

Of pleasure and pain: Teaching IP to a multinational postgraduate cohort

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Agenda

- Brief overview of full-time/on-campus PG Law courses at RGU
- Postgraduate IP Law module
- Who studies the module?
- Who delivers the module?
- Some challenges, many opportunities
- Future approaches?

Full-time PG Law courses

- MSc/LLM International Trade; LLM International Commercial Law; LLM International IT Law

- Admissions criteria

- Shared/common course architecture at PG Cert/Dip stage

- Plus specialist modules for each degree course

The module: "Contemporary IP Law"

- Optional for Int'l Trade; mandatory for Int'l Commercial/IT Law

- Commences with thorough introduction to IP rights (World IP Day posters; a day in my life and IP ...), to source material and explanation of 'modus operandi' of the module (developing of 'ground rules')

- Covers justification for IP rights; copyright; patents; trade marks; national/international regulation

- 11 sessions of three hours' duration

- "Consolidation Week" in the middle of the semester – to take stock and offer guest sessions

- Assessment by portfolio or essay

Who are the students?

- Cohort of 40 – 50 students

- Int'l Trade: students mainly from China (around 15), some Home/EU; business, management, admin, economics/public policy; very few law students

- Int'l Commercial Law: students from Nigeria (around 20), some from India and Home/EU; mainly law students (incl. diploma of legal practice; some practitioners); business/mgt, but with relevant work experience

- Int'l IT Law: very mixed in terms of nationality; mainly law students, but increasing number of "tekkies" with relevant work experience

Who are the tutors?

- Moe Alramahi (main interests: trade marks; domain names as ‘property’; PhD candidate at Manchester)

- Thorsten Lauterbach (main interests: justification of IP; balancing of rights; copyright – (joint) authorship; PhD candidate at Edinburgh)

Challenges

- What subject-matter?
- a three-hour time-table slot ...
- Sources? Which textbook?
- Expectations/motivation of the cohort? The “pitch”?
- Expectations/motivation by the tutors?
- Language?
- Backgrounds? ...nationality, educational, cultural ...

Opportunities

- Diverse backgrounds of both students and tutors
- Identification of IP 'problem areas'/themes, and investigation how different jurisdictions, commentators and interest groups respond, rather than 'black letter law'
- VLE- Moodle: links and audio/video clips from selected conferences
- Sources: traditional and digital (incl. blogs & websites: IPKat, Afro-IP; out-law.com; scl.org ...)
- Modus operandi: some tutor input, but mainly based on group debate
- "Consolidation Week": taking stock; guest lecture (academic/practitioner)

A typical session

• Duration: ca. 2.5 hours

• Students receive in advance

- work sheet which outlines the framework of the session topic, essential & further reading, and topics for discussion (with links to the reading list, but without over-whelming students with content) and invitation to all students to draw on their own respective experiences and opinions

- PPT presentation which introduces the session in more detail, puts it into context of the module plan and sets out the areas of particular legal issues

• Tutor input: ca. 45 minutes (followed by a break of 10-15 minutes)

• Group work on discussion topics (incl. feedback & summary): ca. 45-60 minutes

• Outlook and linking to the next session (tutor)

Future approaches to TLA?

• Even more consideration of TLA research on 'theory & methodology' vis-à-vis international students

• Invite guest to talk to the course teaching team on teaching law to international PG cohorts, incl. discussion/Q&A; handing initiative to students?

• Formative assessment
  - seminars (small group work); "reflection"; discussion forum online?

• Summative assessment
  - Retaining written element (portfolio; posters incl. narrative); adding group presentations (peer assessment?)

• Placements (outside term-time) and/or field trip (Geneva)

• More pleasure for all, less pain for most?

References

• J. Carroll & J Ryan (2005), *Teaching International Students: Improving Learning for All*, Routledge

• H. Teekens, "The Requirement to Develop Specific Skills for Teaching in an Intercultural Setting" (2003) Journal of Studies in International Education, Vol. 7, No. 1, 108-119

• Y Takagi et al (eds), (2008) *Teaching of Intellectual Property. Principles and Methods*, Cambridge Uni Press

• Colleagues and students who responded to a 'cry for help' via IPKat

• German Law Journal, July 2009 – "Following the Call of the Wild: The Promises and Perils of Transnationalizing Legal Education"