

Legal Literacy and Procedural Justice: Professional Growth among UiTM Auxiliary Police

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ABSTRACT

Auxiliary police have long served as a supporting security force in universities and other semi-public institutions in Malaysia. In recent years, their role has expanded beyond basic enforcement to responsibilities such as making arrests and inspection of room in campus. Not only do they need to have a sound understanding of law and procedure, but each decision making should be made reasonably and fairly. This paper examines the legitimacy of the enforcement by auxiliary police officers at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) through the lens of legal literacy and procedural fairness. The Faculty of Law at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) introduced an In-Service Legal Literacy and Professionalism Enhancement Training (Kursus Latihan Dalam Perkhidmatan Pemantapan Profesionalisme Polis Bantuan UiTM Siri), which includes core modules in the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC), Law of Evidence, Dangerous Drugs Act (DDA), Criminal Law, Constitutional Law, and Administrative Law, to strengthen the legal and procedural competence of campus Auxiliary Police. A mixed-method descriptive survey was administered to 58 Auxiliary Police officers at the end of the training. Quantitative items measured perceptions of training effectiveness, confidence in handling criminal and student misconduct cases, and officer-student relations, while open-ended responses captured reflective insights. The findings show that 96.6% of respondents agreed that the Faculty of Law training helped them in campus law-enforcement duties, 96.6% reported greater confidence in handling criminal cases, and 98.3% reported greater confidence in handling student misconduct cases. The open-ended responses also emphasised legal knowledge, practical training, respectful communication, and the need

for clearer and more consistent enforcement powers. Viewed through procedural justice, these responses reflect the importance of lawfulness, fair treatment, explanation, and respectful engagement. The study concludes that institutionalised legal-literacy training supports professionalism and provides a basis for procedurally fair campus enforcement.

1. Introduction

Auxiliary police are given specific powers to enforce the rule of law at universities. At the same time, they are expected to communicate properly and exercise their authority fairly. UiTM's Faculty of Law developed an In-Service Legal Literacy and Professionalism Enhancement training to improve officers' knowledge of powers, procedures, communication, and legal documentation. Legal knowledge is important because officers may have to deal with arrest, investigation, evidence, student misconduct, and other enforcement matters in their daily work. Their power is largely discretionary, which must be exercised reasonably according to substantive and procedural fairness.

Auxiliary police have previously been discussed in the context of supervision, performance, training and operational matters. How legal education contributes to the professional development of auxiliary police is not widely discussed. This paper focuses on the experiences of UiTM Auxiliary Police officers who attended the training. Specifically, their understanding and exposure to procedural justice.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Evolution and Comparative Perspectives on Auxiliary Policing

Undeniably, auxiliary police have been maintained over the years by governments and institutions to assist in security and traffic control. Alamban, Poquita and Procurato (2024) emphasised that capacity building must be structured in the form of continuous training to develop the confidence of auxiliary officers. In Canada, O'Connor, Frederick and Kosoralo (2021) found that auxiliary police volunteers were motivated by civic responsibility. However, they faced limitations when training was inconsistent. O'Neill, de Maillard and van Steden (2022) discussed auxiliary policing as part of a wider system where different agencies share responsibility for public safety.

In Southeast Asia, research on auxiliary policing is still limited. Nalla and Lim (Nalla & Lim, 2003) examined the relationship between private security, police and auxiliary police in Singapore. In Malaysia, Seman, Ramdan and Ngah (2024) studied supervisory and organisational support among auxiliary police at a public university. Mustapar et al. (2017) examined scheduling and workforce management at UiTM. These studies provide useful information on auxiliary policing, but they do not focus specifically on legal literacy.

Law-enforcement training has also been discussed as part of professional development. Mansoor et al. (2023) examined the learning and training of Malaysian law enforcers during the COVID-19 period, while Omar, Indrawati and Hassan (2021) discussed enforcement issues in Malaysia and Indonesia. Research on auxiliary police has also considered supervisory procedural justice (Sun & Han, 2024) and knowledge-based

professional management (Lin & Wu, 2024). Other studies have discussed police education and the need to prepare officers for changing professional demands (Audikana, 2025). Research from China has examined the experiences and management of auxiliary police (Chen et al., 2023), (Xiao & An, 2025). Studies on online, distance and digital learning have also discussed changes in professional training (Dhawan, 2020), (Gaston, 2018), (Spridzāns, 2024), while Feng (2024) examined police education and technological innovation in law-enforcement agencies. In addition, the focal point of Adi et al. (2026) is legal training for non-law learners.

Overall, previous studies show that training and education are important for professional policing. Seman, Ramdan and Ngah (2024) examined supervisory and organisational support, while Mustapar et al. (2017) considered scheduling and workforce management. Research on Malaysian policing has also discussed integrity and accountability in relation to public trust (Yahya et al., 2024). This study looks at another area, namely the officers' views of legal training, confidence, communication and enforcement challenges. Malaysian auxiliary police remain less studied in relation to legal knowledge and its use in daily enforcement. UiTM's training provides legal exposure in areas such as Criminal Procedure, Evidence, Criminal Law, Constitutional Law and Administrative Law. This study examines how the officers themselves viewed the usefulness of this training.

2.2. Legal Literacy, Professional Competence, and Procedural Justice

Legal literacy is not only about knowing the law. For enforcement officers, it also means understanding when and how a legal power can be used. Officers who understand their powers and procedures should be better able to explain their actions, prepare proper documentation and make decisions within the law. Recent Malaysian research has also discussed the importance of legal literacy in making informed decisions in changing professional settings (Audikana, 2025). These matters are relevant to professionalism and to the proper exercise of authority (Yahya et al., 2026).

Procedural justice focuses on the way authority is exercised. It includes fair treatment, respectful communication, and proper explanation. Research on police legitimacy has shown that the way people are treated can influence how they view police authority (Yahya et al., 2026). Other law-enforcement research has also connected transparency and accountability with professionalism and public trust (Kim et al., 2024). Fairness is also an important part of institutional decision-making (Dizon et al., 2026). In this paper, procedural justice is used to discuss the officers' responses. It was not measured through a separate procedural-justice scale.

3. Methods

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a mixed-method descriptive design to examine how UiTM's In-Service Legal Literacy and Professionalism Enhancement Program supports the professional growth of Auxiliary Police officers. Quantitative measures assessed perceptions of training effectiveness, confidence in handling criminal and student misconduct cases, officer-student relations, and technology use. Qualitative reflections provided insight into officers' experiences with law enforcement, communication, training needs, and future professional challenges.

All 58 Auxiliary Police officers who attended the training voluntarily participated in the survey. The respondents represented a range of educational backgrounds and lengths of service. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. The survey used five-point Likert-scale questions consisting of the usefulness of training, confidence in handling criminal and student misconduct cases, relationships with students and the use of technology. The respondents were asked to describe their experience through open-ended responses. This approach can explain the qualitative findings of the survey.

The method used was to analyse their responses using a descriptive approach. This was done by observing the frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations. Their responses were reviewed and coded thematically. The responses were then considered in relation to legal literacy, professionalism, and procedural justice.

4. Results

Table 1 summarises the demographic composition of the 58 respondents. Most respondents were male (84.5%), and the largest age group was 40–49 years (46.6%). The service profile also shows an experienced group, with 40 respondents (69.0%) having more than ten years of service.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	49	84.5
	Female	9	15.5
Age group	20–29 years	1	1.7
	30–39 years	22	37.9
	40–49 years	27	46.6
	50–59 years	8	13.8
	60–69 years	0	0.0
Education	Certificate	31	53.4
	Diploma	13	22.4
	Degree	6	10.3
	Malaysian Certificate of Education	4	6.9
	Master	1	1.7
	Malaysian Higher School Certificate	1	1.7
	Lower Secondary Assessment	1	1.7
Years of service	Foreign certificate	1	1.7
	1–4 years	3	5.2
	5–10 years	14	24.1
	11–15 years	16	27.6
	16–20 years	23	39.7
	More than 20 years	2	3.4

4.1. Perceived Impact of Training and Professional Practice

The training was rated positively. The mean score for the statement that the training helped in campus law-enforcement duties was 4.66 (SD = 0.61), with 96.6% selecting 4 or 5 on the five-point scale. Confidence in handling criminal cases averaged 4.52 (SD = 0.63), while confidence in handling student misconduct cases averaged 4.62 (SD = 0.52).

Table 2: Perceived Impact of Training and Professional Practice

Item	Mean (M)	SD	% rating 4-5
Training received throughout service helps campus enforcement duties	4.55	0.68	93.1
Faculty of Law in-service training helps campus enforcement duties	4.66	0.61	96.6
Confidence in handling criminal cases after the training	4.52	0.63	96.6
Confidence in handling student misconduct cases after the training	4.62	0.52	98.3
Perception of students' view of AP presence and role	4.29	0.68	87.9
Students understand the role of Auxiliary Police	3.83	0.88	67.2
Students respect Auxiliary Police authority	3.74	0.89	63.8
Relationship with students during enforcement duties	4.00	0.88	74.1
Technology training helps daily duties	4.21	0.74	87.9
Competence in using enforcement technology	3.74	0.78	60.3

The results also show a more moderate picture of officer-student relations. Although respondents generally viewed students' perceptions of Auxiliary Police positively ($M = 4.29$), the mean scores were lower for students' understanding of the Auxiliary Police role ($M = 3.83$) and respect for Auxiliary Police authority ($M = 3.74$). The relationship with students during enforcement duties recorded a mean of 4.00. These items are limited to present officers' own perceptions of their relationship with students.

4.2. Open-Ended Responses

Qualitative responses described the auxiliary police officers' views of their training and their work. Their responses resulted in four related themes.

Table 3: Qualitative Themes and Illustrative Responses

Theme	Illustrative responses (original wording)	Interpretive commentary
1. Legal Knowledge and Procedural Competence	"Tatacara Tangkapan"; "Kuasa polis bantuan"; "Akta 174 dan Undang-undang Keterangan"; "Perkara berkaitan undang-undang dan mengenal seksyen yang berkaitan."	Respondents repeatedly identified law, arrest procedures, powers, evidence, and relevant statutory provisions as useful aspects of training.
2. Professional Confidence and Continuous Training	"Alhamdulillah.. Saya berasa lebih yakin untuk menjalankan tugas selepas menghadiri kursus ini... Semakin jelas dgn ilmu yg diterima."; "latihan berterusan"; "mengadakan kursus secara praktikal dan simulasi."	Confidence was linked with clearer knowledge, while respondents also asked for continuous, practical, and simulation-based training.
3. Respectful Communication and Fair Enforcement	"Mesra tapi tegas"; "Sentiasa saling hormat menghormati"; "Komunikasi dengan baik & berhemah"; "Menggunakan tutur kata yang sopan dan memberi penerangan yang baik."	Respondents emphasised respectful communication, explanation, tolerance, and firmness. These responses reflect important features of procedurally fair interaction.
4. Evolving	"Semakan kuasa polis bantuan";	Respondents raised questions

Theme	Illustrative responses (original wording)	Interpretive commentary
Enforcement Powers and Professional Challenges	“prosidur penguatkuasaan yang selaras bagi semua kampus uitm”; “Memperjelaskan kepada semua anggota berkenaan kuasa-kuasa yang boleh diguna pakai dan apa yang melindungi anggota.”	about the scope of powers, consistency of enforcement, current legal issues, technology, and the increasingly complex future role of Auxiliary Police.

5. Discussion

5.1. Theme 1: Legal Knowledge and Procedural Competence

The most useful content of the training was the legal knowledge relevant to their duties. The officers relate legal literacy to practical aspects of their work such as powers, arrest, investigation, and evidence. The officers appreciated the scope and limits of their power in enforcing the rule of law in the university.

5.2. Theme 2: Professional Confidence and Continuous Training

The training boosted their confidence as they learned how to execute the law and exercise their discretionary power. They suggested that legal training should be conducted more often and continuously. This shows that the officers themselves see training as something that needs to continue.

5.3. Theme 3: Respectful Communication and Fair Enforcement

Procedural fairness means that legal power is exercised by protecting the rights of suspects and victims. It requires officers to use respectful language and to give reasons for taking actions. This includes providing the right to defend themselves, grounds for arrest, and the right to inspect premises. Hence, they have given their responses on how they interacted while doing their enforcement duties. The officer agreed that tolerance, mutual respect, and being friendly but firm should be the qualities of a good enforcement officer. They said that they must respect the rights of each party and act according to the law. These findings are relevant to procedural justice because they concern the way officers deal with people when exercising authority.

The above findings are similar to the ideas of fair and respectful treatment discussed in procedural-justice research (Yahya et al., 2026). However, the quantitative findings must be read carefully. The mean for officers' perceptions that students understand the Auxiliary Police role was 3.83, while the mean for students' respect for Auxiliary Police authority was 3.74. These are the officers' perceptions. Students were not surveyed. The study therefore cannot conclude that the training increased legitimacy, but it does show that officers themselves placed importance on communication and fair treatment.

5.4. Theme 4: Evolving Enforcement Powers and Professional Challenges

Auxiliary officers faced new challenges in their work that are not fully addressed in the training. Legal knowledge related to the use of digital technology and the process of admitting technology-based evidence are among the new areas related to enforcement. Hence, they believed that continuous training on how to enforce new laws, such as the

prohibition of the use of vapes, must be conducted. These responses show that legal knowledge has to be updated as enforcement work evolves.

In this paper, legal literacy was therefore connected closely with the officers' actual duties. The officers still face uncertainty in some areas. They asked for clearer powers, more consistent procedures between campuses, and guidance on new enforcement issues. This suggests that one training is not enough. Laws, campus rules, technology, and enforcement problems can change, and the officers themselves asked for continuing and practical training.

6. Conclusion

This paper reinforces the principle that legitimacy is grounded not only in statutory authority but also in the perception of fairness, professionalism, and competence. By embedding legal literacy, UiTM enhances the auxiliary police's institutional credibility, a finding that is relevant not only locally but also internationally. Comparative scholarship could benefit from further exploring how legal education shapes auxiliary forces' professional identity in other contexts.

This study has limitations. The reliance on self-reported survey data may have produced inflated positive responses, and the sample was limited to one Malaysian institution. Future research should examine longitudinal outcomes, such as whether officers who receive legal training show fewer complaints or better performance indicators. Comparative studies across universities or agencies could further test whether UiTM's model is replicable.

This paper contributes to the scholarship on plural policing by demonstrating how auxiliary police, when equipped with legal education, move beyond supplementary manpower to embody a professional, legally literate security persona. It positions UiTM as an innovator in integrating legal knowledge into auxiliary policing and suggests directions for future international collaboration on training and professionalisation.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare there are no conflicts of interest.

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