

**Application for a Teaching Award in the Rising Stars category  
Dr Luke Moffett, School of Law**

**1. PREVIOUS TEACHING AWARDS (200 words maximum): N/A**

**2. CONTEXT FOR THE APPLICATION (300 words maximum)**

I have been a law lecturer for nearly two years teaching core, optional and student-training classes.

Module	Type of module	Role	Class Size	Year
Contract Law - LAW 2040/3044	UG core	Module Coordinator /lecturer/tutor	260	2013/2014
Evidence – LAW3002	UG core	Lecturer	195	2013/2014
Public International Law – LAW3034	UG optional	Lecturer	12	2013/2014
International Criminal Justice – LAW3055	UG optional	Lecturer	35	2013/2014
Human Rights in the Americas – LAW8103	PG optional	Lecturer	18	2013/2014
Contemporary Issues in Obligations - LAW2044	UG core	Lecturer	160	2013-2015
Tort Law - LAW2042	UG core	Lecturer	210	2014/2015
Transitional Justice - LAW8221	PG optional	Module Coordinator /lecturer	18	2014/2015
Criminal Law – LAW1025	UG core	Lecturer	260	2013-2015
Researching Human Rights – LAW8253	PG core	Module Coordinator/lecturer	20	2014/2015
Business and Human Rights	PG core	Lecturer	8	2014/2015
Conducting Fieldwork in Conflicted or Transitional Societies - S0224	PGR PRDP	Lecturer/facilitator	30	2013-2015

My teaching philosophy is to see the potential in each student and to inspire them to develop their own personal interest and path in law. I try to achieve this through passionately speaking about my own personal interests in the law, such as international criminal justice and access to redress for victims. I emphasise to students the fluidity of law, which can be malleable to social changes, with any one of them able to shape the law in tackling injustice locally and globally. Through using contemporary examples, such as the threat of ISIS or the use of drones, I try to encourage students to develop critical thinking and problem solving skills in how the law should address such issues. I also seek to fill in the gaps in learning support, such as research methods and skills for human rights masters students and training for PhD students in conducting ethical and safe research in transitional societies.

**2. DISCUSSION**

*You should illustrate your discussion throughout with reference to specific learning and teaching activities/learning support activities. You should also provide examples of the influence of learner feedback on your learning and teaching/learning support practice.*

**(a) Promoting and enhancing the learners' experience (1000 words maximum)**

Students can find it difficult to transition from secondary school to law school, with the different learning requirements.<sup>1</sup> Legal pedagogical literature suggests that students value personal connections with their teacher,<sup>2</sup> which can minimise the stress of transition. To tackle this issue I share my own experiences as a law student with them and develop my teaching methods to their needs, such as presenting abstract concepts through visual diagrams and interactive group work to reinforce knowledge.

<sup>1</sup> Field, R., J. Duffy, and A. Huggins, (2013), Supporting transition to law school and student well-being: The role of professional legal identity, *The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education*, 4(2). 15- 25.

<sup>2</sup> Apel, S.B. (1999), Principle 1: Good Practice Encourages Student-Faculty Contact, *Journal of Legal Education* 49:2, 371-385.

Most of my lectures are two hours; it can be difficult for students to remain engaged the whole time. Research suggests that most people's attention span only last 15-20 minutes.<sup>3</sup> To maximise student attention and improve their learning experience I use a range of techniques from using electronic resources, group work and visual tools. With electronic resources I use the personal response system (PRS) to improve students' engagement and understanding of teaching material.<sup>4</sup> In Contract Law I used PRS to work through problem questions and revision sessions. Not only does this provide an opportunity to reinforce students' knowledge, but it also assists me in mapping students' understanding of complex topics and where I need to re-emphasise their knowledge on subjects they are weaker on. To make it fun for the students I organise them into teams to compete for team prizes, such as a boxes of sweets, or more lucrative individual prizes to reward top learners.

To complement the PRS in class in Contract Law I also created multiple-choice questions for each topic through Questionmark, so students in their own time could assess their knowledge and obtain feedback. Finally to provide some excitement for students, I created a Twitter Contract Law competition with a colleague, where students would tweet key learning points in the lecture, textbook or cases, to be shared with other students. To incentivise students' engagement, we had a weekly prize draw for £5 vouchers. Kassens-Noor suggests that Twitter can contribute to students collectively creating knowledge.<sup>5</sup> It also provided a more contemporary way to engage students on contract law issues outside the classroom.

I have been awarded a £1,300 grant from the e-Assessment and Feedback for Effective Course Transformation (e-AFFECT) project to develop computer-based simulations on international humanitarian law for assessments in undergraduate and postgraduate modules. The computer-based simulations will initially be video multiple-choice questions, before being developed into interactive problem-solving simulations emphasising principles of protection of civilians, injured persons and medical personnel.

With group work in large classes, such as evidence, I have taken pass exam papers, given the students the model answer and conceptual equivalent scale so that they can mark it and understand what is need for each level of marks. In smaller classes I have organised students into teams for moot courts simulations, to develop their knowledge application, team working and oral communication skills. In addition, as part of teaching international humanitarian law I have facilitated practical role-playing for students, such as the treatment of prisoners-of-war, to compete in the Irish Red Cross Corn Adomnáin competition.

In terms of skills, I always include a workshop on critical analysis, solving problems, research governance and/or ethics, depending on the assessment criteria and students' needs. In addition, for the past two years I have run a course in the Postgraduate Centre on 'Conducting Fieldwork in Conflicted or Transitional Societies' with a colleague as part of the Postgraduate Researcher Development Programme. This course was created out of our own experience as PhD students in conducting transitional justice research, without any practical or ethical guidance on how to tackle issues in the field. To encourage engagement with PhD students I have organised a PhD workshop with a colleague and two PhD researchers. The objectives of the workshop will be to bring together PhD students in the area of justice for mass atrocities, to present their own research, network with others in the field, and develop research skills. I have also liaised with Justice Hub to speak on how the PhD students can collaborate with journalists to disseminate their research and engage with the public.

### **Development and organisation of resources**

My approach in teaching resources is to simplify complex issues through different written, visual and electronic materials. Drawing on my own student experience and feedback from my own students, I appreciate that people learn through different ways. Through my own teaching I try to accommodate different learning styles by providing PowerPoint lectures, handouts, visual stimuli, such as fun

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<sup>3</sup> MacManaway, L. (1970) Teaching methods in higher education – innovation and research. *Universities Quarterly* 24(3), 321-329.

<sup>4</sup> Folley, D., Wilkinson, S., Thomson, S. (2009), Rebooting the student's attention span by using Personal Response Systems. *Assessment, Teaching and Learning Journal* 6, 21-25.

<sup>5</sup> Kassens-Noor, E. (2012), Twitter as a teaching practice to enhance active and informal learning in higher education: The case of sustainable tweets, *Active Learning in Higher Education* 13, 9-21.

infographics and flow diagrams (e.g. a Playmobil representation of the complex issue of undue influence with mortgages).

### **Assessments**

To ensure students' knowledge and understanding are properly assessed, I create my assessment to reflect both problem-solving and critical analysis skills. More recently I have developed this further to more group work skills, such as organising students into teams for moot court sessions in Human Rights in Americas, where students were assessed as a group for their oral presentation and through a wiki assignment. The use of the wiki assignment meant I could monitor that each person contribution within the group to the written part of the assessment. This is being developed further with upcoming courses in International Humanitarian Law including a moot court element, a shorter article and computer-based multiple-choice simulations. This approach will provide continuous assessment of students' performance, while also developing life-long skills and rewarding experiences.

### **(b) Supporting colleagues and influencing support for student/and or staff learning (maximum 350 words)**

Within the School of Law I have been keen to support colleagues in teaching. I stepped in to cover evidence lectures for three weeks when a colleague was off on sick leave last year, and again this year I volunteered to cover a postgraduate class this year for another colleague. I sit on the Level 1 internal assessment scrutiny committee, examining examinations and coursework for other colleagues. I am also a member of the School's exam board, ethics committee and some plagiarism committees, providing support to colleagues and students.

I believe that teaching students with passion enlivens the topics and encourages them to find their own interest in the area. As such I have voluntarily taught on colleagues modules such as Contemporary Issues in Obligations, Public International Law, International Criminal Justice, Human Rights in the Americas and Africa. These classes involved my own research, offering students insights into contemporary issues, such as how the law tackles non-state armed groups like ISIS or corporate responsibility for multinational companies like Shell for oil spills in the Niger delta. Students have responded quite well with these guest lectures, with some now pursuing research projects or undertaking masters in these areas.

I am also trying to influence student support amongst my colleagues. As part of my research during my PGCHET training I became interested in the issue of student support with the Law School, in particular the personal tutor system, which is the mainstay of personal interaction and support between staff and students. The pedagogic legal literature confirms that good personal student support can minimise student stress in transitioning into law, and support their studies.<sup>6</sup> Overall the study found that students were generally satisfied with support in the school. To influence increased support I have arranged to take a teaching seminar on improving personal tutees for all staff.

### **(c) Ongoing professional development (maximum 350 words)**

I actively seek to improve my teaching through learning new teaching methods so as to improve student understanding of complex subjects. In the Law School I notice that International Humanitarian Law was not taught, despite being a critical component of international law and world affairs. In order to improve my teaching proficiency in this area I attended International Committee on the Red Cross' Advanced Training Course in IHL in Geneva. Since then I have developed undergraduate and postgraduate courses with the Law School, with two teams from the School going on to compete in the Irish Red Cross Corn Adomnáin, with one team reaching the final.

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<sup>6</sup> Apel, S.B. (1999), Principle 1: Good Practice Encourages Student-Faculty Contact, *Journal of Legal Education* 49:2 371-385; and Townes O'Brien, M., S. Tang, and K. Hall, (2011). Changing our thinking: Empirical research on law student wellbeing, thinking styles and the law curriculum, *Legal Education Review*, 21(2), 149-182.

## APPLICATION FOR A RISING STARS TEACHING AWARD 2015

I have also recently completed the PGCHET course and have been using the knowledge gained to improve my own teaching. As part of developing my pastoral support for students I have taken up the post of Advisor of Studies for Level 2 undergraduate law students and completed the requisite training.

As part of continuous assessment of my teaching performance I use a mix of minute papers, peer-reviews, and student evaluations. Feedback from students and staff I use for self-reflection to see how I can improve my teaching deliver and student understanding. For example in my first module was Contract Law in semester 1(2013/2014), where some student evaluations found that I spoke to fast. Taking this feedback on board in semester 2 in Evidence classes I spoke slower, reemphasised important points, and provided summaries at the end of each section during long lectures. As a result student evaluations gave me an average score of 4.55/5. From studying on the PGCHET course I found the literature supports this approach, with classes not being crammed full of material, but manageable amounts to give students time and space to digest the information being discussed.<sup>7</sup>

In the coming year I will further develop my teaching skills through attending training seminars on new technology, such as Camtasia, to provide video and podcasts to support more active student learning.

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<sup>7</sup> Newble, D. and Cannon, R. (1995), *A Handbook for Teachers in Universities and College: A Guide to Improving Teaching Methods*, Kogan Page.