

# **THE SRI LANKA LAW COLLEGE**

*(August 2000)*

## **— AN INTRODUCTION —**

### **The History**

The history of training for the legal profession in Sri Lanka goes as far back as 1833, the year in which the Supreme Court was empowered to admit and enrol as Advocates and Proctors, persons of good repute and of competent knowledge and ability upon examination by one or more of the judges of the Supreme Court. This was done in order to meet the demand for legal practitioners in the judicial system established by the British Colonial administration. There were no formal classes held to impart legal education at that time. The then system was limited to serving a period of apprenticeship under a practising lawyer and taking certain examinations conducted by the judges of the Supreme Court to satisfy the judges that the apprentice had acquired sufficient legal knowledge to practice law.

The Council of Legal Education (CLE) was formed in 1873 and the **Sri Lanka Law College** (the College) was established under the CLE in 1874 in order to impart a formal legal education to those who wished to be lawyers.

The Law College is one of the oldest, if not *the* oldest, institution for training of professionals in the country. It has trained almost all the lawyers in Sri Lanka and it is the only gateway to the legal profession in the country.

### **The Management**

The College is managed by the CLE, which was established under the Ordinance No. 2 of 1900, and consists today of the following members:

Hon. Chief Justice (Chairman), Hon. Attorney General, the Solicitor General, the Secretary to the Ministry of Justice, two judges of the Supreme Court nominated by the Chief Justice, six members appointed by the Minister of Justice and two members nominated by the Bar Association of Sri Lanka.

Being a self-financing institution, the College does not receive any grant from the government.

## **Admissions**

There are two main channels of admission to the College. One is direct admission of those who qualify via an entrance examination for admission. The minimum academic qualification recognised for admission is four passes in the General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level) Examination and credit passes in Sinhala/Tamil in the General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) Examination. The entrance examination is highly competitive and only a limited number gain admission on the results of this examination. The other channel is by first obtaining a LL.B (Bachelor of Laws) Degree from either the University of Colombo or the Open University of Sri Lanka. These Law graduates need not sit the entrance examination and they are also exempted from taking the first and second year examinations. They only need to take the final examination at the Law College. The particulars of admission of LL.B. graduates and others are given in the annexed schedule.

The Attorneys at Law course at the Law College is of 3 years duration except for the law graduates as above referred to.

## **The Curriculum**

At present the subjects for each year are as follows: -

### **First Year**

Legal systems and History of Sri Lanka  
Criminal Law  
Law of Persons  
Law of Trusts and Equity  
Industrial Law  
Law of Obligations (Contract)  
Interpretation of Statutes and Documents

### **Second Year**

Law of Property (2 papers)  
Law of Obligations (Delicts)  
Jurisprudence  
Constitutional Law  
Administrative Law  
International Law/ Tax Law

### **Third Year**

Commercial law (2 papers)  
Civil Procedure and Pleadings (2 papers)  
Law of Evidence

Criminal Procedure  
Conveyancing  
Trust Accounts and Book keeping  
Professional Ethics

During the early stages of the College history, the emphasis was on providing basic training and skills to students to enter the profession. However, with the passage of time, with new insights into legal education, and guidance from enlightened members of the CLE and the Principals, the curriculum was improved from time to time to orient students towards legal scholarship as well. The present syllabi for the First and the Second Year subjects are similar to those of LL. B courses in the Universities where the focus is on the academic study of law. The Final Year subjects in the College are 'practitioners or procedural' subjects except Commercial Law. However, even here, the emphasis is on the practical aspects of the subject.

On passing the final examination students have to undergo an **apprenticeship** of six months under a lawyer of at least 8 years standing and follow a practical training course conducted by the Law College with the assistance of the Bar Association of Sri Lanka and their senior members. The practical training is intended to impart certain skills that will be required of a practising lawyer and as such it involves participation in mock trials and moots, legal aid work, drafting and workshops on subjects such as pleadings, negotiation and mediation.

The College thus imparts a combination of academic studies and professional training required to equip a student for the legal profession.

### **Faculty**

The faculty of the College consists mainly of visiting lecturers. They are mostly practising lawyers who take time off from their busy practice to deliver lectures to the students. As stated above as the main object of the course is to provide legal knowledge coupled with practical skills the services of highly experienced lawyers with academic scholarship contribute in a large measure to achieve this end.

### **Evaluations & Examinations**

The performance of students is assessed regularly through tutorials, which are written assignments periodically given to the students. The written work is assessed by the tutors and graded. The writing of tutorials is compulsory.

Examinations are held at the end of each year. Thus there are three examinations to pass in order to qualify. To pass an examination a student is required to score at least 50% of the aggregate and at least 40% in each subject. Those who score 60% and above in the aggregate are awarded honours passes.

### **Continuing Legal Education & Training**

With the introduction of market economy, foreign investments, expansion of international trade, and modern communications, it has become necessary to train lawyers to meet the challenges of the modern world. Taking this need into account, the College has embarked on Post Attorney Diploma Courses. The first such course to commence in collaboration with the Asia Pacific Legal Institute, USA under the sponsorship of USAID/TIPS is on Intellectual Property Rights.

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