



Dean: Faculty of Law
Intloko: Ifakalti yezoMthetho
Dekaan: Fakuliteit Regsgeleerdheid

Professor P Andrews

Private Bag X3 Rondebosch, 7701 South Africa
Room 4.08 Kramer Building, Middle Campus
Tel: +27 021 650 2706
<http://www.law.uct.ac.za/>

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Dear Faculty of Law community members,

I am writing to all of you – students, colleagues, alumni, donors and friends of the Faculty of Law at the University of Cape Town – because media reports of the Council of Higher Education (CHE) review process have raised many questions and anxieties about the future of the faculty's accreditation.

Let me begin by saying the following: Accreditation has not been withdrawn. Current students and those who will register as first-years for 2018 will graduate with an accredited qualification. We have until May 2018 to address the concerns highlighted by the CHE and we are confident we can do so well within that deadline.

The Law Faculty is in no danger of losing its accreditation. Such a step, if it were taken (which is not likely) would involve an extended process that could take years. The faculty has every intention of responding to the points raised by the CHE, in a timely manner and in the required detail.

[Read the FAQ provided by the South African Law Deans Association and UCT on CHE's review ...](#)

We are all rightly proud to be associated with the University of Cape Town Law Faculty: it is the oldest law faculty in the country and is ranked 40th worldwide; it has a long, proud history, and a tradition of high standards, with very intense programmes of study. This faculty has very strict admissions criteria; just to be admitted here is a noteworthy achievement. According to the most recent Careers Services exit survey, 61% of black South African LLB graduates and 57% of white South African LLB graduates have already been employed by the time they receive their degree. These are impressive figures. About 19% of remaining graduates (black and white) indicate they are pursuing further studies, while between 6% and 10% are pursuing other plans. Only about 15% are still seeking employment

These are admirable statistics but they do not tell the whole story. While the Law Faculty has high admissions standards, our throughput rates present a challenge. UCT data reflects three separate streams of LLB students:

- The cohort of combined stream students (BA, B Com, B Soc Sc) who complete a law major in their primary degree, followed by a two-year graduate LLB, has consistently achieved an excellent throughput rate of 79.7% graduating on time (in five years) and 85.6% of all students who enroll obtain their degree.
- The throughput rate for the three-year graduate programme (Preliminary year intake) is not as high as that of the combined stream students. 49.1% of students graduated on time between 2010 and 2013; and 57.3% of those who enrolled graduated with the degree.
- The four-year undergraduate degree provides an opportunity for the UCT Law Faculty to increase access to students from disadvantaged educational and socio-economic backgrounds. Students entering the Law Faculty directly from school, with other students in their class who are

postgraduates, or second-year students from other faculties, are challenged by the standards expected of this combined group. Interventions to support these students include a First Year Experience project, a Legal Writing Project, an academic support programme and many dedicated subject tutors available to assist students, as well as a proliferation of tutorials offered in the first year. However, the throughput rate is only 47% after six years, with 47% of the entrants who registered obtaining the degree.

We recognise that the faculty's Extended Curriculum Programme has not succeeded in improving throughput, and instead participants feel burdened by the stigma associated with these interventions – even though the fault is not the student's but rather that of the wholly inadequate education standards provided in government schools.

The critical areas of concern raised by the CHE are: student performance, especially among black students; programme coordination; and curriculum review. I would add that the faculty needs to address the experience of staff members as well. While the faculty did address these areas in general terms in the self-assessment report we submitted to the CHE, we need to provide more specific detail on how we intend to improve, with clear targets and timelines. We will cooperate fully to meet the CHE's requirements.

It is important to note that transformation issues are not specific to any faculty at UCT; they affect the entire institution and are being dealt with on an institutional level through different teams, such as the Curriculum Change Working Group. In this way we seek to bring holistic change to the university through a central approach that will influence how faculties approach transformation issues. The Law Faculty is working within this wider structure as part of the institutional process for curriculum change.

The faculty sent our self-evaluation report to the Law Students' Council (LSC) for comment. And as we work on our report to the CHE, we will involve the recently established LSC.

Now I would like to offer you the opportunity to share your thoughts on the issues I describe above, by writing to LawFeedback@uct.ac.za. You do not need to identify yourself if you would be more comfortable writing anonymously. I appreciate all suggestions that will help to improve the faculty's performance. I do hope you will give your frank feedback as it helps to provide a wider picture of how you experience the Law Faculty.

[Send feedback to UCT Faculty of Law ...](#)

The process with the CHE will take some time to complete and will involve the relevant governance structures and processes within UCT. You will hear more about this as we complete these processes. In the meantime, thank you for playing your part in helping the UCT Law Faculty to better serve our students and our country.

Sincerely,
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*Professor Penelope Andrews | Dean, Faculty of Law | University of Cape Town | Rondebosch | 7700 |
Tel: +27 21 650 2706 (w) | 078 918 8393 (c) | <http://ssrn.com/author=537527>*