



LAW CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE

Curriculum Renewal in Legal Education: Articulating Final Year Curriculum Design Principles and Designing a Transferable Final Year Program

Welcome to the second Curriculum Renewal in Legal Education (Law Capstone Experience) newsletter. In what has been an exciting couple of months, the team has produced its first iteration of the Final Year Curriculum Design Principles, and presented these Principles at the recent Australasian Law Teachers' Association conference in Auckland, New Zealand. The project team is now seeking feedback from the legal education community in relation to the draft principles, which appear overleaf and on the project's ALTC Exchange site.

The project team is now directing its efforts towards the coordination of **focus groups** with final year law students and recent graduates, seeking to identify what they consider to be missing from the final year of an undergraduate law degree.

We would like to take this opportunity to say **thank you** to Fiona Cunningham and Amy Falwasser, who represented the Australian Law Students' Association on our project reference group until their terms ended in late July, and to **welcome** their replacements, Melissa Coade and Heath McCallum to the team for the coming 12 months.

We look forward to your continued engagement with our project.

Sally, Des, Rachael, Judith, Catherine and Natalie

Meet the Project Team - Professor Des Butler

Des Butler is a Professor of Law at Queensland University of Technology, where he previously served as Assistant Dean, Research in the Faculty of Law. In 2006 he was awarded a Carrick Institute (now ALTC) Award for Teaching Excellence in the Law, Economics, Business and Related Fields category and in 2008 was the inaugural winner of the prestigious Lexis-Nexis/Australasian Law Teachers Association Award for Excellence and Innovation in the Teaching of Law. In 2009 he was awarded an ALTC teaching Fellowship and is regarded as a leading practitioner in Australia in the use of multimedia in teaching law. Des is widely published, having authored or co-authored 14 books and numerous articles and has been a chief investigator on Australian Research Grants examining teachers' duties to report suspected child abuse, and cyberbullying.

Contact

To stay abreast of the project's progress, please join the Curriculum Renewal in Legal Education Group on the ALTC Exchange at:

<http://www.altcexchange.edu.au/group/curriculum-renewal-legal-education>.

Please address correspondence to Natalie Gamble at natalie.gamble@qut.edu.au.

Introducing Professor Clark Cunningham

The project team is very grateful to Professor Clark Cunningham, from the Georgia State University College of Law in Atlanta, who represents the international legal education community as a member of the project reference group.

In 2002, the Georgia State University College of Law hired Clark as the inaugural holder of the W. Lee Burge Chair in Law & Ethics. Upon his appointment, Cunningham – who had worked as a community organizer, legal aid lawyer, and civil rights litigator during the 12 years that preceded his entry into full-time teaching in 1987 – immediately began to devote the resources of the Burge Chair to interdisciplinary and international collaboration in the teaching of ethics and professionalism. The Burge Chair has supported the establishment of the National Institute for Teaching Ethics and Professionalism, a consortium of ethics centres at five American universities; a five year research project begun in Scotland, and now carried forward in the USA, on the development of new methods for assessing client communication skills; the 5th Worldwide Conference of the Global Alliance for Justice Education that took place in the Philippines; and an International Conference on the Future of Legal Education, held in 1998 at Georgia State, that was co-sponsored by the Council of Australian Law Deans and included six speakers from Australia.

For information on Clark's recent publications, please visit his homepage (<http://law.gsu.edu/ccunningham/>) and select 'Publications'.

Coming up...

- **Student focus groups**
- **Draft capstone models**
- **Project toolkit**



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Draft Final Year Curriculum Design Principles

1. Closure through Curriculum Design

The capstone experience should be designed to provide an integrated learning experience that provides closure by:

- Supporting students to synthesise their learning in the program through the integration of existing knowledge and skills rather than the introduction of new material;
- Building upon the identified critical learning path over the program;
- Providing enhanced opportunities for reflection; and
- Assisting students to attain an understanding of what it means to be a graduate of the discipline.

2. Transition Out

In order to support transition to professional practice the capstone experience should:

- Be explicit in assisting students to begin to develop a sense of professional identity and transition into a diverse range of professional destinations;
- Consolidate students' lifelong learning skills, resilience, self-confidence and self-efficacy as the foundation for a lifetime of professional practice;
- Provide opportunities for students to consolidate their career planning processes;
- Enable students to enhance their professional skills and competencies so they can be applied in complex environments post graduation; and
- Assist students to use their university education as responsible global citizens.

3. Diversity

In order to respond to diversity, the capstone experience should be:

- Attuned to the diversity of graduate destinations, including research, policy, post-graduation study, and non-legal career options;
- Designed to accommodate different programs and program progression; and
- Accessible by, and inclusive of, all students, accounting for the diverse learning, teaching and experiential needs of each student.

4. Engagement

In order to promote student engagement, the capstone experience should:

- Enact engaging and involving pedagogies; and
- Provide appropriate opportunities for reflection in order to achieve closure and transition from student identity to developing professional identity.

5. Assessment

Assessment in the capstone experience should:

- Be authentic;
- Assist students to become self-reliant, independent legal professionals who take responsibility for their own assessment and feedback processes; and
- Recognise the culminating nature of the capstone experience.

6. Evaluation and Monitoring

The capstone experience should have strategies in place to ensure that:

- Curriculum design is evidence-based and enhanced by regular evaluation that leads to curriculum development and renewal; and
- All students have achieved the threshold learning outcomes for their discipline education.