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A brief overview of the joint diploma in English and French Law: LLB King's College, London/Master 1, University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne

In 2007, the Franco-English programme of the KCL Law Department and the European and International Studies Department at the University of Paris 1 celebrated its 30th anniversary. In 2009, the programme was ranked as France's best bi-national law course by the SMBG agency.

Since 1977, the number of students following the course each year has risen from a handful to about 40. The programme's organization and philosophy, however, are the same:

1/ The Philosophy

Law is without doubt an essentially national discipline compared to other fields, as it is mainly the law of a university's country of origin which is taught. Each country has its own system of laws and so law as a science varies from one State to another. Only some trans-border subjects like European law (at the regional level) or international law (at the world level) may be similar from one country to another.

While law is essentially a national science, individuals and entities like companies are not preoccupied by borders, so that maintaining legal relationships between them necessarily involves different legal systems. Such cross-border relationships are becoming more frequent with economic globalisation and European integration.

As a result, the labour market in law calls for more and more lawyers with a twofold legal culture, who can move from one system to another without being lost or disoriented. Such is the aim of the Franco-English legal programme. It seeks to provide employers not just with bilingual lawyers but lawyers having the aptitude and the reflexes required to handle cases, going from one system to another, and able to tackle international cases easily. Also, this joint education is not limited to improving student's foreign language abilities, or simply developing their knowledge of the two legal systems, but seeks to allow them to draw on the best in each educational system and hence be even more effective in their future careers as lawyers.

2/ The Organisation

- *The selection of students*

In France, the programme is open to students coming out of school or to students with one year of higher education. In England, A-levels are required. Selection in France is special: the post-baccalaureate system is applied for candidates who do not yet have their baccalaureate, but are in their last school year. Last year, 3000 candidates applied from the whole of France. About 65 candidates were called for interview, in which their motivation and language skills were assessed. 20 students were finally selected. In England, selection follows the usual KCL criteria, along with a test of language skills.

- *A joint training programme*

Students spend two years in England at KCL and two years in France at the University of Paris 1. Each country charges students the usual, national enrolment fee, and receives no payment from students it receives from the partner institution. In principle, students in this joint diploma take the same exams and are assessed using the same criteria applied to students following national programmes. Each university awards its own degree – an LLB for King's College and a Master 1 for the University of Paris 1 – at the end of a very complete education. This obviously assumes a significant concentration of the programmes, so that the two diplomas awarded do indeed cover the training provided in both countries individually.

After graduation, students in France and England do not necessarily go on to do the same thing. French students normally complete a specialised Master 2, after a fifth year of study. English students, in contrast, usually enter the national labour market, immediately after completing their degree.

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