

# **QUT Law and Justice Journal**

## **Special Edition on Legal Education**

### **Introduction**

This special edition of the QUT Law and Justice Journal is focused on Legal Education. The idea for the special edition arose through the Scholarship of Higher Education, Learning and Law and Justice Program (also known as SHELLJ) of the Law and Justice Research Centre at QUT. The SHELLJ Program ran a project in 2011 to promote the scholarship of learning and teaching in law, culminating in this special edition. The Program was co-led by Professor Sally Kift and myself, and special thanks go to Sally (who leaves QUT to become the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) of James Cook University in May of this year) for her tireless leadership in learning and teaching, and particularly in legal education, at QUT, as well as nationally and internationally.

Although the Centre is to be re-constituted in 2012 and SHELLJ is not to be continued in its existing form, the Program has acted as a focus for QUT's Faculty of Law for more than 5 years, promoting higher education learning and teaching scholarship, particularly in its legal and justice aspects. Leveraging the Faculty's national and international reputation for learning and teaching excellence, the Program has achieved a research track record of high-impact multidisciplinary and trans-disciplinary research by team members who have consistently partnered with interfaculty, divisional and external colleagues. From 2012 the principal elements of the Program will be refreshed and renewed under the leadership of the Faculty's current Assistant Dean Learning and Teaching, Judith McNamara.

During the period of its operation, SHELLJ has supported the achievement of significant research outcomes including scholarly publications, Australian Learning and Teaching Council (now Office of Learning and Teaching) Fellowships and competitive grants, and higher degree research student enrolments. Through these research achievements, SHELLJ has made a sustained contribution to law and justice teaching scholarship and innovative curriculum design. The Program has also demonstrated a close alignment to sectoral drivers, especially the integration of research, learning and practice that comes from curriculum enhancement through teaching scholarship. In particular, the Program has promoted the scholarship of learning and teaching as a sustainable model for early career academics to manage their complex workloads by exploiting the integration of the three domains of academic work – teaching, research and service.

Building on the Law Faculty's established reputation for learning and teaching excellence, members of the Program have worked together to promote and advance the scholarship of learning and teaching in law in Australian higher education. Particular areas of focus for the program over the years have included: innovative online course delivery; the experience of first year students; transition into studying law; work integrated learning; student electronic portfolios; the teaching-research nexus; the future of legal education; technology innovations relevant to learning and teaching; the acquisition of professional skills; effective and efficient blended learning environments; the promotion of law student well-being; reflective practice in legal education; capstone experiences in law; and support for sessional teachers.

This special edition contains eight articles which all make a significant contribution to the scholarship of learning and teaching in law. They are relevant not only for the Australian context, but also for the teaching of

law internationally. The quality of the articles has been assured by the expert team of peer referees from around Australia who have conducted double-blind reviews. Grateful thanks and appreciation are extended to these colleagues who have given generously of their time and expertise in providing critical, constructive and collegial feedback to the authors.

We are privileged to include four articles by colleagues at institutions around Australia. Dr Susan Armstrong and Dr Michelle Sanson of the University of Western Sydney have provided guidance on effectively addressing the difficulties of transition to law school. Dr Nick James of the University of Queensland considers the contentious issue of what it means to teach students how to ‘think like a lawyer’. An author team from the Law School at James Cook University led by Kate Galloway, discusses the issue of future reform and renewal of the LLB. Dr Rita Shackel of Sydney University explores e-learning in the law curriculum.

The remaining four articles in this special edition have been contributed by QUT Law Faculty staff. Dr Matthew Ball of the Faculty’s School of Justice has written on power in legal education. Jennifer Yule, Judith McNamara and Mark Thomas of the Law School have conducted research into the use of technology for mootings. Anne Matthew of the Law School has contributed a topical and timely piece on managing distraction and attention in diverse student cohorts using technology. James Duffy and myself have documented a new subject introduced to the QUT Law School curriculum in 2011 designed to promote law student well-being.

A final thank you must be extended to Professors Sara Dolnicar, Wilma Vialle and Rob Castle at the University of Wollongong, who led an Australian Learning and Teaching Council Leadership Grant in 2010 and 2011 entitled the Propel Program, in which I participated. That Program provided a focused framework and structure for the advancement of the SHELJJ project. I am also grateful to the (former) Executive Dean of the Law Faculty, Professor the Honourable Michael Lavarch, and Professor Rosalind Mason (Head of School of the QUT Law School, currently Acting Dean), who supported my participation in the Propel Program.

Rachael Field  
Senior Law Editor  
Editor, Special Edition 2012.  
12 April 2012