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Section 34 Consultation
Legal Services Regulatory Authority
PO Box 12906
Dublin 2

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A chara,

I am writing to you on behalf of the law staff within the School of Law and Government at Dublin City University, in order to share our views on the education and training arrangements in the State for legal practitioners, pursuant to s 34(1)(a) of the Legal Services Regulation Act, 2015. We welcome the opportunity to make this submission to support the important work of the Authority.

We have read and we support the submission made to you jointly by the Heads of Irish Law Schools and Departments in universities in Ireland. In that submission reference was made to the need to recognise undergraduate law degrees for the purposes of entry to the professional training bodies. We agree with this view and consider that a return to the position which existed prior to the cases of *Bloomer v Law Society of Ireland* [1995] 3 I.R. 14 and *Abrahamson v Law Society of Ireland* [1996] 1 I.R. 403 ought to be considered. At present graduates having taken a full three or four years of an undergraduate law degree are spending an additional year or two studying for and undertaking the FE1 examinations for entry to the Law Society of Ireland. We suggest that these examinations, or an equivalent, should exist for those who either do not have an undergraduate degree in law, or who did not do as well as they might have wished in an undergraduate law degree and now seek a

second chance at entry. Similarly, for entry to the Honorable Society of King's Inns, we would suggest that direct entry on the basis of one's law degree should be possible. The current structure of entry seems to create an unnecessary delay in progression for those interested in becoming solicitors in particular, and, in both cases, adds an additional layer of exam stress for applicants.

Furthermore, focus on the modules examined for the FE1s or the Honorable Society of King's Inns entrance exams, or as part of the requirement for a qualifying law degree to be eligible to even sit the latter, can restrict student choice in elective modules within their undergraduate law degree: it elevates certain modules to "core" status above others and the rationale for the distinction is not always clear. A perennial question, for example, is why Family Law is not viewed as a "core" law subject in this sense. Also, this *de facto* delineation of "compulsory" subjects can restrict, to some extent, the module offerings which can be provided within university law degrees.

The granting of exemptions from entrance examinations in this context would be commensurate with that operated across other professions, such as accountancy, tax and actuarial studies.

Another matter to which we would like to draw the Authority's attention is the manner in which vocational training is delivered in Ireland. The Law Society is the only place where one can study to become a solicitor, and the Honorable Society of King's Inns is the only place where one can study to become a barrister. This differs significantly to the process in place in other jurisdictions. In England and Wales, for example, the Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC) and the Legal Practice Course (LPC) are both delivered within a number of universities, along with the Inns of Court in the context of the BPTC. This has a number of benefits including, for example, a greater level of linkage between the staff delivering both the vocational and the academic qualifications, which would allow for a greater transfer of expertise and ideas in terms of practice, pedagogy and substantive legal matters. Another potential benefit for students would be the geographic spread of course availability, as compared with the current Dublin-centric situation.

Finally, we at DCU are of the view that it is essential to equip undergraduate law students with a sense of the impact of law and legal practice on society. We strive to embed a socio-legal focus within our delivery of undergraduate, and indeed post-graduate, modules. We believe that law graduates should carry with them a sense that the law and legal practice can bring about positive societal change, and they should strive to use the law in that manner.

Le gach deá-ghuí,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Yvonne Daly". The signature is written in a dark ink on a white background.

Associate Professor Yvonne Daly

on behalf of the School of Law and Government, DCU