

# University of Chester

**This work has been submitted to ChesterRep – the University of Chester’s  
online research repository**

<http://chesterrep.openrepository.com>

Author(s): Dutton, Kathryn; Hunter, Phil

Title: Responding to expectation

Date: 4 January 2008

Originally given at: Learning In Law Annual Conference

Example citation: Dutton, K., & Hunter, P. (2008). Responding to expectation.  
Unpublished conference presentation given at Learning In Law Annual Conference  
at University of Warwick, 3-4 January 2008

Version of item: Given at conference

Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10034/48475>

# 'Responding to Expectation'

Kathryn Dutton and Phil Hunter  
University of Chester School of Law

# The Study

**'Responding to Expectation'** is a 12 month (empirical) research project funded by the Learning and Teaching Institute of the University of Chester

**The principal aim** is twofold:

- (i) to further contemporary understandings of student expectations of, and motivation(s) for, undergraduate law study; AND,
- (ii) to examine the extent to which contemporary student experiences of undergraduate law study meet both their expectations and motivations

# The 'Inspiration'

- ▶ The 'Law Experiential' evaluation: linking theoria and praxis or 'learning to be a lawyer'?

"[The main reason I chose to study law was]...to be a solicitor and live a comfortable life from an early age I was interested in this"

- ▶ Theory and research surrounding 'expectation' and 'motivation'
- ▶ The particular pertinence of the 'expectation - reality' gap in the context of the LLB:
  - The long-standing 'clash of ideologies' and continuing debate surrounding the true 'purpose' of the QLD (eg. Cownie, 2004)
  - The 'vocational' culture of law students (eg. Twining, 1994)
  - The need to provide a positive student experience whilst avoiding commodification and corporatization (eg Arthurs 2001)

# Methodology

- ▶ An exploratory study, concentrated on gathering rich and detailed data
- ▶ A longitudinal, multi-layered, multi-site 'case study' design
- ▶ The principal 'layers' of data collection include:
  - Gathering qualitative and quantitative data from LLB and 'combined' degree students at the University of Chester
  - Gathering qualitative and quantitative data from A-2 students at three sixth-form colleges and one 'access to law' course in the North-West region
  - Examining the design and delivery of the LLB degree programme at the University of Chester

# Exploring Expectation and Motivation

- ▶ Data from 62 undergraduate level one students (LLB and combined)
- ▶ Method: Survey instrument distributed in induction week to the 'full(!)' cohort
- ▶ Aimed to gather preliminary data on motivation AND expectation before students were 'contaminated' by the course 'proper'
- ▶ Today, discuss and compare your 'expectations' of the students with their *actual* expectation

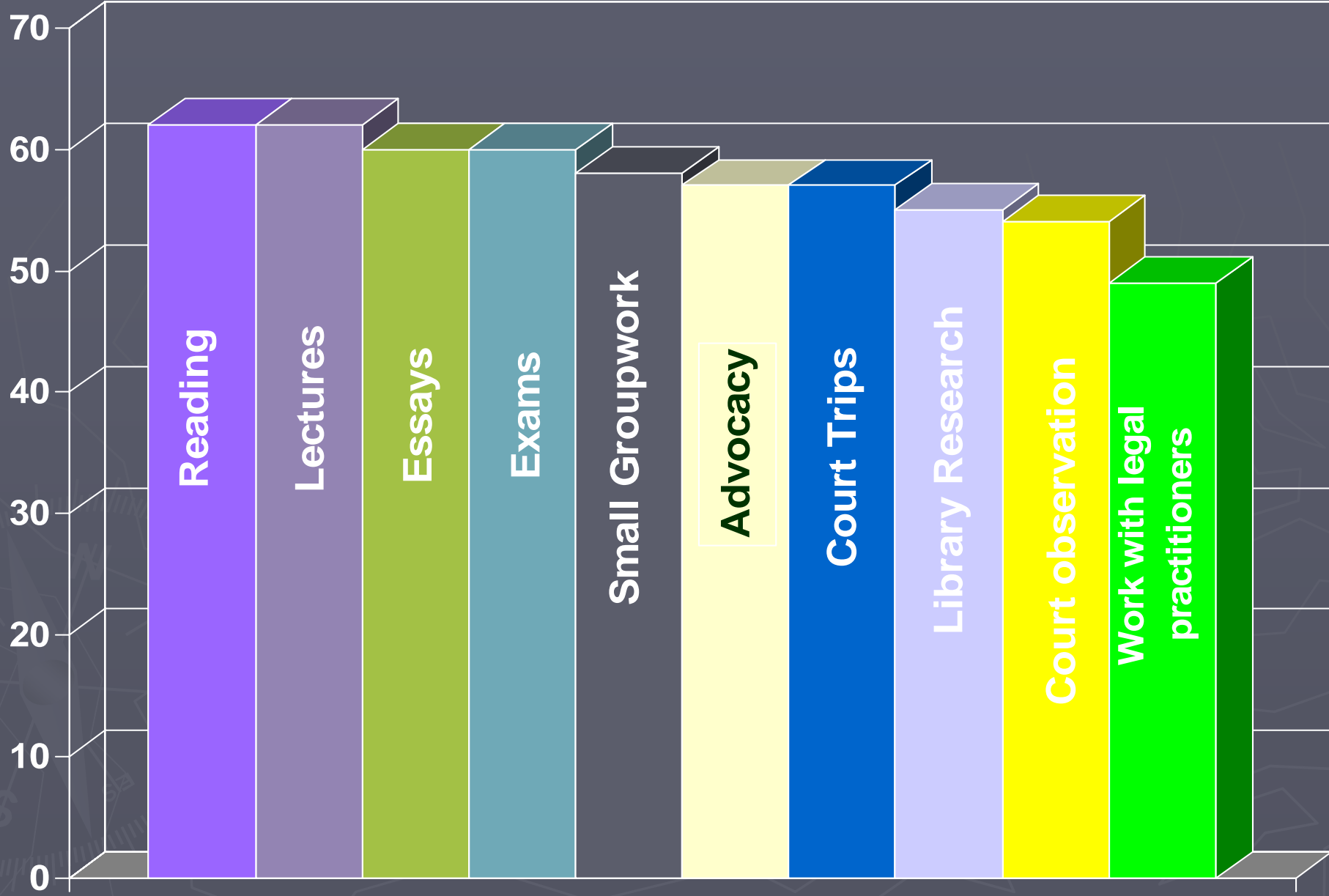
# What is the 'main' reason you chose to study Law at University?

1. 52% = wished to pursue a career in the legal profession
2. 16% = were interest in the subject
3. 10% = enjoyed the subject at A-level
4. 10% = wanted to develop a financially lucrative career
5. 6% = wanted to gain a qualification useful in another career

# What kinds of work do you think that you will be undertaking at University to study law?

1. ALL students thought they would be reading and attending lectures (!)
2. The overwhelming majority of students (over 90% in all cases) thought they would be:
  - Writing essays
  - Undertaking examinations
  - Undertaking small group work
  - Partaking in some form of mooting or advocacy
  - Undertaking visits to courts
3. The majority of students (over 75% in all cases) thought they would be:
  - Undertaking library based research
  - Working with legal practitioners
  - Observing cases in court
4. Only 1 of 62 students thought that the programme would *NOT* involve any of the 'practice' based variables suggested

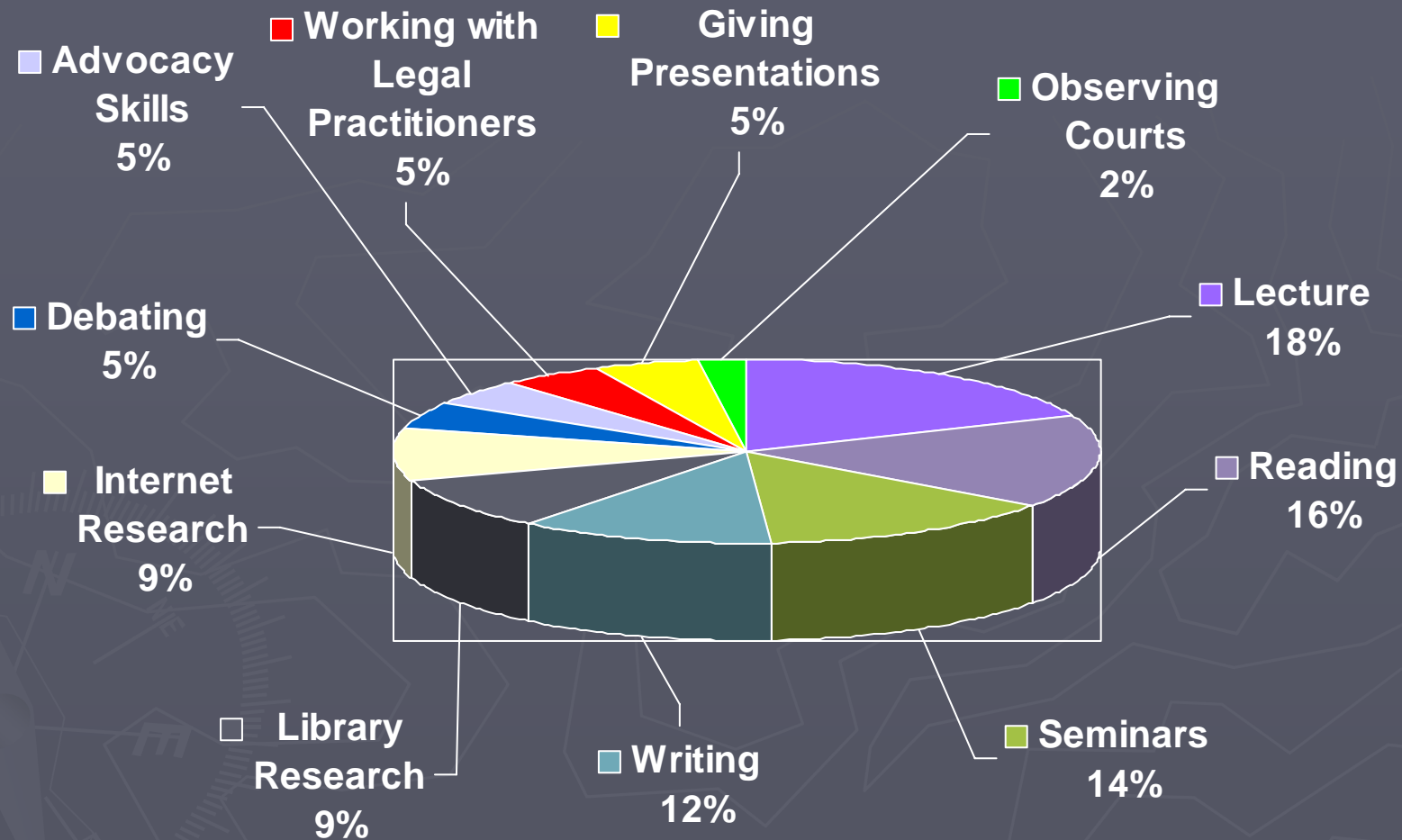




# In an average week on the programme, how many hours do you think you will be spending the different activities (eg. lectures, reading)?

- ▶ Students thought they would be spending 41 hours a week on activity relating to their studies
- ▶ The *average* number of hours students thought they would spend on particular activities can be broken down as follows:
  1. Lectures = 8 hours
  2. Reading = 7 hours
  3. Seminars = 6 hours
  4. Writing = 5 hours
  5. Library research = 4 hours
  6. Internet research = 4 hours
  7. Debating = 2 hours
  8. Advocacy Skills = 2 hours
  9. Working with legal practitioners = 2 hours
  10. Giving presentations = 2 hours
  11. Observing courts = 1 hour

# Student Activity Breakdown



# Number, in order of importance, the skills you hope to develop through the study of law

1. Knowledge of the UK Legal System  
- For 28%, most important
2. Reading  
- For 13%, most important
3. Writing  
- For 4%, most important
4. Knowledge of UK Statutes and Cases  
- For 11%, most important
5. Debating  
- For 4%, most important
6. Critical Thinking  
- For 9%, most important
7. Advocacy  
- For 4%, most important
8. Legal Practice  
- For 4%, most important
9. Presentation
10. Library Research  
- For 4%, most important
11. Internet Research

# Next Steps

- ▶ We have presented one 'layer' that will be compared with today's 'layer'
- ▶ Short term: comparison with data gathered from A2 students and Access course students
  - This 'layer' will be discussed at ALT 2008
- ▶ Medium term: Returning to UG1 students and other UGs to assess changes in motivation