



**Legal Profession
Admission Board**
of New South Wales

Submission on the Proposed Revisions to the Accreditation Standards for Australian Law Courses

Legal Profession Admission Board
11 February 2026

PREAMBLE

These submissions have been prepared by the Board in response to a request from the Admissions Committee of the Legal Services Council (**Council**) and the Law Admissions Consultative Committee (**LACC**). The Council and LACC are undertaking a targeted consultation following the public consultation on proposed revisions to the Accreditation Standards for Australian Law Course.

1. THE PROPOSED STANDARDS

Clause 1: Introduction

In the final paragraph of the Introduction, the statement: “In 2025, the LACC reviewed and revised the Standards in response to technological developments, the online delivery of law courses and for accelerated modes of delivery, such as intensive or block delivery” should be amended as follows:

In 2025, the LACC reviewed and revised the Standards in response to technological developments, the online delivery of law courses, and ~~for accelerated~~ other modes of delivery, such as intensives or block learning.

The reason for deleting ‘accelerated’ in the Introduction follows from the review of Standard 4.3 (see below).

Standard 4.6 includes a note to the effect that ‘reasonable adjustments may be made for individual students if required by law – for example due to disability’. To the extent that it is necessary to make such a statement, given that it may be a legal obligation, it is suggested that it may be more appropriate to include this in the Introduction so that the statement covers all activities. For example, as currently drafted, ‘reasonable adjustments’ only applies to teaching (4.6) and not to Standard 4.7 which deals with assessment.

Accordingly, **it is recommended** that the Introduction include a statement regarding reasonable adjustments in the Introduction. However, it is also suggested that the statement emphasise the purpose of accreditation standards. The following is recommended:

In setting standards for accreditation of law courses, it is recognised that reasonable adjustments may need to be made, as required by law, for individual students, such as those with disabilities. However, reasonable adjustments must be understood in the context of the purposes of these Standards. The Standards enable an Admitting Authority to be satisfied that a student, having completed the accredited law course, will have the

knowledge and competence implicit in the award of the degree (or other qualification) and as may be required for the practice of law. Reasonable adjustments are designed to assist a student to meet the requirements of the Standards, as embedded in the law course, not to be a substitute for them.

Consideration could be given to this statement being included in Standard 4.3 (Purposes of the Standards) rather than the Introduction.

Clause 2: Definitions and Interpretation

Active learning and direct interaction: The new definition ‘active learning’ is welcome given its emphasis on active learning and student engagement. It is also relevant to note the amendment to the definition of ‘direct interaction’ which now requires interaction between persons in ‘real time’. This corrects the seeming inconsistency in the 2018 Accreditation Standards which recognised synchronous and asynchronous communication as ‘direct interaction’. However, whilst these new and corrected definitions are welcome, how they are applied substantively in the Proposed Standards is the crucial issue. This is addressed in Standard 4.6, which deals with teaching.

Block learning and intensives: Whilst it is helpful to have definitions of ‘block learning’ and ‘intensives’, the Proposed Standards would benefit from definitions which more clearly distinguish between the two modes so that it is clear that ‘block learning’ applies to the way in which a course may be delivered and ‘intensives’ to the mode in which a unit may be delivered. Having a clear distinction is important because very different considerations may be relevant when accrediting a course that is delivered in block mode compared with a law course which is delivered in the traditional way across an academic year, although it may include scope for some intensive study. For example, a course delivered in block learning mode will likely mean that the prescribed areas of knowledge will be taught in a concentrated form; and, hence, a matter for close inquiry by the Admitting Authorities. Currently, the Proposed Standards do not make a sufficient distinction between the two modes. Accordingly, the following definitions are suggested:

Block learning model means a type of delivery applying to a course whereby all subjects in that course are taught over a concentrated teaching block of six weeks or less. Typically, only one or two subjects will be taught in each teaching block.

Intensive means a learning model where a unit is taught over a short period of time, typically during a session (such as summer or winter) which is outside the usual teaching sessions.

It should be noted that the definition of ‘block learning model’ has omitted the reference to ‘a type of accelerated mode of delivery’. The concept of accelerated delivery will be addressed in Standard 4.3 (duration of the law course).

The suggested definition of ‘intensive’ has removed the reference to weeks. Intensives are often delivered in a variety of formats and, hence, it is preferable to have a broad reference to the scheduling of the intensive.

Delivery mode: **It is recommended** that the definition also include reference to the ‘block learning model’. This would ensure that in Standard 4.1 a law school provides upfront information not just about whether a law course is online or not, but also whether it is in block mode.

The reference to ‘other modes to facilitate distance education’ is vague, and it would be helpful to include an example of what this term is understood to cover to ensure it is in line with the intent of the Proposed Standards.

Gamification: The term ‘gamification’ is not used in the Proposed Standards, although there are references to ‘gamified’ environments and activities in the examples given in Standard 4.6, and in the definitions for ‘synchronous online learning’ and ‘teaching method’.

On its face, the definition of ‘gamification’ and its inclusion in other defined terms is not problematic. However, the central question is how gamification is used in teaching delivery, and whether its application can provide sufficient assurance to Admitting Authorities that the purposes of the Proposed Standards will be met, particularly having regard to the importance given in the Proposed Standards to active learning and direct interaction. This is addressed elsewhere in the report.

Online synchronous learning: The definition refers to ‘real time’ gamified activities between students or teachers...’. This is ambiguous.

It is recommended that for clarity the definition should be amended to ‘students **and** teachers’.

Clause 3: Purposes of the Standards

The amendments to Clause 3 are minor and sensible. However, Clause 3(b) omits from the list of Standards, Standard 4.4 (learning outcomes for the law course). Presumably, this is an oversight, but the learning outcomes, and their alignment to other matters covered by the Standards, are important, and, as such, emphasis on learning outcomes should not be lost.

Recommendation: Clause 3(b) should be amended to include (iv) the learning outcomes for the course; the following items to be renumbered.

Clause 4: The Standards

Standard 4.1 The delivery of the law course

A separate standard requiring a statement for the delivery mode of the course is sensible. The current NSW Board Framework requires a statement about the delivery mode, as part of the standard dealing with the nature of the law course. An upfront statement explaining the delivery mode provides context for an admitting authority and may influence the approach and findings of the accreditation process.

However, the wording is curious, for a standard that is meant to be a statement of principle and expectation. Whilst it acknowledges the right of a law school to offer online delivery for a law course, the reference to only one delivery mode places undue emphasis on online delivery at the expense of in-person delivery modes. There should be no implication that the Proposed Standards set a preference for online delivery.

It is recommended that the first paragraph of the explanatory note should be the statement of Standard 4.1, suitably adapted. Thus:

“The law school may select the delivery mode for the law course and units being offered, that is appropriate for compliance with the Accreditation Standards”

The explanatory note would then comprise the remaining two paragraphs.

Given the definition of delivery mode in the Proposed Standards, it should not be necessary to set out the different types of delivery in Standard 4.1, but this could be done for emphasis.

Standard 4.1 **should** also require a law school to state if the law course is being taught in block learning mode. If the 'delivery mode' definition is not amended, as suggested above, Standard 4.1 should require the law school to state this also.

Standard 4.2 The nature of the law course

No substantive issues arise from amendments to proposed Standard 4.2.

Standard 4.3 The duration of the law course

The chief purpose of Standard 4.3 is to set the requirement for the length of a law course. The requirement – the equivalence of three years' full-time study of law - is unchanged from the 2018 Standards (Standard 4.2). The 2018 Standard 4.2 also provides that 'the course may be offered in full-time, part-time or accelerated mode'. In the 2018 Standards 'accelerated mode' is not defined but may be understood from the context to refer to a course that is undertaken in less than three calendar years.

Proposed Standard 4.3 also includes a requirement about intensive and block learning models and their use in the teaching of prescribed areas of knowledge.

Standard 4.3 provides a definition or explanation of 'an accelerated mode'. This appears in the body of the Standard 4.3 (explanatory note) not in the definitions section. The explanation of 'accelerated mode' includes intensive and block learning modes.

Although, the concept of 'accelerated mode' has been part of the accreditation standards for some time, it is suggested that reference to this concept causes confusion; and this confusion is now exacerbated by the references to intensive and block learning. Indeed, the attempt to explain the concept in the Proposed Standards is evidence itself of the confusion about accelerated modes and the requirement of duration. In addition, the references to block learning and intensives have resulted in proposed Standard 4.3 imposing requirements which are not relevant to the question of duration of the law course, complicating the application of this standard.

Accordingly, **it is recommended** that Proposed Standard 4.3 is reconsidered having regard to its approach and to its understanding of what is meant by the duration requirement:

- The requirement at first bullet point should be retained.
- The second bullet point should be removed. This requirement does not relate to purpose of this standard – namely, duration of a law course. The treatment of intensive and block learning modes is considered separately, for ease of reference, in part 3 of this report.
- With regard to the explanatory note (4.3(a)), the explanation for an accelerated mode should be deleted. As noted, this creates confusion.
 - A law course which adopts a block learning model is not necessarily an accelerated law course. Such law courses are expected to meet the requirement of three years (as well as the 36-hour requirement) and are offered over three calendar years. As such they are not accelerated. The equivalence aspect is acknowledged in the LSC and LACC *Consultation Report – Proposed revisions to the Accreditation Standards for Australian Law Courses (2026)* (Consultation Report), p. 20, in its consideration of feedback.
 - References to intensives in Standard 4.3 also creates confusion. Intensives are a mode of delivery for a law unit, not a law course. How intensives are taught, and the subject matter of that intensive unit is not a matter for a standard on the duration of a law course but may be relevant to a standard on teaching of the law course. See further part 3 of this report.
 - The only possible relevance of the term ‘accelerated’ might be in a situation where, exceptionally, a law course is offered for a duration of less than three calendar years, for example a law course that may be undertaken in two or two and a half years. However, retention of the term ‘accelerated’ for this one situation seems redundant given that the circumstance is already captured by the *LACC Statement on Duration of Legal Studies*, which is included in the explanatory note.
- The requirement of proposed Standard 4.3 is a simple one. A law school must satisfy an Admitting Authority that the law course it offers is the equivalent of three years full-time study. The inclusion of the term ‘equivalence’ demonstrates that the inquiry is not necessarily an orthodox application of the calendar, as does the *LACC Statement on Duration of Legal Studies*. Terms such as ‘accelerated mode’ add nothing to the understanding of the Standard.
- Standard 4.3 also includes in 4.3(a) a list of factors that are indicative of the matters an Admitting Authority may consider in relation to block learning models and intensive teaching. Although a clearer distinction should be made between block learning models and intensive teaching, these are helpful factors. However, they are not relevant to this standard; see further part 3 of this Report.
- An Admitting Authority needs to satisfy itself that the three-year rule is not undermined in a law course that offers a block learning course mode or intensive units. However, this is the only inquiry relevant at this point.

If these recommendations are accepted, proposed Standard 4.3 would appear as follows:

- The law course includes the equivalent of at least three years' full-time study of law.

(a) *Explanatory note*

The total credit points for the law units in the law course must equal or exceed an EFTSL of 3.0.

The course may be offered in a full-time or part-time.

The LACC Statement on Duration of Legal Studies, provides that the requirement for at least three years' full-time study refers to three calendar years and that –

A law course that can be completed in fewer than three years may be accredited ... if the relevant law school satisfies the Admitting Authority that the course is, indeed, the equivalent of a three calendar year full-time course undertaken at the relevant law school, in terms of the breadth and depth of its content, the teaching methods to be employed and the assessment criteria and methodology.

(b) *How can a law school show that it has met this standard?*

[text continues as set out in the proposed Standard 4.3.]

Standard 4.4 The learning outcomes for the law course

There are no substantive changes to Standard 4.4 in the Proposed Standards, aside from, sensibly, adding reference to 'statutory interpretation'.

Standard 4.5 Content of the law course

Proposed Standard 4.5 is consistent with the 2018 Standards in approach with changes largely reflecting new or changed definitions, and a clearer emphasis on the expectation that total teaching hours equate to at least 36 hours.

It is recommended that 4.5(b)(ii) be amended to include a requirement that the number of hours allocated to the teaching methods for that unit be specified, rather than just a statement of the total teaching hours. This provides an Admitting Authority with a better understanding of how those hours are employed in relation to the teaching methods being used within the unit/s and, thus, assist the question of whether the content is being adequately covered. Accordingly, 4.5(b)(ii) should read:

estimate the total teaching hours allocated to the teaching of each prescribed area of knowledge, and describe the teaching methods having regard to the delivery modes for each prescribed area of knowledge indicating the predominant teaching method and delivery mode **(and number of hours allocated to this teaching method and mode)** and the use of other teaching methods and delivery modes **(and number of hours allocated to each of these other teaching methods and modes)**....

It is suggested that the treatment of statutory interpretation in this proposed Standard should be reviewed and clarified. Standard 4.5 covers both the prescribed areas of knowledge and statutory interpretation.

- However, the explanatory note does not refer to statutory interpretation which may cause confusion over whether statutory interpretation is able to be taught across units or required to be a discrete unit. It is noted that the definition of prescribed area of knowledge is now also defined to include statutory interpretation: ‘... the teaching of which may include statutory interpretation...’. However, it is not entirely clear what is intended by this definition, which, arguably, suggests the definition only applies if statutory interpretation is being taught alongside an area of prescribed knowledge, rather than some other area of law. The *LACC Statement on Statutory Interpretation* does not require this. The Consultation Report notes that some submissions have sought clarity on the teaching of statutory interpretation, although in relation to Standard 4.7 (p.17). The Consultation Report makes the following statements, ‘The existing requirement whereby law schools may teach statutory interpretation as part of one or more Priestley 11 subjects is intended to remain unchanged’ and ‘...applies to each Priestley 11 subject (which are now defined as including statutory interpretation)’. It is submitted that there is no such existing requirement. Whilst it is likely that much of the teaching of statutory interpretation will be undertaken alongside the prescribed areas of knowledge units, other law units may also be used to teach the elements of statutory interpretation. The Consultation Report’s view that the definition of prescribed areas of knowledge includes statutory interpretation adds to the confusion, given that separate references are sometimes made to statutory interpretation and prescribed areas of knowledge and in other cases statutory interpretation is not mentioned but may be caught up by the new definition of ‘prescribed areas of knowledge’.
- Standard 4.5(b) provides an example of this potential confusion.
 - In 4.5(b)(i) separate references are made to prescribed areas of knowledge and statutory interpretation.
 - However, 4.5(b)(ii) and (iii) make no reference to statutory interpretation. Whilst this is consistent with the approach taken in the 2018 Standards, the new definition of prescribed area of knowledge leaves open the question of whether this nevertheless covers statutory interpretation. It is noted also that the second paragraph of the explanatory note refers only to the prescribed areas of knowledge.
 - It is noted also that 4.5(b)(iv) has been deleted. It is not clear why this has been deleted, but again the question must arise as to whether it is therefore intended that this is now covered elsewhere because of the new definition of ‘prescribed area of knowledge’.

It is recommended that the purpose and scope of the definition of ‘prescribed area of knowledge’ be clarified. This clarification needs to apply also to the Proposed Standards overall to ensure that statutory interpretation is covered in the Proposed Standards as intended.

Standard 4.6 Teaching the law course and active learning

The explicit reference to ‘active learning’ AND ‘direct interaction’, and to a learning environment encouraging student engagement and participation in Standard 4.6 is welcome. Further, explanatory note (a) retains the Admitting Authorities’ position that active learning and direct interaction are the most reliable means of ensuring acquisition of understanding and competence.

However, Standard 4.6 also marks a significant change in approach which undermines the objective of active learning and direct interaction, and proper pedagogical considerations. This is because of the introduction of a quantitative approach. Explanatory note 4.6(b)(iii) requires only 18 of the 36 hours of teaching to include active learning and direct interaction. It is to be noted that this is in place of ‘primarily’ in the 2018 Standards, which offers a qualitative, and hence more nuanced, approach. The quantitative approach taken in the Proposed Standards risks creating an assumption that law courses can effectively abandon student engagement and direct interaction for up to half of the unit’s teaching hours.

The quantitative approach also puts at risk proper pedagogical practice whereby the design of a unit (or course) is shaped by the nature and needs of the subject matter and student cohort. Accreditation processes are likely to turn into accounting exercises rather than an holistic assessment of the learning environment being offered. The examples provided in the note to Standard 4.6 are indicative of this likely direction, as are the queries that have already arisen regarding what is and what is not included in an ‘18 hour requirement’, as noted in the Consultation Report. Standard 4.6(a) talks about ‘quality of teaching’; a quantitative approach is not the way to assess quality or to have the assurance sought by the purposes of the Proposed Standards.

Given that the definition of ‘teaching methods’ contemplates gamification as one method, there is potentially a risk that up to half of the student’s teaching may be delivered by an automated process, rather than the unit teacher. This is not to suggest that gamified activities have no place in the teaching of law subjects. The rich variety of learning activities available for students is valuable. Nevertheless, the growth in online courses and block learning models potentially adds to the pressure for ‘slimming down’ expectations of engagement and interaction. A review of the Consultation Report shows that these are not idle concerns given that there were submissions to the effect that the 36 teaching hours should also include student preparation time (p.14), that the term ‘direct interaction’ should remove the requirement of ‘real-time’ (p.13) and include interactions with artificial intelligence (p.13).

Accordingly, **it is recommended**:

- Standard 4.6, third bullet point, is amended as follows:

When considering whether a law course will enable a student to acquire an adequate level of understanding and competence, an Admitting Authority will consider whether the provision for active learning and direct interaction enables a learning environment where there is a sufficient level of student engagement and participation.

- Standard 4.6(b)(iii) is amended to delete the reference to 18 hours:

the design of the law course and its program of instruction primarily comprises for each prescribed area of knowledge [and statutory interpretation?] both

- Deletion of the Note to the Standard 4.6.

Standard 4.7 Assessing understanding and competence

No substantive issues arise from amendments to proposed Standard 4.7.

2. OTHER MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

The treatment of block learning and intensive modes in the Proposed Standards

It has been recommended that Standard 4.3 dealing with the duration of a law course is not the appropriate place for consideration of block learning and intensive modes, and that these modes are more relevant for consideration in other standards. To simplify the discussion, the recommendations regarding the block learning and intensive modes are made in this part.

Block learning models and intensive units need to be treated separately in the Proposed Standards as different issues arise when accrediting a course, that is delivered in block mode, compared with review of a unit that may be taught in an intensive mode.

Block Learning Model

It is recommended that Standard 4.1 is the appropriate standard for an assessment of a law course delivered in block learning mode. This is consistent with the second paragraph of Standard 4.1(a) (the explanatory note) which expressly states that an Admitting Authority will consider the delivery mode of the law course as part of the accreditation process. Standard 4.1 is thus an inquiry into whether the design of the law course having regard to the delivery mode

chosen can be accredited. Accordingly, the factors set out in Standard 4.3 could be used in Standard 4.1 as factors to guide an Admitting Authority in considering whether the block learning model should be accredited. It is suggested that this consideration, so far as Standard 4.1 is concerned should be confined to the block learning mode and not to intensives. Thus, Standard 4.1(a) could be as follows:

The Admitting Authority will consider the delivery mode offered by the law school when considering the accreditation of a law course.

In relation to a law course that uses a block learning model mode, the Admitting Authority may take into account the following factors:

- (i) whether block learning model delivery would enable students to acquire the appropriate level of understanding and competence in the prescribed area/(s) of knowledge and statutory interpretation
- (ii) the impact the block learning model would have on teaching hours and teaching methods
- (iii) the maximum number of units a student may undertake concurrently
- (iv) whether the duration of the block learning model will permit sufficient breaks for students to digest primary reading materials and allow for deep learning
- (v) whether the breadth and depth of content is equal to or less than that offered in a comparable non-accelerated law course
- (vi) whether there are specific issues for students undertaking part-time or combined degrees
- (vii) the consequences for progression if a student fails a unit
- (viii) the catch-up arrangement that would be put in place where student progress is unsatisfactory
- (ix) whether the compressed timeframes for learning and assessments negatively impacts student performance (e.g. pass rates), attendance and retention (e.g. dropout rates), and
- (x) the way in which the block learning model facilitates the use of interactive teaching methods and authentic course assessment.

When a law course is offered to international students, there may be legislative restrictions on online delivery and distance education.

Intensive units

Standard 4.3 also includes a statement to the effect that intensives or block learning modes may be used for the teaching of prescribed areas of knowledge, where appropriate in all the circumstances. In the review of Standard 4.3, it has been recommended that this statement should be removed. It is inevitable that a block learning model by the nature of its design will be teaching prescribed areas of knowledge in units delivered within a concentrated teaching period. These units are not intensives as understood by the Proposed Standards definition. The inquiry, under Standard 4.1, into the block learning model design should be sufficient to address the question whether the teaching of the prescribed areas of knowledge is adequate having regard to the law school's block learning model. The inquiry under Standard 4.1 is not intended to pre-empt the Admitting Authority's review under Standard 4.6.

Outside of the block learning model which is likely to offer all units in a concentrated form, it is difficult to envisage the circumstances which require a unit covering a prescribed area of knowledge to be taught in intensive mode. Whilst intensive mode can be a useful and interesting teaching mode for some elective subjects, there is no obvious reason for a prescribed area of knowledge unit to be taught outside of the usual teaching sessions.

Accordingly, **it is recommended** that Standard 4.6, concerned with teaching, should include a prohibition on prescribed areas of knowledge being taught in intensive mode. A bullet point statement could be added in Standard 4.6 in the following terms:

Units covering the prescribed areas of knowledge must not be delivered in intensive mode.

Proposed implementation date

The Consultation Report proposes commencement of the new Standards at the start of the academic year 2028 (p.4). It is noted that some law schools argued a longer time frame was needed and proposed a grandfathering type transition (pp 4-5).

It is submitted that a commencement date of 2028 is more than generous, and that a more realistic time frame would be for a commencement date to be the start of the 2027 academic year. The Proposed Standards are an evolution of the 2018 Standards, not a radical departure and expectations such as active engagement by students are a continuation of current expectations. It would be surprising, considering the current 2018 Standards, to find that an accredited law course is being offered entirely asynchronously.

Accordingly, **it is recommended** that a commencement date of start of academic year 2027 be set. It is open to an Admitting Authority, as part of the accrediting process, to make determinations and impose conditions in individual cases, as may be appropriate.

The teaching of technology and AI in the curriculum

The Consultation Report has rejected inclusion of a requirement for law schools to demonstrate how students are being trained in the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) and related technologies (pp 8-9) on the basis that this is already covered through TEQSA guidance as well as the courts.

A discipline-specific inquiry into approaches taken by law schools is important, especially given the increasingly pervasive role of these technologies in legal practice. It is suggested that Admitting Authorities should, as part of the accreditation process, be satisfied that a law course will equip students to understand and engage with generative AI in an appropriate and legitimate manner.

Conclusion

The Board is grateful for the assistance of Emerita Professor Leslie Hitchens in the formulation of this submission.

The Hon Justice Tony Payne

Presiding Member

11 February 2026

[END]

Document information

Title:	Submission on the Proposed Revisions to the Accreditation Standards for Australian Law Course
Approver:	Legal Profession Admission Board
Date of Effect:	10 February 2026

Document history

Version	Effective Date	Reason for Amendment
1	10/02/2026	Document released