

A tutor's guide to *LPC Skills Online*

Liz Polding and Jill Cripps

Let the authors of OUP's innovative *LPC Skills Online* guide you through the resource and help you integrate it into your course.

LPC Skills Online contains over 60 interactive exercises covering all of the skills required on the LPC. It's a flexible resource that can be fitted around your course, rather than the other way around: it has been designed to be used either as a standalone resource or integrated with face-to-face learning and independent study as part of a blended course.

We have created this guide to provide you with some ideas as to how you can understand the full benefits of *LPC Skills Online* and amalgamate the ones that will work best for your students into your course.

Make the most of *LPC Skills Online*

In the guide, you'll find:

- ▶ suggestions as to how to use the exercises as pre-course preparation
- ▶ guidance on how to use *LPC Skills Online* to help students prepare for workshops
- ▶ a summary of the teaching points in each exercise to help you plan which exercises will work best with which sessions of your course
- ▶ suggestions as to how to use exercises for follow-up or additional practice as confidence-building tools
- ▶ notes on the legal context of exercises
- ▶ tips on how to incorporate the resource into students' portfolios
- ▶ an 'at a glance' guide to suggested activities.



Before the course begins

At the start of the course there is often a period of adjustment, and in our experience, students also often underestimate the difference between the undergraduate law degree or graduate diploma and the LPC. Some students find it difficult to accept that the strategies and approaches that served them well in their academic careers are less effective in an LPC context. There is often a risk too that they will underestimate skills and the importance that law firms attach to them.

You may therefore find it helpful to offer students access to *LPC Skills Online* before their course starts. OUP can provide temporary licences for students who have accepted places but not yet started, and if they do not take up their places, the licences will be cancelled and access will cease. Once a student has taken up their place, they can be issued with a hard copy of the resource in the usual way and the licence will run for its full two-year period.

Writing and drafting

As you'll know, writing is specifically assessed on the LPC, so focusing on writing will alert students to potential problems so that they can correct any common errors prior to the assessment. Generally at undergraduate level, assessments are not marked for grammar, spelling and so on and many undergraduates may well not consider it to be an issue at all. It is useful therefore to flag these up at an early stage and point out that the firms are concerned about correct English.



Diagnostic and preparatory work

First, students should watch the introductory practitioner videos in this section and then complete the diagnostic exercises 1–3. These deal with basics such as grammar, punctuation, spelling and plain English. These are often a cause for concern, particularly where the wrong form of a word is used because the spellcheck feature does not pick this up.

Pre-workshop activities

The early exercises on letters and attendance notes are a good way to help students develop an awareness of their writing (exercises 4–6 inclusive). Students can also start to recognise when a difference between their work and the suggested answer is significant and when it is not.

Ask students to complete the attendance note in exercise 5 and then bring their version and the suggested answer to a session. You can then invite questions and comments and give them some pointers about what would be a critical difference between the two

versions. This will also give you an opportunity to consider strategies that they might find helpful for this type of exercise, which they are likely to carry out great deal in practice. For example, not trying to get down every word, ensuring that critical pieces of information are recognised and recorded and so on.

Follow-on activities

The drafting exercises (exercises 9, 9A, 11–12A inclusive) provide additional examples in all compulsory areas, also with feedback and suggested solutions. They also include prompts to consult a tutor in the event that the student is achieving less than half the available marks in these skills. For writing, there are further exercises in writing memos and any letters and attendance notes which the students have not already been directed to attempt.

Summary of exercises and key teaching points

Ex.	Context	Teaching points	Suggestions for use
1		Archaic expressions	Pre-course or early preparation
2		Common misspellings and those the spellchecker will miss	Pre-course or early preparation
3		Grammar and punctuation	Pre-course or early preparation
4, 4a	Letter writing	Salutation and closing, internal consistency, tone, clarity	Early preparation
5, 5a	Litigation, property	Attendance notes – telephone calls including a conference call. Ensuring key details are correct. Making a judgement about what should be included.	Preparation or follow up for an SGS. Could be used for a debrief on how students can judge their own work – are the differences between their work and the suggested solution critical? Do they have the essentials correct?
6	Company	Attendance notes – meetings. Checking the names of those present. Summarising dialogue and grouping information logically. How to present the information for a client as well as your principal.	Preparation or follow up for an SGS. If used for preparation, consider asking students for their feedback on difficulties with summarising, taking notes when several people are speaking etc.
7	Criminal	Taking a statement. Costs implications of details being recorded inaccurately.	Preparation or follow up.
8, 8a	Company taxation (8), probate (8a)	Writing a memo to present research findings. Function and content of an executive summary. Structure, appropriate level of detail. Editing quoted information rather than copying and pasting. Presenting key factual data clearly. Applying law to facts. Giving clear advice.	Preparation or follow up. Could also be used for extra practice.

9, 9a	Property	Definitions and using defined terms, house style, internal consistency, the use of capitalisation, style, considering the implications of what you draft. Providing for changes in the law, breach, enforcement, adapting the document to reflect different circumstances. Addressing the client's concerns.	Follow up and extra practice. Could be used as preparation for a later session once they have had some experience of simple drafting.
10, 10a	Litigation	Emails: tone, content, reminders on grammar and spelling. Avoiding abbreviations and informality. Remembering that the email in this context is an electronic letter. Reminders about clarity and brevity.	Preparation or follow up. Email is one area where firms give poor feedback on trainees. There is a tendency to be too informal, especially when emailing trainees on the other side.
11, 11a	Drafting particulars of claim	Parties, clarity, appropriate wording, damages. Requesting an order. Address for service. The consequences of incorrect drafting.	Follow up or preparation for a later session.
12, 12a	Company	Drafting terms of business. Following clients' instructions, internal consistency, using definitions, clarity, brevity and tone. Making clear which document prevails if there is inconsistency, the use of interest in commercial agreements, form or notification of breach, IP rights and licensing terms. Providing for future eventualities. 12a involves reviewing an existing draft and determining whether it does what it should do in clear terms.	Follow up or preparation for a later session. 12a may be more suitable as a preparation exercise. It could be used as a group exercise if students attempt it beforehand and then give their views on why some clauses work and some do not.

Interviewing and advising

Diagnostic and preparatory work

Students should first watch the introductory practitioner videos. They should then complete exercises 1–3A, which deal with the stages of an interview and the practical issues surrounding a meeting with a client. These are often overlooked as it is assumed that it is the law which is most important. Dealing with these issues in a session is potentially time consuming and the points raised are small but important. Even if you get the law completely correct, if the client had to drive around for an hour because the trainee did not think about a parking space, they will not have a good impression of the firm!



Pre-workshop activities

The interviewing exercises covering professional behaviour and questioning deal with small but important points prior to taught sessions (exercises 4–6 inclusive). You may want to pick up on key points at the start of the session, the most significant of which are usually the need to listen to the client and to use plain English.

Follow-on activities

The interviewing section includes further interviews on which to comment and also gives students exercises to complete on the follow up phase for interviews (exercises 6 and 7). These again deal with useful practical issues including professional conduct such as conflict checks. There may not be time to cover these points in sessions and in general it would be a tutor-led point unless your exercises in sessions require the students to deal with this point specifically. It is therefore a useful way to make an important point without having necessarily to devote time to it in a session.

Summary of exercises and key learning points

Ex.	Context	Teaching points	Suggestions for use
1	Interviews	Flowchart of interview structure.	Pre-course exercise or early preparation. This can be used to address student preconceptions – e.g. that it is they who should do most of the talking in an interview
2, 2a	Criminal (2), discrimination (2a).	Preparing for an interview. Reviewing facts from a telephone attendance note to help determine the areas of law involved and to plan the interview.	Pre-course exercise or early preparation. Introduces the idea (which they will also need for PLR), that they need to identify the area of law involved – this is a step up from undergraduate or GDL level where the area of law would be clear.
3, 3a	Property context (3), probate (3a).	Preparing for an interview – checklist of practical points. Conflict checks, administration, costs.	Pre-course exercise or early preparation. This exercise covers practical issues which might otherwise have to be addressed in a fairly didactic way in a session.
4, 4a	Company, (4), probate (4a)	Explaining clauses to a client in plain English. Ensuring that a document meets the client's needs. Questioning and listening skills. Professional conduct points – conflict of interest and identifying your client, confidentiality.	Preparation or follow up for interviewing sessions. May be used for extra practice.

5, 5a	Company context (5), litigation (5a)	Advising the client over the telephone. Clarity, plain English, professional manner, tone, introducing yourself, preparing properly before calling the client. Avoiding jargon and statutory references when speaking to a client. Switching off your mobile.	Preparation or follow up. Could also be used for extra practice before an assessment, but the prep/follow up option is likely to be most effective as it will make the students consider basic points, particularly in relation to professional manner and proper preparation.
6	Conduct of an interview	Listening skills, encouraging the client to tell their story. Dealing with an urgent call, professional manner. The feedback points out that this is not what should happen, but if it does, the least damaging method of dealing with it). Ensuring that the client knows what will happen after the interview.	Preparation or follow up. Some troubleshooting points in this exercise. May be inappropriate for a pre-course exercise. Could be used as a basis for discussion in a session – for example on professional manner.
7		Follow up checklist from exercise 6.	This could be used as follow up for preparation. If it is used as preparation, ask the trainees to bring their checklists to the session and give feedback on how their answers differed from the suggested answer.

Advocacy

Diagnostic and preparatory work

Students should watch the introductory practitioner videos. They should then complete the preparatory exercises which deal with preparation and analysing facts (exercises 1–2A).

All of the above exercises can be done without the hard copy part of the resource. A brief summary of the key points on how to use the online resource is available on the website and there is a ‘tour’ facility to show new students how it works. They will not need to have access to your systems and any support will be handled by OUP.



Pre-workshop activities

The early exercises involving pace, tone and the use of notes give students some initial pointers (exercises 3 and 4). As preparation for more advanced sessions, consider using the multi-track advocacy exercises (exercises 5, 5a and 6) so that the different uses of open and closed questions and the consequences of using them inappropriately are highlighted.

Follow-on activities

Exercises that have not yet been used can be used to provide students with additional information and practice in this skill (exercises 3–6A inclusive).

Summary of exercises and key learning points

Ex.	Context	Teaching points	Suggestions for use
1, 1a	Litigation in a company (1), contract (1a)	Keywords exercise. Exercise judgement about relevant areas of law, possible source of further documents to request and review.	Pre-course exercise or early preparation. An introduction to formulating case theory.
2, 2a	Property (2), breach of contract (2a)	Using information from a client's statement on video to formulate an argument to take the client's case forward. Examples of good practice for interviewing technique also. Evaluating facts and determining their importance for the case. Determining what the client's objectives are, rather than making assumptions.	Pre-course or early preparation. Could be used as an interviewing example if necessary – for example if there is a lot of other material for pre-course completion.
3	Criminal	Bail application. Court etiquette, professional manner, pace and tone of voice. Clarity and using the correct form of address for the court.	Preparation or follow up. It could be used as a debrief exercise at the start of a session or the video could be played for class comments.
4	Criminal	Cross examination. Referring the court to the bundle. Dealing with errors in court (directing the judge to the wrong page), professional demeanour. Introduction to open and closed questions and their function.	Preparation or follow up.
5,5a	Criminal (5), partnership dispute (5a)	Open and closed questions dealt with in more detail – multi-path video showing the consequences of each choice. Etiquette, leading questions. Making use of the court bundle. Not asking for the opinion of anyone who is not an expert witness. When to let your client tell their story and when to keep them to the point with closed questions.	Preparation or follow up depending on the content of your sessions.
6		Closing speeches. The importance of not repeating all the evidence. Making sure that your points stand out by keeping it brief.	Follow up. Good demonstration of the impact that brevity can have and the detrimental effect of being too long-winded.
6a		Relevance, brevity and clarity.	Follow up.

Practical legal research

Diagnostic and preparatory work

Students should complete the keywords and interpretation exercises (exercises 1–3a inclusive). The feedback in these exercises prompts the student to consult their tutor if they have difficulties here. Both the QLD and the GDL require students to cover research as a skill and this should therefore be reasonably familiar territory, although it may also serve as a refresher for some students.

Pre-workshop activities

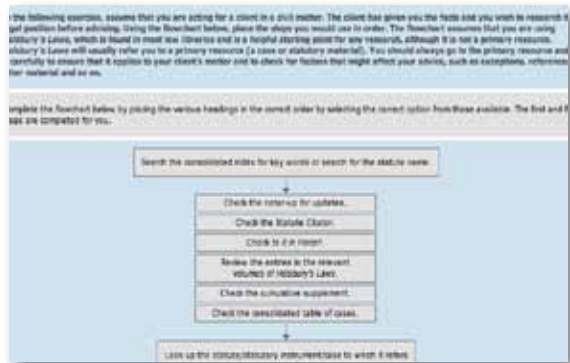
The preparatory exercises such as the drag and drop exercise gives students a good introduction to using Halsbury's Laws in hard copy (exercise 2) If you do not run a taught library session, there are numerous exercises for both hard copy and electronic resources (exercises 6–15 inclusive). The hard copy research exercises use Halsbury's and popular practitioner texts so that students whose libraries are smaller or part time students who may have quite limited access can still complete these exercises effectively.

Use the exercises as a way of encouraging student input in a workshop session. For example, ask them to complete two exercises, one from each group of exercises and ask them for their views on the difference in approach. This can raise valuable teaching points including:

- ▶ The different methods of updating, depending on which type of resource students used. This can also build on the exercise on Halsbury's if you have asked them to complete this – for example the difference between 'Is it in force' and the Citorator. Students often assume that online resources are always up to date so this is a chance to flag up the fact that they need to check the Stop Press, Current Awareness.
- ▶ Different search methods and the difference in your approach if you are using an index and if you are searching electronically.
- ▶ Reliability of different sources, particularly electronic sources. For example, students who found statutes on the parliament website may be surprised to learn that these are the original versions, so any amendments and updates will not be included.

Suggested activities

The bank of research exercises for hard copy and electronic resources have full solutions and feedback and can be used for additional practice in this skill once face-to-face sessions have been completed and as preparation for a marked mock assessment (exercises 6–15 inclusive). In addition, the exercises on writing up research in the writing and drafting section (exercises 8 and 8a). can be used to provide further practice in presenting results.



Summary of exercises and key teaching points

Ex.	Context	Teaching points	Suggestions for use
1, 1a	Employment (1), defamation (1a)	Key words. Determining the area of law. Using an index to search. Different types of index.	Pre-course or early preparation.
2		Flowchart for using Halsbury's Laws, including citators and the resources used for updating and checking if legislation is in force.	Pre-course or early preparation.
3, 3a	Probate (3) inheritance tax (3a)	Interpretation of statutory material. Reminder that interpreting what you find and applying it is as important as finding it to being with.	Pre-course and early preparation.
4	Property	Research method. Starting with secondary sources. The importance of using primary sources as authority.	Early preparation.
5		Presenting your research, research trails, the use of summaries. House style for presenting research material.	Preparation or follow up.
6		Hard copy research exercise. Income tax. Starting with secondary sources, but using primary sources for authority. Updating using paper sources. Practical conclusions and applying the law. Destination tables.	Preparation, follow up or extra practice.
7		Hard copy research exercise. Money laundering. Using statutory instruments. Footnotes and updating materials to check for recent changes in the law. Citators, notes and professional guidance as resources.	Preparation, follow up or extra practice.
8		Hard copy research exercise. Administration of estates. Client objectives. Using Is it in Force? to check if the provisions on which you want to rely are in fact in force. Case law as an authority.	Preparation, follow up or extra practice.
9	EC law	Hard copy research exercise. Using a practitioner text. The effect of EC law, using EC directives.	Preparation, follow up or extra practice.
10	EC competition law	Hard copy research exercise. Reading around what you find to check for relevant points.	Preparation, follow up or extra practice.

11	Conveyancing and bankruptcy	Electronic research exercise. Search strings, connectors. The importance of reading cases. Obiter dicta and ratio decidendi.	Preparation, follow up or extra practice.
12		Electronic research exercise. . Updating, rewrite projects. Search strings, using appropriate e-resources (not Google!). Using notes and following links to other material.	Preparation, follow up or extra practice.
13	Company, professional conduct	Electronic research exercise. Professional conduct – not advising beyond your area of competence. The importance of reading the material you find, rather than relying on commentary.	Preparation, follow up or extra practice.
14	Jurisdiction where the contract is silent	Electronic research exercise. Using professional regulations such as the CPR. Tailoring your search string so that you get a manageable number of hits. The importance of reading what you find thoroughly.	Preparation, follow up or extra practice.
15	Human rights.	Electronic research exercise. Primary and secondary sources, using footnotes and notes generally.	Preparation, follow up or extra practice.

Case study

The exercises in this case study module, which is in an employment law context, are a useful way of showing students how the skills all fit together in practice. You could use the consolidation exercises near the beginning of your course so that students can get a feel for how their skills will build during the course. If you do this, it is likely to be most effective if the students have been asked to complete preparatory exercises in all skills before joining the course.

The consolidation exercises can also be used to pull all skills together after completion of face to face tuition. This can either be done as a single extended exercise or as a series of exercises after the completion of teaching in each skill. Which approach is most effective will depend on the structure of your course and the timing of your skills teaching.

Key teaching points

Ex.	Teaching points	Suggestions for use
1	Interviewing. Questioning, listening, determining the client's objectives. Sorting out relevant information.	Overview, follow up or consolidation and revision, depending on the structure of your course
2	Research and interpretation of findings. Research trails and application to the client's matter.	

3	Writing a letter to the client. Clarity, brevity, tone and structure revised.
4	Drafting a questionnaire. The format is prescribed, raising the point that filling out forms and completing documents of this type are both still drafting, but within tight limits.
5	Employment tribunal advocacy. Etiquette, mode of address, open and closed questions.

Reflection and the LPC

The act of reflecting is one which causes us to make sense of what we've learned, why we learned it, and how that particular increment of learning took place. Moreover, reflection is about linking one increment of learning to the wider perspective of learning – heading towards seeing the bigger picture. Phil Race

As you'll know, the LPC outcomes now include reflection as an explicit requirement, but students may not be familiar with doing this in any formal way. Introducing them to the reflective diary, in which they can make use of the templates supplied to get them started with this process will provide clear evidence that they have met this outcome. You can also use their reflective diary in personal tutorials or mentoring meetings and to add to their portfolio if you use this form of recording achievement (see below).

For example, you might ask them to bring their reflections on any diagnostic or preparatory exercises to your first personal tutorial so that you can determine how they did and their approach to reflective learning. You can also guide them if necessary and use the reflective diary as a way of focusing them in subsequent meetings and flushing out any points of difficulty.

Portfolios

Portfolios are an increasingly popular way of recording achievement in undergraduate courses and also in some schools. It also appears likely that work based learning, whether as part of the training contract or otherwise, will make use of portfolios in some form. The package allows students to print off their work, together with their reflections and add these to their portfolios if they wish. If you make use of portfolios in your course, you may wish to suggest that students compile a record of their skills using this feature and add it to their portfolio. You may also wish to make use of this feature for students who require additional support as a way of demonstrating progress and to provide material for individual feedback.

Links to useful information about portfolios are listed below.

- ▶ www.ukcle.ac.uk/resources/personal-development-planning/eportfolios/
- ▶ www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/e-portfolios
- ▶ www.recordingachievement.org/component/content/frontpage.html

Suggested activities at a glance

Pre-course activities	Diagnostic Use answers in first personal tutorial Use answers to identify any additional support requirements Refresher/test of assumed knowledge
Reflective diary	Personal tutorials and mentoring meetings Portfolios Preparatory work Follow up work Extra practice
Preparatory exercises	Address didactic points which might otherwise make the session very tutor-led Prompt discussion of teaching and learning points Raise questions and identify points of difficulty Reinforce points made in previous sessions so that later sessions can build on them Peer and self-assessment exercises to help develop judgement Standalone exercises with feedback to build a foundation for further learning
Follow up	Increase familiarity with the area and (for PLR) with available resources Put new knowledge into practice after SGS Consolidate and build confidence
Extra practice	Build confidence Provide additional feedback without additional marking Make use of new knowledge and deepening understanding Formative assessment

A final word

We welcome feedback on how you use the resource and any suggestions you may have for features that you would welcome. Please email any suggestions to voc.law@oup.com.