



6th March 2024

## **Socio-Legal Studies in the Law Curriculum**

### **Project Information Sheet**

The Socio-Legal Studies Association (SLSA) and the Association of Law Teachers (ALT) are collaborating with the University of Portsmouth Law School in undertaking this survey into the current position of socio-legal education in UK law schools with the aim of understanding how best to support the members of both learned societies in the design and delivery of their teaching.

The ALT aims to further the advancement, development, study, understanding, use, and reform of the educational aspects of law and its teaching. The SLSA is dedicated to promoting education in socio-legal studies, emphasising the development of a socially conscious generation of legal professionals who are well-equipped to address real-world challenges.

The 2023 QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Law stipulates that law graduates should possess socio-legal skills, including demonstrating interdisciplinary research techniques, and the ability to engage in contemporary debates about the operation of law in society. The SLSA has recently supported scholarship aimed at integrating feminist approaches and projects that seek to decolonise the law curriculum for both undergraduate and postgraduate students.

However, integrating socio-legal studies into the law curriculum faces challenges. The Nuffield Inquiry's findings in 2006 highlighted the limitations of a professionally influenced curriculum on the study of law as a social science (Nuffield Inquiry, 2006). In 2012, Professor Caroline Hunter's research identified barriers to implementing socio-legal approaches, stemming from the requirements of the Qualifying Law Degree (QLD) and addressed the need for enhanced support in this context.

In recent years, the landscape of legal education, especially in England and Wales, has changed considerably. A notable shift is the transition from the Legal Practice Course to the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE) in vocational training for solicitors. This shift has impacted undergraduate law degrees to the extent that QLDs are no longer governed by the SRA/BSB Joint Statement. The removal of these external constraints presents an

opportunity for law schools in England and Wales to think more creatively about the content of the undergraduate law degree and their level of engagement with socio-legal studies. At the same time, it has the potential to stifle this engagement, as some law schools seek to orient their curricula with the SQE in mind.

### **Survey Aims**

In light of developments, our survey seeks to evaluate the incorporation of socio-legal studies in UK law curricula and to identify ways the SLSA can further support and promote these approaches. We focus on:

- The presence of socio-legal modules in undergraduate and postgraduate modules.
- The adoption of socio-legal approaches in core and optional modules.
- The impact of external factors, such as the SQE, on course design.
- Strategies to bolster socio-legal education.

For this survey, we define 'core module' as a module that students are required by the institution to study. This requirement may be motivated by professional requirements (such as the ability to meet the requirements of the Bar in England and Wales, or the professional competencies in Scotland and Northern Ireland). We define 'socio-legal education' broadly, encompassing diverse strategies that allow students to understand and critique law as a social institution. These strategies might include integrating socio-legal research into learning activities, training students in socio-legal research methods, and encouraging research that examines the societal impact of legal issues. Other approaches may involve drawing inspiration from other disciplines within humanities and social sciences in the design, delivery and/or content of teaching.

### **Survey Outcomes**

The outcomes of this survey will form the basis of a report which will be disseminated through the SLSA and the ALT as well as other research outputs.

#### **Consent**

Participation in the survey will be taken as consent. You will not be able to withdraw consent once you have completed and submitted your responses. You will not be identified in the report or any subsequent publications.

#### **Data Confidentiality**

We have asked if you are willing in providing your name, the name of your institution, and your email address. These data will be stored securely on a password protected Google Drive and will only be available to the project team.

If you have any queries about this [survey](#) please contact [Emily Walsh \(emily.walsh@port.ac.uk\)](mailto:emily.walsh@port.ac.uk) or [Daniel Bedford \(daniel.bedford@port.ac.uk\)](mailto:daniel.bedford@port.ac.uk) or if you have any general queries about how your data will be processed, please contact the University's Data Protection Officer, Samantha Hill, using any of the following contact details:

Samantha Hill, 023 9284 3642 or [information-matters@port.ac.uk](mailto:information-matters@port.ac.uk)  
University House, Winston Churchill Avenue, Portsmouth, Hampshire, PO1 2UP, UK

We ask for your consent to process the data we ask for in the [survey](#), so that we can conduct the research as described in the project information sheet. We will only share your personalised data with members of the project team.

Your personal data will be held securely on [University servers](#) / (we **will not** store your data outside the EU) for a maximum of 3 years, and securely destroyed after that date. Anonymous data will be retained for a minimum of 10 years. When it is no longer required, the data will be disposed of securely.

Although you have the right to request a copy of the personal data we hold about you, to restrict the use of your personal data, to be forgotten, to data portability, and to withdraw your consent for the use of your data, it is possible that we may not be able to fully comply with those rights where your data has been used for the research and / or has been anonymised. For more information on your rights in general, please see the information on the following links:

<https://www.port.ac.uk/about-us/structure-and-governance/legal/data-protection-and-gdpr/requesting-your-data>

You also have the right to lodge a complaint about the use of your personal data to initially the University (email [information-matters@port.ac.uk](mailto:information-matters@port.ac.uk)) and then, if you are unhappy with our response, to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) – for more information please see <https://ico.org.uk/your-data-matters/raising-concerns/> .