

## **From Freshers to Scire Feci: LLB Portfolios and Pathways To Legal Practice**

The concepts of 'learning gain' and 'employability skills' are not easily defined by reference to generic terms. For law students in particular, employers are increasingly demanding that LLB programs be grounded in 'whole person models of experiential learning' which will gradually embed and develop complex key 'lawyering' skills via an 'integrative, reflective and transitional' pathway (Eden, 2014: 266). Arguably, the processes involved in generating 'ideal' future employees (Allen et al, 2013) must begin at or before induction and continue (and indeed intensify) throughout the first four semesters of the Law degree, culminating in the production of a 'work-ready' fledgling lawyer (Sims, 2015) by graduation day. This paper focuses upon the linked-learning and employability aspects of two innovative, professions-led undergraduate LLB modules (namely, Lawyers' Skills and Advanced Lawyers' Skills) which together aim to prepare under-graduate students for the challenges of the legal workplace and the courtroom. This portfolio-based module pathway requires students to engage with difficult issues of legal ethics, conduct complex legal research, take part in moots, and draft detailed Legal Opinions on narrow points of law. Together, the two modules equip and enable LLB students to compete for a prestigious place on the Law Clinic (Clinical Law) module in final year, which itself affords a selective cohort of high-performing students the opportunity to act directly as legal advisors to members of the public, on a wide range of difficult issues. The portfolio tasks in particular are underpinned by the over-arching need to achieve a strong sense of professional 'belongingness' (Yorke, 2016). This paper argues that having students consistently meet the 'right level of challenge' (Eraut, 2007: 418) across tight deadlines, as an ongoing process, promotes the motivation and resilience (Pryce-Jones, 2014) needed for a successful career in legal practice.

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