

THE NLS LEGAL EDUCATION GROUP

Newsletter 12 (June 2013)

This Newsletter summarises the Nottingham Law School's 5th Annual Learning and Teaching Conference on 14th May 2013. **Andrea Nollent**, Dean of Nottingham Law School, opened the conference by challenging the audience to consider the future of legal education, of law jobs, of training, and of our role in that future, locally, nationally and internationally. Notwithstanding these challenges, there are reasons to be cheerful. In a very competitive market, as a strong provider of legal education, we can drive innovation and change. Even with a backdrop of uncertainty, and rapid and constant change, NLS is well positioned at the forefront of legal education and that will allow us to develop in the market to become who and what we want to be.

John Hodgson delivered a session about providing electronic and audio feedback to students and his experiences on the LLB DL, the GDL DL students and LLM. John focused on providing students with an audio file via the NOW Dropbox for individual students and as a podcast for generic feedback. The advantage to audio feedback is that it is very personalised, can be more detailed, and has a greater impact on how students feel about the feedback. John gave pragmatic examples on which tools/kit to use, and the advantages and disadvantages of each.

Andrea Nicholson's presentation, "Teaching Every student, strategies for improving student satisfaction" was based on ideas from the Teaching Every Student website. She had redesigned her teaching in 2012-2013 to clarify student expectations about assessment outcomes and criteria, to engage students more actively in the assessment process, and enable them to get ownership of the assessment itself. In a presentation containing many pragmatic examples from her International Human Rights module (space prevents us reproducing them all here) Andrea showed how she had taken her students through the issues about the universality of human rights, allowing them to show development of their reasoning skills, working on research individually, then presenting to the whole group, and critiquing work in pairs using the 'two stars and a wish' form of feedback (two positives from the work and one main recommendation for improvement).

Jo Ann Boylan-Kemp delivered a session on "The role of mooting in modern day legal education: all students, all subjects, all years?" Jo started with a brief historical summary of the use of mooting as a practice in legal education and then explained the role of mooting in legal learning at NLS. Jo showed that mooting is suitable as a primary teaching tool in undergraduate legal education. It is Jo's contention that mooting allows students to meet every course learning outcome. She articulated each, and illustrated how a student might meet each. She has also reviewed the marks students achieved in 2010-2011 across the first, second and final years. It is clear that mooting is a challenging assessment, but the students certainly rise to the challenge.

Graham Ferris led a whirlwind session about "Ethics, what and where to teach". He started with a description of what he means by ethics, by explaining what his talk was *not* limited to (not limited to values, conduct, individuals, communities and/or the workplace). Graham suggested ethics is a skill, using Bruner's definition. Knowledge is not enough. Theory is not the starting point because this is about experience and informing action. Theories are helpful in determining options and choices and the reasoning process. He explained the Rest and Narvaez components of ethical action. Graham also discussed what the purpose (or purposes) of teaching ethics is, or are. He also explained how one can teach ethics: experientially and in groups, through discourse, practice, reflection and games (the latter facilitates self knowledge). The theme which ran through the presentation was pulling a cat's tail. The podcast on T drive explains the context rather better than this brief summary.

Louise Taylor is researching the importance of enhancing numerical literacy on the QLD. We want students to be best equipped to work confidently with numbers, tables and graphs and understand what they mean, in the context of law (and not ignoring or simply skipping over anything which contains numbers). One of the problems she has identified is, of course, resistance from legal academics to teach numeracy skills. Louise suggested we might offer numeracy skills without interrupting the existing curriculum though a year one online mandatory module, similar to the existing legal research module, or a final year credit bearing optional module, or finally we could offer a numeracy skills and employability summer school.

Jane Jarman shared her experiences teaching the new Path to Professional practice module. Jane suggests students need an ethical consciousness in order to comply with the new regulations imposed by the regulators. The student skills which were developed are all in the affective domain, a relatively unexplored area in legal education and training. Jane compared the nature and content of the oath taken by CILEx and new solicitors admitted to the Roll, and that taken by doctors. Jane reflected that when she addressed the 'skills' parts of the module, the client care element had sealed into the skills, in a way she has never seen when assessing the same skills with professional students.

Pamela Henderson discussed her work and that of colleagues in NLS and in the School of Education on the SRA's review of CPD for practising solicitors in England and Wales. She described the current input-based system and issues arising from that scheme being perceived as being a one-size fits all regime based on compliance and at best maintaining static competence rather than enhancing practice. Results of the empirical work showed barriers relating to cost, time, location and relevance of CPD provision.

Nick Johnson talked about developments and proposed developments in NLS pro bono activity, moving from clinic as a "must have accessory" for a law school and using pro bono activity as a vehicle for asking questions about what good the law does. There are challenges for clinic work in resources, how it fits in, how staff see it and the extent to which the benefits of clinic activity can be repeatable across larger groups on taught courses.