

Forum insight re annual review of Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund 2015 project

PROJECT TITLE:

'Street Law' – a module to enhance the transferable skills of law students through a digitally resourced and digitally supported module in community legal education (undergraduate law students teaching second level students).

Overview of this project

'Street law' involves teaching practical law to grassroots audiences using interactive teaching methodologies. It is a form of Public Legal Education (PLE) which is internationally accredited as being mutually beneficial to both the trainers and the recipients. The trainers (law students) develop professional and other transferable skills and second level students are introduced to legal information in an engaging and interactive way. Elements of practical law taught might include awareness of human rights/civil rights, democratic principles, conflict resolution, criminal justice, employment law, civil liberties and human rights (or the target audience themselves select the areas of law that they wish to learn about).

Introduction of the Street Law module grounded in digital resources represents a new departure in undergraduate legal pedagogy in Ireland and simultaneously creates the space for collaboration between third level institutions and their communities. In this proposal the collaborating third level institutions will partner with secondary schools to introduce the law to pupils in an accessible, engaging and interactive way. The aim is to positively impact second level students and their communities whilst the third level students develop professional and transferable skills as required by the Hunt Report. It is aimed at a target audience of Transition Year School students in the Partner Secondary Schools and will be delivered by third level undergraduate law students in highly participatory classes using a digital platform that will be developed to support learning. An interactive blog including discussion forum will be created by learners to facilitate reflective and thus enhanced learning.

Delivery on a national scale will be facilitated by the development of digital resources to support the implementation of the programme.

The central activities of this proposal are the development of these digital resources and supports followed by the piloting of the delivery of the module and informed refinement before national implementation.

Partner institutions and the name and email address of the contact person at each institution.

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- Trinity College Dublin. David Fennelly, Clinical Legal Education Coordinator david.fennelly@tcd.ie
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Key outcomes of this project

- Learning through Teaching
- Creating collaborative partnerships between third level educational sectors both nationally (partners of project (NUIG and TCD) and internationally (links with University of Ulster, Queen's University Belfast and Georgetown, U.S.A.).
- Creating collaborative partnerships with second level educational sectors.
- Professional collaboration with consultant partners, namely the Law Society of Ireland
- Enhancing Digital Learning by it's use in the delivery of the programme and the construction of digital infrastructure; streetlaw.ie hosting a repository of Street Law materials
- Learning about Social Justice and unmet legal need
- Learning through the Street Law Method (an interactive problem-based methodology)
- Creating a pipeline to the Legal Profession
- Enhancing Transferable Skills of Law students
- Contribute to academic staff development
- Enhancing the development of Clinical Legal Education in Ireland

National benefits of this project to the higher education sector

- Recognition of the capacity of higher education to contribute to community engagement through teaching, learning and research as articulated in the Campus Engage Charter for Civic and Community Engagement.
- The emphasis on the use of digital resources including the creation of the website with lesson plans and other supports necessary to facilitate the provision of this form of service learning by other higher education institutions.
- Opportunity for the higher education sector to strengthen links with the professional education providers in readiness for their possible involvement in professional education as anticipated by the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015.
- Strengthen links with the second level sector initially through Career guidance counsellors and transition year coordinators and ultimately direct access to students in delivery of the programme.
- Development of a further form of experiential learning and community education as promoted by their Irish Clinical Legal Education Association (ICLEA) and CampusEngage.
- An opportunity to promote and publish the programme to encourage replication nationwide.

Student benefits of this project

On successful completion of this module the student will be able to:

1. Develop an awareness of the community and social justice aspects of the law, the role of lawyers and their own role as law students, reflecting the essential role of higher education institutions in promoting civic engagement activities.
2. Develop teamwork, self-management and reflective skills under close supervision.
3. Plan and deliver Street Law (interactive problem-based) lessons in selected areas of Irish law.
4. Enhance interpersonal, communication and organisational skills through effective interaction with the target audience using a digital platform with the benefit of a mentor(s).
5. Interact professionally with the target audience, their support staff, academic mentors and learner's own colleagues.
6. Develop a belief in their own capacity to teach and understand law.

Complimentary national and international development work

This programme is a form of public and community legal education where the student's transferable skills and their understanding of the law and their own role within it are enhanced through experiential learning whilst providing a service to the community. Nationally this form of service learning directly compliments the objectives of the Campus Engage Charter for Civic and Community Engagement whilst simultaneously providing for the transferable skill development of the third level students as required by the Hunt Report.

This programme brings Ireland aboard the international Street Law movement. The Georgetown link is vital and has already resulted in plans to develop US/Irish Street Law collaboration. The January event will initiate this liaison where it is hoped to bring academics from US, Ireland and parts of Eastern Europe together to explore synergies. Street Law is also an emerging methodology in the UK and it is intended to strengthen links with Northumbria University with a view to developing a research interest group.

Contacts re further information or the next steps of the project.

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