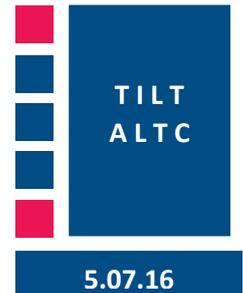


Transforming learning through Scholarship

Session Abstract



Inspiration and transformation: Motivating law students to engage with transferable skills to transform their future employability prospects

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This presentation began by explaining the motivation and rationale for the creation of the Path to Professional Practice module for final year undergraduate law students at Nottingham Law School. Employability is a key focus for HE institutions (HEA, 2013) and has been so for law schools for a considerable time in both undergraduate and postgraduate study (Bermingham and Hodgson, 2001; Fancourt 2004).

The presentation focussed on the challenges faced since the inception of the module including:

- a lack of cohesive vision for the module; and
- the increase in the number of the students who enrolled on the module.

The module is now a choice from one of two compulsory options (the other being a dissertation). Module numbers now exceed 250 but not all move onto further legal work or education. How could teaching methods be amended to ensure all students finished the module with tangible skills for many employment sectors?

Furthermore, the module team reflected on the real skills needed by lawyers in practice and if the module had indeed missed essential elements that students would need. (Webb, Ching, Maharg, and Sherr, 2012; Legal Education and Training Review Report 2013) Student performance in assessments suggested some skills had been omitted from the module.

Strategies to deal with the challenges have included the following:

- “In tray exercise” to explore problem solving strategies, presentation skills and commercial awareness;
- Personal development plans to encourage students to begin reflective analysis of their own skills and knowledge with the outcome of improving in order to target potential career paths;
- A case file simulation which links the entire skills units and gives the students realistic tasks a trainee lawyer may undertake; and
- A “How To and How Not To” series of recordings (visual and audio) where students are able to analyse previous student answers and the marks awarded. This assisted with transparency of marking and was an effective form of peer marking.

The exploration of the module also provided information on student feedback and performance. Finally, future plans for the module, includes units on resilience, assertiveness and personal branding were discussed.

References:

Bermingham, V. & Hodgson, J (2001) "Desiderata: what lawyers want from their recruits" Law Teacher, 35(1), 1-32

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Webb, J., Ching, J., Maharg, P., Sherr, A., 2012. Knowledge, skills and attitudes required for practice at present: initial analysis. Available at

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