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## **The Alternative Assessment Challenge**

This is an innovative approach to discipline-specific student learning which includes presentation to a panel with industry representatives.

201040 Designing Law Apps for Access to Justice is a 10-credit point unit in the Bachelor of Law course. The aim of this unit is to enable law students to proactively adapt to the transforming nature of the legal profession. Entirely new ways of delivering legal services will emerge, new providers will be firmly established in the market, and the workings of our courts will be transformed. This unit teaches students how to design and build an application using expert system software. This unit does not require students to have any pre-existing skills or experience in expert systems or computer programming. Instead, the unit itself includes instruction on how to use an expert system software. This unit provides students with an understanding of powerful AI technology. This will be an increasingly vital competency for lawyers of the future, to ensure their employability.

## **A challenge in legal education and profession**

While there will be continuing job losses within the traditional paradigm of legal service providers, there has been an increase in new technology-focused skilled positions and a significant increase in Information and Communication Technology positions within the legal industry.

**A case-based app and product pitching with industry partners and clients as authentic assessment**

[See the video that introduces the assessment task to students.](#)

This unit sees law students create artificial intelligence applications that help people address legal problems online. It provides students with a clinical legal experience by providing access to a community-based client. This enables them to ascertain the client's needs, and undertake collaborative work to provide a solution that requires applied legal research, teamwork, innovative and creative design thinking, and the capacity to manage a project.

Students need to know how to identify, design, and build appropriate legal information systems for use in generating legal documents from precedents, and assist users to navigate solutions to legal problems. Students are exposed to a variety of automated legal tasks and various legal and practical issues associated with their use, including issues of professional regulation. This includes guest lectures from those working on legal expert systems and related technologies.

After learning the necessary skills, students work in small groups to design and build a legal information system.



The winning team of Designing Law Apps for Access to Justice Showcase 2020. The team, David Yousif, George Doueihi, Hamna Amaan, Klara Thwaite, Nihal Dev and Sandra Infante, built an extraordinary app for the Legal Aid NSW which gives support to vulnerable people struggling against unfair and predatory commercial contracts.

## Assessment

The final assessment is a showcase event – like the traditional law school moot competition – where teams can compete for a social justice award. Student presentation on their product is assessed by a panel consisting of a legal law firm representative, one law student, and law academics. Students get feedback from all the panel members at the pitch. This is a genuine way of utilising partnership pedagogies in assessment where we co-assess students' learning with our different partners (Barrie & Pizzica, 2019).

In 2020, the COVID pandemic led to significant changes to assessment items. This unit can be taught online without any difficulties.

[See an example of a group assessment presentation.](#)

## Feedback

Student feedback indicates a high level of engagement with the authentic task and a successful outcome. Comments on the unit include:

- ▶ This unit had one of the biggest learning curves in terms of both technical and soft skills. It provided me with the confidence to embrace technology and view the opportunities surrounding it. Being able to work as a team and get critical feedback from various groups of people allowed for an in depth development of the application. Managing client expectations and being able to work with people external to this unit was also something very new and beneficial for me to take into my workplace. I was constantly out of my comfort zone in this unit, but that helped me learn so much about what my strengths and areas of improvement are.
- ▶ This unit is an incredible and unique opportunity to converge my legal academic and professional knowledge into an extremely useful technological resource for both service provider and end user. The Neota logic platform is much like a playground for a student to practice logical and oriented thinking. This unit makes you think outside of the box, to come up with creative solutions to manage and cater for client requirements. Loved the work placement experience. Best teachers and law unit I've had! I am looking forward to seeing not only what we produce, but also how many people the app will aid and that our efforts will hopefully be replicated in the delivery of legal services and alike.

- ▶ This unit was absolutely phenomenal because of how collaborative it was. The tutors were so kind and allowed us to be creative. I really enjoyed being able to use and develop my communication skills in terms of design, learning computer logic and negotiation expectations with a range of stakeholders.
- ▶ This unit stands apart from others in that you have the chance to make a real impact in the world by helping non-profit organisations improve their processes and quality of service. The unit also teaches you many soft skills, such as negotiating with clients and external stakeholders, working in a team environment (a rare experience in law units), documenting process and meetings, effectively communicating, and offers an immersive experience into the development of applications which does not require any knowledge of coding. Despite all students being enrolled in a bachelor of laws, teams were cross disciplinary due to the other degree and prior experience of each student, which highly influenced the development of each application and helped to avoid blind spots while designing and planning.

## References

Barrie, S., & Pizzica, J. (2019). Reimagining university curriculum for a disrupted future of work: Partnership pedagogy. In Education for Employability (Volume 2) (pp. 143-152): Brill Sense.

## Useful links

Useful links are:

- ▶ [WSU Partnership Pedagogy website](#)
- ▶ [WSU Assessment Guide - Authentic Assessment](#)
- ▶ [WSU Online Engagement and Teaching Hub - Authentic Assessment](#)