



UNSW Law & Justice Legal Education Research Group

Call for Papers

LEGAL EDUCATION RESEARCH CONFERENCE

Pedagogies of the Pandemic

26 and 27 November 2021

The *Legal Education Research Conference* does not, to be fair, necessarily evoke drama or disaster. Nor do we necessarily court it. And yet, barely had our last meeting (in late November of 2019) on the topic of *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* concluded, than Sydney was plunged into its worst bushfire crisis in recent memory (timing right?). Questions of climate catastrophe and crisis were thrust centre stage. Just weeks later, in December of 2019, reports of a deadly virus in the Chinese province of Wuhan began to circulate. The rest, we might say, is history. And (painfully) present. And (awfully) future...

Covid-19 has circumscribed the day-to-day work, thoughts, hopes and practices of legal academics and law teachers across Australia and the globe. To say that it has disrupted and exposed an already disrupted and precarious university sector is to risk cliché. Borders have been closed, international students grounded, and business models fundamentally challenged. Classrooms have been variously physically distanced, emptied, cancelled and sent online. Students have been learning from lounge rooms and bedrooms (and even from moving motor vehicles). University staff have been forced to adapt and learn new skills, teaching subjects online that were previously taught face-to-face. And university workers (both academic and general staff) have been sacked in their thousands as universities, starved of government assistance, seek to rebalance their brittle budget sheets. This is only to put down some obvious markers of our shared 2020-2021 learning and teaching experience – it is not at all to begin to theorise, resist, reflect upon, reimagine or even remake it. That is what the 2021 conference is for...

The theme of our 2021 meeting is *Pedagogies of the Pandemic*. We mean this broadly, and at least in two basic senses. We are interested in discussions of what law pedagogy looks like under conditions of covid-19. How does one take a course of study most often focused on in-class discussion and debate and conduct it virtually? What has worked and not worked in particular law subjects? And why and how? But in addition to what and how we have had to teach under the pandemic, we encourage reflections about what the pandemic has taught us – what have we learnt about the institutions and intellectual life of the law school, nationally and globally? What have we learnt about our discipline and the way we teach and transmit its knowledge? Is the pandemic a 'teachable moment?' If so, what kind of a moment is it...

We invite paper presentations on the above broad themes. Possible contributions might include reflections on:

- ❖ The political economy of Australian and global legal education: borders, visas, business models, and international legal education
- ❖ Student learning, wellbeing and resilience in an online law classroom
- ❖ Assessment, assessment integrity, and student privacy
- ❖ Research-led reflections on particular law subjects and units of study – what has worked, what has not?
- ❖ Academic workloads, stress and work-life balance
- ❖ The past, present and future trajectories of legal education in light of covid-19 – what frailties does it expose, what possibilities does it open up?
- ❖ Critical legal thinking in times of crisis – critique, reflection, imagination.

Conference Format

The Legal Education Research Conference will be held online in 2021. While we all no doubt long for the nostalgic days of bad coffee and milling around with colleagues in conference rooms, we have opted for a virtual conference for the following reasons:

- a) It is possible NSW (or other states) may end up having another outbreak of covid-19 and being locked down; a virtual conference can still take place if that occurs.
- b) A virtual conference allows participation even when travel is impacted by snap state and territory border closures or international travel bans.
- c) A conference about online learning and teaching in law will be performative, in terms of showing both the possibilities and the limitations of the format.

Conference Participation

There are two main types of participation in the virtual conference: individual conference papers and panel proposals.

Individual conference paper: participants should send abstracts of no more than 500 words. If accepted, participants should plan to present papers of 20 minutes duration.

Panel proposals: we encourage traditional and non-traditional session formats. These can include debates, interviews, conversations, roundtables, or other formats. They can also include the standard conference format of 3 x 20-minute papers plus a chair, in which case the panel organiser needs to submit a brief (100 word) description of what the panel is about followed by 3 x 500-word abstracts (one for each of the papers). For non-traditional formats, please include the names of the participants and an explanation of the planned format and theme for the panel.

We particularly welcome doctoral, early career and junior scholars. We welcome scholars within the discipline of law but also those outside law who are interested in questions of legal education and the reproduction of legal knowledge.

Please send paper abstracts and session proposals for this conference to leconf@unsw.edu.au by 1 July 2021.

Any inquiries can be directed to: leconf@unsw.edu.au

Registration is free. Registration details to follow.

Keynote Presenters

Professor Natalie Skead University of Western Australia Law School

Professor Natalie Skead has been Dean of the UWA Law School since 2017.

Natalie's principal research and teaching areas are Property, Land Law and Equity and Trusts. She completed her doctorate on the proprietary implications of Australian proceeds of crime legislation. She is a prolific researcher with an extensive publication record in Property, Confiscation of Proceeds of Crime, Equity and Trusts, Legal Education and Wellbeing in Law.

Natalie is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Law, Chair of the Australian Law Academics Association, Deputy Chair of the Council of Australian Law Deans, Associate Editor of the Legal Education Review and a Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. In 2011 she received a national citation for her outstanding contribution to student learning and in 2017 she was the recipient of the national award for teaching excellence in law.

Prior to joining the academy, Natalie practiced as a solicitor for over ten years specialising in Corporate Finance, Commercial Litigation, Property and Securities.

Professor Alex Steel, UNSW Law & Justice

Alex is Director Teaching Strategy (Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic & Student Life), and a Professor in the Faculty of Law and Justice. He is currently leading a University-wide project on digital assessment.

Alex is a member of the Australian Law School Standards Committee, and previously co-convenor of the Legal Education Associate Deans (LEAD) Network (2012-16). He is on the Executive of the Australasian Law Academics Association and the Editorial Committee of the Legal Education Review. Alex is a member of the NSW Bar Association Education Committee.

Alex's legal education publications range across the pedagogy and regulation of legal education, curriculum design, assessment practices and student wellbeing. He was a member of the nationally funded Smart Casual project (smartlawteacher.org) developing online professional development for sessional law teachers.

Alex's previous university positions include Acting Pro Vice-Chancellor Education (2019-2020), Law Associate Dean Education (2009-2014), and Deputy Director Scientia Education Academy (2017-2019).

Professor David Thomson, Sturm College of Law, University of Denver

David Thomson is Professor of Practice and the John C. Dwan Professor for Online Learning at the University of Denver's Sturm College of Law, where he has taught for 20 years. He has written and presented extensively on the intersections of technology, assessment, and legal education – in the U.S. and internationally in Russia, China, and Japan. Since 2008, David has served on the University of Denver's Distance Learning Council and was a member of the Strategic Issues Panel on the Future of Higher Education in 2015. He is the author of *Law School 2.0: Legal Education for a Digital Age* (LexisNexis/Matthew Bender 2009), and is co-Series Editor of the Skills & Values hybrid law school textbooks published by Carolina Academic Press. He has published two textbooks in that Series, *Skills & Values: Discovery Practice* (3rd Ed., Carolina Academic Press, 2017) and *Skills & Values: Lawyering Process* (2nd Ed., Carolina Academic Press, 2017). David was the recipient of the University of Denver's Distinguished Teaching Award in 2012. His thoughts about the future of legal education can be found on TheChalkboard.Life and Twitter @dichthomson.