



Queen's University  
Belfast

Legal Services  
Queen's University Belfast  
Belfast, BT7 1NN  
Northern Ireland  
Tel 028 90 975002  
Fax 028 90 911043  
[n.laird@qub.ac.uk](mailto:n.laird@qub.ac.uk)  
[s.d.spence@qub.ac.uk](mailto:s.d.spence@qub.ac.uk)  
[rosemary.carson@qub.ac.uk](mailto:rosemary.carson@qub.ac.uk)  
[www.qub.ac.uk](http://www.qub.ac.uk)

30 January 2006  
Our ref: SS/nl

CONFIDENTIAL

Mr. M. Foster  
Secretary Review of Provision of Legal Services  
First Floor  
Energis Building  
Gas Works Site  
1 Cromac Avenue  
Belfast

Dear Mr. Foster,

**RE: Review of Legal Services in Northern Ireland**

The University believes that the consultation paper does not explore the issue of legal education in sufficient detail. In particular, it fails to consider and take account of the unique characteristics of the provision of legal education in Northern Ireland as carried out by the University's Institute of Professional Legal Studies. The institute was established following the report of the Armitage Committee and uniquely provides for the joint training of solicitors and barristers. This training is reviewed by the Council of Legal Education, with representation from the University, the Law Society and the Bar Council. This is an important distinctive characteristic of the local legal services sector, and only one of several such characteristics that the paper fails to address.

The University, as opposed to the Council of Legal education, has limited experience of the provision of legal services and will be unable to comment in any great detail on the proposals put forward. However, a number of issues do merit mention. It appears that the paper seeks to adopt the generic issues raised by Clementi, but as is admitted, with little research on the efficacy of the current framework. The University would question whether it is appropriate to implement a series of measures designed for England and Wales and we note that the provision of legal services in Scotland remains unaffected by Clementi. With a predominance of small practices, legal services provision in Northern Ireland differs significantly to that in England, and it would seem appropriate that the paper should address the particular local circumstances to ensure that customers of the legal provision receive high quality, cost effective services.

In relation to the University's first-hand experience of the legal system, we are in general content with the service we have received. We feel that the split between the bar and solicitors is effective, and we have no concerns about any lack of choice. One final point: the University would be seriously concerned about any proposal to allow non-legal organisations to 'own' legal practices. The University

would see this as fundamentally endangering the independence of legal advice and would lead to a lack of confidence on the part of the customer.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S.D. Spence", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**S.D. Spence**  
**Legal Services Manager**

CC. Mr. J. O'Kane, Registrar and Chief Operating Officer  
Mr. S. McGuickin, Director of Human Resources