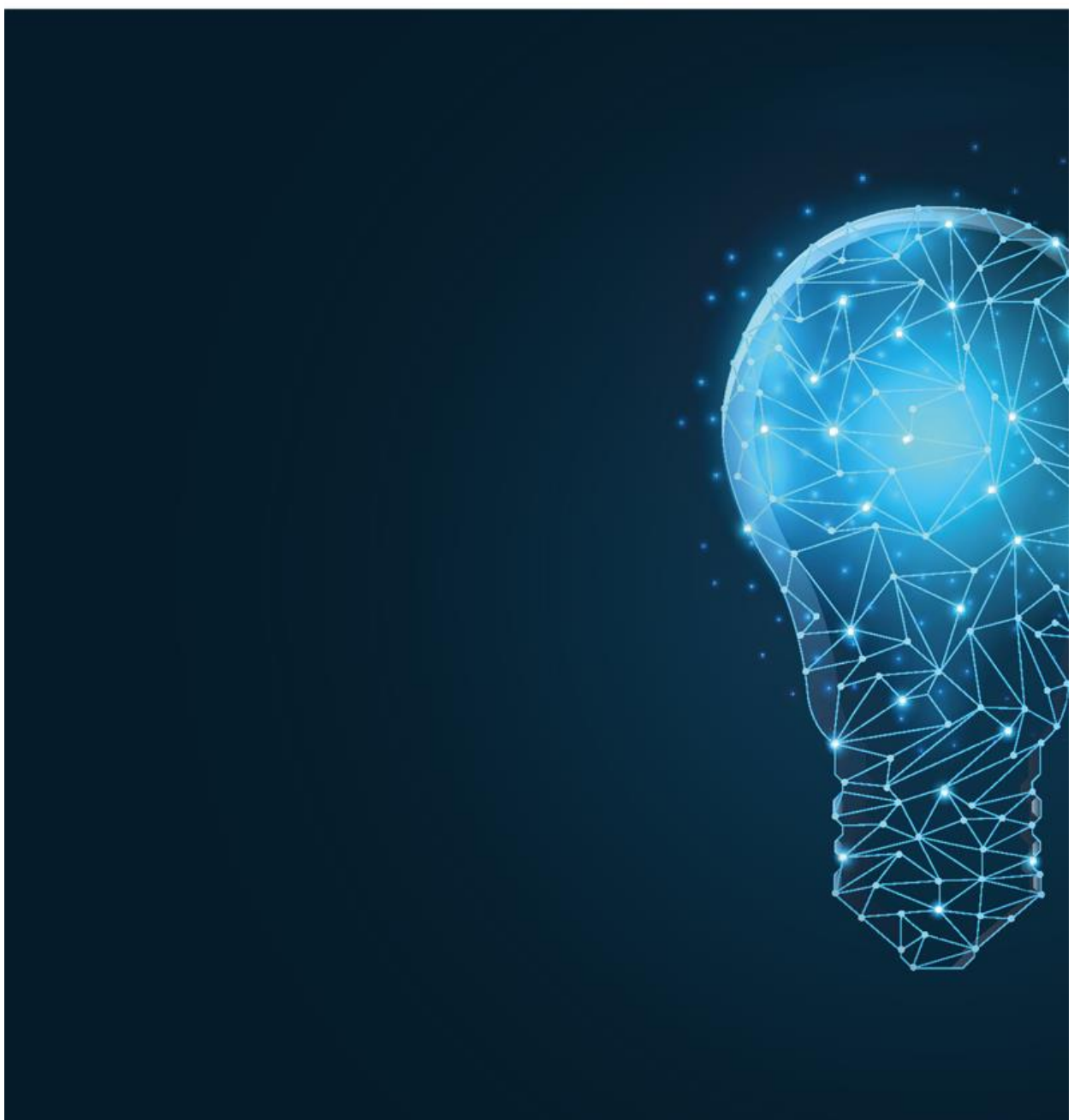




Law Society
of Scotland

Tech in the Diploma roundtable May 2021



This is a summary of a virtual roundtable discussion with representatives from Diploma providers, legal firms and members of the LawscotTech Advisory Board. The purpose of the roundtable was to explore how technology is included within the law degree right now and what the plans are for the future and how the LawscotTech programme may be able to facilitate this area.

Key points:

- There was no uniform approach to the integration of legaltech in the diploma with different, although on occasion similar, approaches being taken by each of the diploma providers as to how to integrate legaltech into their particular offering.
- While not all diploma providers offered a dedicated elective on legaltech all providers had integrated legaltech into their core courses where appropriate. Areas such as Registers of Scotland and interactions with Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service were two examples cited.
- Some providers had elective modules that had already been running for 3 years. One such module was delivered using a mixture of recorded lectures and then tutorial based work where students were taken through a process of identifying the tech available, how to use the tech available and then where to invest in the context of a high street firm that had been acquired by a larger firm.
- There has been success in having tech vendors provide diploma students with presentations and access to their platforms as part of the diploma. An action point it would be useful for LawscotTech to explore the possibility of working with the diploma providers and the tech vendors it has access to with a view to linking tech vendors and courses together to give the students exposure to some of the legaltech that is available on the market.
- It was noted that while some students are familiar with more complex case management systems and how to use various other platforms there still seems to be a gap in some of the more basic IT skills such as Word, Excel and PowerPoint. This was noted to be a recurring theme of feedback that is being received.
- Another provider explained that their elective ran as an online live classroom with a series of guest speakers. Topics included teaching of the basic skills (noted above) and these formed parts of a first assessment. Other areas of focus included UK GDPR, cybersecurity, innovation, marketing and the use of analytics.
- The practitioners in attendance were very encouraged to hear that analytics were being taught as at the moment there seems, wrongly, to be an attitude from graduates that work in this area is little more than data entry when in reality the use of analytics can be an extremely powerful and beneficial resource.
- Some of the providers who did not have a dedicated elective at present advised that they were working on developing an elective course.
- Everybody present agreed that there was a difficult balance to be struck between what should be part of the core course offering and what could (or should) be offered as part of an elective.
- Some students still appear to be daunted by legaltech and what it actually is. As an action point the LawscotTech Advisory Board were invited to consider preparing a short introductory

video that gave a background to and explanation of what legaltech is. This could be provided to students to try to dispel some of the myths surrounding legaltech and make them more comfortable with the concept (<https://lawtomated.com/legaltech/> was recommended as a resource to be shared with diploma providers and students alike).

- There still appears to be a gap between what a law firm looks for in relation to a graduate's commercial awareness and how the graduates are presenting upon being hired as trainees. It was readily accepted that the diploma providers are teaching commercial awareness – for example good time recording, budgeting, feeing – however this does not seem to be reflected in the firms' experiences. It was accepted that there is and no quick or easy fix to this problem and it remains the responsibility of the firm to plug any gaps that exist.
- It was noted that in order to try to plug the gap on both legaltech and commercial awareness some trainees take up other roles, such as paralegal roles, within firms once they know where they are going to be carrying out their traineeship. This is seen by trainees as having the benefit of becoming aware of the specific legaltech that any one particular firm might be using and that they will be asked to use once their traineeships commence.
- It was noted that the types of jobs that exist in and around the legal sector are significantly different to what they were even five years ago and as an action point it may be worthwhile diploma providers considering how (and when) to provide diploma students with this information and what can be done to assist those who do not have traineeships.
- In order to promote excellence and to assist where possible the diploma providers were invited to maintain open lines of communication with LawscotTech and ask questions of the Advisory Board.

Thank you to everyone who participated

Elizabeth Comerford, University of Dundee
Frances Murray, University of Strathclyde
Jill Sinclair, DWF
Kerry Trewern, University of Glasgow
Laura McBrien, University of Edinburgh
Lynsey Walker, Addleshaw Goddard
Sam Moore, Burness Paull
Steve Dalgleish, Shepherd and Wedderburn
Val Bremner, Robert Gordon University
Zoe Fowlie, Viallex
Rob Marrs – Law Society of Scotland
Fiona Menzies – Law Society of Scotland
Antony McFadyen – Law Society of Scotland