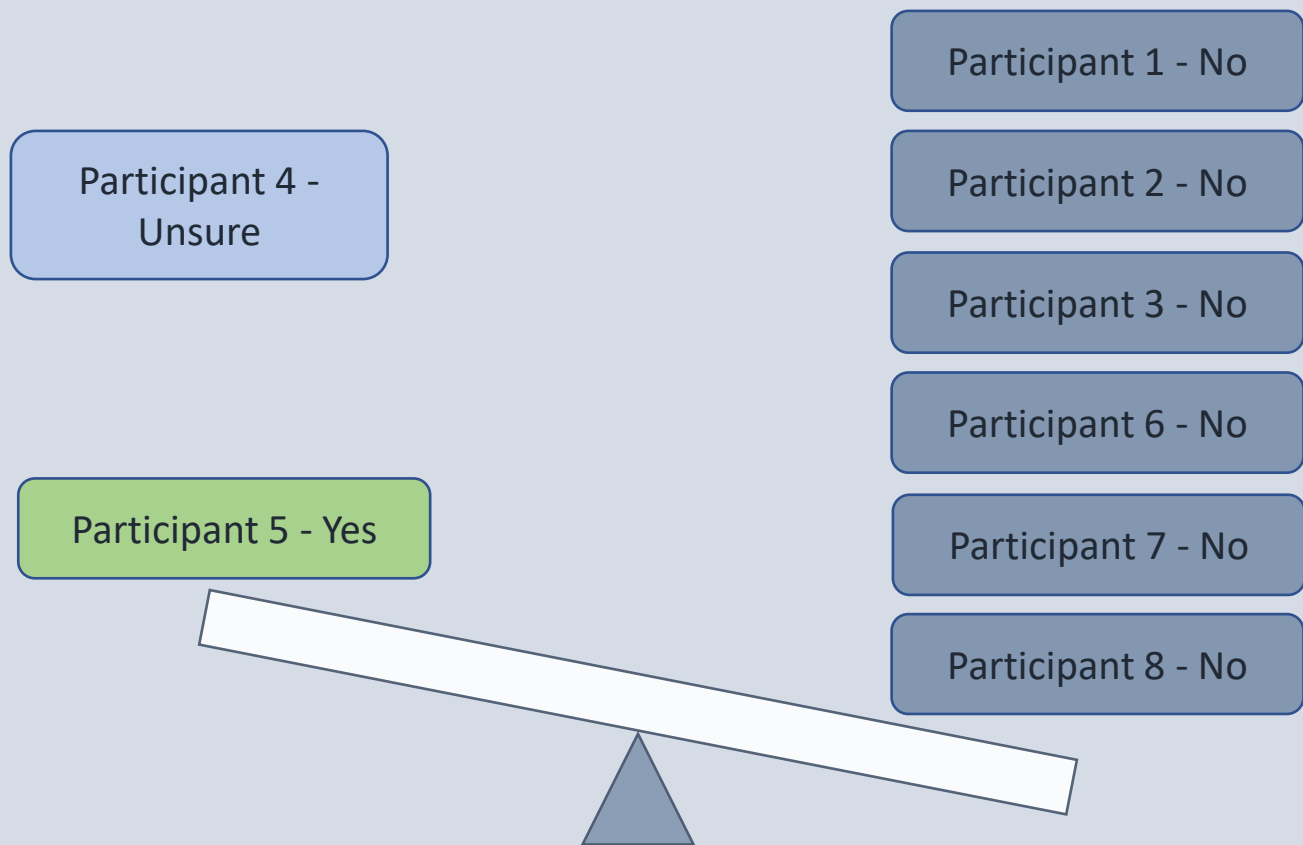
Would alternative forms of assessment be useful to ensure the necessary skills needed for post-graduation success are incorporated into the degree?



What forms of alternative assessment would have been useful?

- Handling cases and client management
- Assessments boosting basic PC literacy
- Research reports
- Writing letters and completing forms
- Presentations
- Moots
- Problem questions based on real life scenarios (as would be seen in practice)

Overall, do you believe that your assessment experience at undergraduate level prepared you well for life after graduation?



Conclusions and Future Work:

The study showed students underwent a wide range of assessment formats. However, the reoccurring theme in the data called for further implementation of practical skills through the replacement of written examinations with varied, practical assessment. In this way, assessment should link closely to legal practice post-university, with particular focus on application and communication of law, drafting of legal documents, and client care skills.

There is clearly a disconnect here, as the forms of assessment highlighted do help to build transferrable skills needed for legal employment. Universities must place greater emphasis on and clearly communicate the benefits of assessment formats, and the skills they build, to their students.

Future work will explore whether extracurricular activities (such as; mooting) are an effective tool to bolster the employability skills of law students.

Citations:

Alharansheh, H. H., & Pius, A., ‘Employability Skills Development through Assessment in Higher Education: Student’s Voices on Reflective Assessments’ (2019) 1(2) Global Academic Journal of Economics and Business
Bradley, J. S., ‘Education for Law Practice: Law Students Can Be Given Clinical Experience’ (1948) 34 American Bar Association Journal
Brooman, S. & Stirk, S., ‘Who Am I? Using Reflective Practice and Self-determination to Redefine Employability in Legal Education’ (2020) 41 Liverpool Law Review
Cassidy, S., ‘Developing employability skills: Peer assessment in higher education’ (2006) Education and Training
Dolin, J. M., ‘Opportunity Lost: How Law School Disappoints Law Students, The Public, and The Legal Profession’ (2007) 44(1) California Western Law Review
Rigg, D., ‘Embedding employability in assessment: searching for the balance between academic learning and skills development in law: a case study’ (2013) 47(3) The Law Teacher
‘UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Part B: Assuring and Enhancing Academic Quality, Chapter B6: Assessment for Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning’ (*Quality Assurance for Higher Education*, 15 December 2011)