

Are your students Bore-ing?

Lawbore was recently featured in *The Times* ('Clever law students let the web do the work' 15 January 2009) and in this piece Lawbore's creator, Emily Allbon, highlights what the site has to offer.

Making students less intimidated by the prospect of legal research was a key driver for the creation of www.lawbore.net back in 2003. The original version was designed in response to my experience that students relied too much on a limited number of sources, and to provide an online community for the law school.

Lawbore is split into 4 areas:

- Topic Guides** – Essentially a guide to the best resources available on the web for different subject areas. Arranged on a cool sliding menu into Core and Elective subjects, Research and Careers. The format is usually 3 main categories: the top picks of websites, commentary and hot docs. Commentary can include speeches as well as articles from both free and subscription sites. Users can adapt a profile if they don't want to see the stuff that's only available to City students. Hot docs can be documents like key cases, legislation, Law Commission reports, and glossaries. The Careers tab includes links to information on Careers, Mooting and Pro Bono.



- City Hub** – The community side of the site, mainly for City Law School students. This offers a place for all student messages to go, with each course/year getting their own noticeboard. There is also general news, access to databases and the e-library, and a set of very popular useful links. Since this section was launched in October 2007, it's been hugely popular and has become the first port of call for City students.



- Learnmore** – A know-how wiki designed to help students with all the knowledge they need to gain which falls outside their core teaching; mooting, doing legal research, using law libraries, writing coursework and much more. The emphasis on creating resources for this section is very much on making them entertaining. There are a number of talking slide shows (made using *Articulate* – see <http://www.articulate.com/products/studio.php>) which have been really well received by students, who like the fact they can learn without having to read. Some of the materials have even been written by students. The materials on mooting are extremely popular, especially the 'Do's and Don'ts Video Guide to Mooting' and the 'Know Your Judge' piece which tells students how to deal with different types of Moot Judge (Quiet, Bored, Bemused, Mean...).



'What was that case Prof X kept going on about in the Crime lecture today?'

'I'm thinking of taking Maritime Law as an elective, aren't the books really expensive?'

'Help – how do I interpret the wording of this Act?'



Emily Allbon is Law Librarian and Head of Information Literacy at City University London. In 2005 she was named Best Legal Information Professional in an Academic Environment at the BIALL/LexisNexis Awards

for Excellence for her work on Lawbore. For more information (including academic references) on Lawbore, click on the [About link](#) on the site or contact Emily e.allbon@city.ac.uk



A quick guide to what Lawbore can do for your students

- Encourages reading around their subjects – highlighting useful websites, commentary and related documents online in **Topic Guides**.
- Gives them free chapters from certain texts – working with publishers to allow access to free content (see **Research Tools for McBride: Letters to a Law Student** and **Mooting for Kee: The Art of Argument**).
- Offers a place for discussion – **Lawbore Forum** gives students the opportunity for asking questions in an environment where no-one knows who they are. Perfect for those questions they're too embarrassed to ask in tutorials!
- Keeps them informed – using the feeds from Linex Legal in some Topic Guides, and RSS feeds from other areas in Lawbore.
- Gets them more confident about mooting – **Learnmore** provides a range of resources to support students new to this, including video clips and talking slide shows.
- Makes Equity & Trusts more fun with a crossword (see **Equity Topic Guide**).
- Brings all the 'library stuff' to life – **Learnmore** has a range of talking slide shows about legal abbreviations, using law libraries and the materials held within them.
- Informs students about events, competitions and training days via **City Hub**.

A practice survey of teaching, learning and assessing law in undergraduate medical education



The drive towards integrated services and changing professional roles mean that the professional and legal responsibilities of different health and social care professionals need to be ever more clearly defined, but we have little systematic understanding of where and how law is taught and assessed in undergraduate medical education. Judy McKimm and Michael Preston-Shoot explain how they plan to fill the gap.

UKCLE and the MEDEV (Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine) Subject Centres have jointly funded a project which includes a practice survey of how law is taught, learned and assessed in the 31 UK undergraduate medical programmes and a systematic literature review of law teaching in medical education. The project, which builds on earlier work funded by an HEA National Teaching Fellowship [NTFS] awarded to Michael Preston-Shoot, is due for completion in Summer 2009. Findings from the project will be disseminated initially through a national workshop which will involve a wide group of those interested in how professionals 'learn law' and apply law in practice.

The NTFS study compares teaching, learning and assessment of law in medical and social work education. Preliminary data analysis indicates varying perceptions and understanding of the law and how it is used in practice within and between the two professional student groups, with evident implications for their future working together. Our research indicates variation in practice in how law is taught, learned and assessed in undergraduate medical education. These variations are not only between the medical education programmes but also within medical programmes themselves, where law is sometimes taught as a discrete topic; alongside ethics teaching; as part of preparation as a professional practitioner but, most commonly, embedded within clinical attachments

where the learning is often opportunistic and assumed (Consensus Group, 1998; McKimm et al, 2008). We have found no evidence to date from the literature as to how law is systematically assessed in undergraduate medicine. The medical profession is undergoing further reform (by the Department of Health, Postgraduate Medical Education and Training Board and General Medical Council) around ensuring fitness to practice, regulation and licensing and there is an increasing research and practice emphasis on professionalism. It is therefore timely to review and evaluate how medical students acquire their knowledge and understanding of the law relating to medical practice; legal rules, concepts and constructs, and the skills needed to apply the law in a range of potentially complex clinical and community situations, including consulting with and referring to other professionals.

The practice survey will provide a baseline from which we can begin to examine the nature and the pedagogy of law teaching in undergraduate medical education, develop new research questions and identify areas for debate and discussion.

It will provide new knowledge for deepening understanding of how law teaching is conceptualised in medical curricula

and, more importantly, how UK medical schools approach and address the teaching of law as it relates to professional medical practice. The practice survey will describe how law is currently taught, learned and assessed in UK medical schools, identify common themes and approaches, and offer examples of good practice and challenges to teaching and learning law in medical education. We will highlight implications for curriculum development and reveal variations in how curricula support medical students in developing a professional identity and 'professionalism' which incorporates a real understanding of law. It will also identify the 'profiles' (background and expertise) of those involved in teaching and assessing law in medical education with a view to developing resources to support the professional development of those involved in law teaching.

Generally the literature has not reported the quality, effectiveness or outcomes of different methods of teaching, learning and assessment of law in medical education.

Understanding of the law tends to be coupled with medical ethics (Consensus Group, 1998), introduced as part of the development of professionalism (Goldie et al, 2007; Jha et al, 2007) or acquired during clinical attachments relating to different client groups. The systematic literature review will provide an evidence base from the published literature on law as it relates to medical education and to medical practice. This work will also contribute to the current debates and interest on all aspects of 'professionalism' and the development of professional identity. The focus to date has been much more on the ethical and regulatory dimensions of practice than the legal aspects which, in curriculum and learning terms, have tended to be assumed, tacit and implicit rather than overt and explicit.

This project has benefits for the wider community of healthcare educators as well as law teachers and practitioners,

providing opportunities for sharing practice and approaches to the teaching and learning of law. Parallels will be drawn with the data already available on teaching law to social workers (Braye et al, 2006). Ultimately of course, it is patients and service users who will benefit from improvements to the way in which health and social care professionals learn and apply the law in practice.

Further information about the project (including publications and reports) can be found on the UKCLE and MEDEV websites or by contacting Judy McKimm on: j.mckimm@btinternet.com

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