

The Process of Adapting to Changes in a Global Pandemic

Over the last several months, the Law Students' Society of Ontario (LSSO) has heard from countless students about difficulties, concerns, and feedback related to the impact of the pandemic on recruitment, licensing, employment, and both law school and the legal profession in general.

We have seen significant changes in response to the pandemic. The first was related to recruitment. Moving the OCI recruitment process for the 2020-2021 academic year to the Winter involved numerous considerations and stakeholder consultations. This required a high degree of collaboration between law schools, employers, career services, students, and the Law Society, among others. Throughout the process, the LSSO was given the opportunity to be an active member of these discussions, to share student feedback and to make recommendations.

The second significant change was the move of licensing exams to an online format. A similar level of coordination was required among stakeholders, and the LSSO was again given a regular and direct forum to provide feedback and to be an active part of the process. As students have had questions or faced issues with the new process and have shared them with the LSSO, we have been able to escalate these directly to the Law Society and have seen the process iterate throughout as a result.

A sincere thank you to all of the stakeholders we have worked with, but in particular to Chris McKenna and Anna Maria DeCia-Gualiteri, who led the OCI Working Group. They endeavored throughout to keep a student-centric process at the forefront of creating a compressed recruitment schedule, in order to lessen the impact of grading changes in the recent Winter semester and to allow students more time to prepare. I would also like to particularly thank Sheena Weir and Priya Bhatia, among many other staff at the Law Society, for their work on both recruitment and licensing exams. They provided a direct line of communication for the LSSO, and also endeavored to continue to evolve the process to address barriers that students were facing to facilitate this year's exams.

Without student feedback, none of this would have been possible. While many changes have already occurred, we appreciate that this will be an ongoing journey as students face a new reality in terms of both their legal education and the legal profession more broadly, as a result of ongoing social distancing measures. We encourage students to

continue to provide feedback and to let the LSSO know what they are worried about, so the LSSO can continue to work with other stakeholders to advocate on their behalf. I would also like to thank the LSSO Council, made up of student leadership from law schools across Ontario, for their tireless efforts in gathering feedback and representing their students' perspectives.

As I conclude my term as LSSO President, I am appreciative of the opportunity to have worked with so many great stakeholders and to have been a part of this process. I am looking forward to seeing what the LSSO does next.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karen Mann", with a stylized, cursive script.

Karen Mann
President (2019-2020), Law Students' Society of Ontario