

QUB TEACHING AWARDS

APPLICATION FOR SUSTAINED EXCELLENCE TEACHING AWARD 2017
(Open to individual academic colleagues who have been teaching within Higher Education for 5 or more years)

Contact details
Name (including title) Dr Kevin J. Brown
School/Department: School of Law
Number of years teaching in higher education: 7.5 Years

1. PREVIOUS TEACHING AWARDS (200 words maximum)

N/A.

2. CONTEXT FOR THE APPLICATION (300 words maximum)

Please provide a brief summary of your application and a context for your work. Examples of the information you might include are; the subject you teach or the area of learning support you work in, the type of learning and teaching/learning support activities you are involved in, how many learners are involved, your particular learning and teaching/learning support interests and an outline of your overall teaching/learning support philosophy?

I am a lecturer in Criminal Law and Criminal Justice in the School of Law. I am also the Director for Internationalisation in the School.

I have lectured in Criminal Law and Criminal Justice for seven and a half years. I have been based at QUB since July 2014. Prior to that I spent five years as a lecturer at Newcastle University.

I am currently involved in teaching across various degree programmes within the School of Law:

- Module co-ordinator and a lecturer on Criminal Law (UG 1st Yr). 278 students enrolled on this module. 4.71/5.0 in student feedback last year.
- Module co-ordinator, module creator and a lecturer on Criminal Liability (UG 3rd Yr). 81 students enrolled making it one of the largest optional modules in the School. 5.0/5/0 in student feedback last year.
- Joint module co-ordinator and a lecturer on Criminal Law (PGR: JD Yr 2). 15 exclusively international students enrolled on it. 4.5/5.0 in student feedback last year.
- Module co-ordinator, module creator and lecturer on Crime, Justice and Society (PGT: LLM). 31 students enrolled on it. 4.25/5/0 in student feedback this year.
- Currently a PhD supervisor to two students.

As a criminal law and justice lecturer, I teach both large cohort UG classes as well as smaller PGT and PGR classes. My governing teaching philosophy is that learning opportunities for students should not be restricted by the size of cohort of which they happen to be a member. I am committed to making teaching interactive, engaging and skills-enhancing no matter what the size of cohort. For me developing an understanding of how to work effectively with the barriers and opportunities that different size cohorts present is a subject of enduring interest.

3. DISCUSSION

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

(a) How you are promoting and enhancing the learners' experience (1000 words maximum)

I am promoting and enhancing learning through the use of activities which provide students with a simulated experience of what it is like to engage with criminal law as legal practitioners. Through these simulations the students develop an appreciation for the law beyond that which traditional academic methods of teaching instil. During my time at Queen's University Belfast I have implemented two simulation methods aimed at different types and size of student cohort. I will now address each in turn.

(i) Client Counselling

I teach on the JD, professional doctorate, where I have incorporated client counselling exercises into the teaching and assessment methods for the compulsory criminal law module. The student cohort on the module typically contains around 15 students all of whom are international. Students on the JD programme for the most part have aspirations to practice law on completion of their studies. Students on this programme are therefore keen to develop practice-based skills which will be valued by potential employers. I introduced client counselling in response to this student demand.

Client counselling exercises are undertaken in class as a form of active learning. They also form part of the summative assessment for the module constituting 30% of the final mark.

A client counselling exercise involves students participating in a form of semi-structured role-play. As part of the role-play students, in pairs, meet with a client (played by an actor) for thirty minutes. Students are playing the role of solicitors meeting a client for the first time. The students have a number of learning objectives when undertaking the exercise.

The students must first learn to develop an effective working relationship with a client by instilling in the client trust and confidence. The students are taught to achieve this by behaving professionally, treating the client with dignity and respect, and responding to the client as an individual rather than a problem to be analysed.

The actors who play the role of the client are provided with scripts written by me. These scripts include direction on the individual personality traits and backstory of the character they are playing. Depending on the scenario a client may be particularly anxious, unfocussed, prone to crying, or may demonstrate emotions such as anger or shame. Clients also represent the diversity of life including different genders, ages, races, nationalities, religions and sexualities. Students learn how to tailor their engagement appropriately and to challenge stereotypes or assumptions they may have. As an example, students learn to avoid heteronormative assumptions (ie where a client is assumed to be heterosexual).

Students learn how to frame questions to clients to garner the necessary information from them including how to balance the use of open and closed questions. Students also learn how to respond in a non-judgmental manner to clients who may be divulging information about behaviour with which the student personally disagrees.

To be successful in the exercise students must demonstrate the ability to apply their legal knowledge in a real life context. Client counselling assists students to develop the skill to convey technical legal knowledge in a manner that is understandable to a lay person. Students learn to develop their ability to provide clients with effective and practical legal advice.

Throughout the exercise students learn how to behave in an ethical manner and this provides them with an appreciation of legal ethics which are a key part of practice.

Students undertake the counselling exercise in pairs which encourages the development of close team working skills.

Student feedback has been extremely positive and the students have inquired into whether other modules on the JD degree programme can also incorporate similar professional simulation exercises.

(ii) Solicitor Memo

I also teach on the undergraduate LLB programme. The Criminal Law module which I convene and lecture on always has a large student cohort. This year it has 278 students registered on it. I was determined to develop a method to introduce simulation teaching methods and assessments onto this module despite the large student cohort. The solution I developed is the use of a technology based role-play.

This role-play involves actors playing the roles of witnesses to a criminal incident. The actors variously play the roles of victim, defendant and third party witnesses. The actors are given scripts provided by me. The witnesses played by the actors convey their recollection of the criminal event to camera. In lectures, these recordings are played to students and they work through the recordings with me as lecturer in class. We discuss together the relevant facts (including any conflicting evidence), the relevant law, how we apply the relevant law to those facts and any ambiguities in the law. The video recording includes subtitles for students with hearing difficulties or international students who may struggle with aural English skills. The videos are also posted on QOL for students to explore further themselves as part of their independent learning.

The videos bring the criminal law to life for the students and help them to learn about criminal law through a format which is more closely aligned to experience in practice.

For the assessment aspect of the exercise, the students are provided with access to a witness recording on QOL. From the time of the posting of the video on QOL the students have two weeks to complete the assessment exercise. The students can download the video recording and play it as often as they wish in those two weeks. The assessment involves students drafting a memo as if they were a trainee solicitor in a law firm writing to the partner of the firm. The memo is a maximum of 1,500 words which requires students to be concise. In the memo the students need to successfully set out the relevant facts (including any conflicting evidence from the witnesses), the relevant law, they must apply the law to the facts and discuss any ambiguities in the law. The assessment is individually marked and feedback is provided. The assessment is worth 20% of the final mark for the module.

(b) How you support colleagues and influence support for student learning
(350 words maximum)

I am passionate about sharing with others how one can improve teaching and enhance the student learning experience. I have attended and presented at a number of national conferences on the pedagogy of criminal law in recent years. I have recently had a chapter published in a leading international edited collection that promotes best practice in criminal law teaching (G. Gledhill and B. Livings, 'The Teaching of Criminal Law: The pedagogical imperatives' (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016). My contribution was based on my experience of utilising response technology in large cohort lectures. The chapter includes a discussion of my empirical study which used quantitative and qualitative data to assess the experience of law students using the technology. In my previous institution I championed the appropriate use of response technology which saw me going from me being the only academic using the technology in the School to being one of a dozen.

- Disseminating the Experience of my Innovative Teaching Methods to Colleagues in the School

Later in this academic year, I am planning on hosting a staff seminar for colleagues to present on my experience of using the two interactive teaching methods, Client Counselling and Solicitor Memo exercise, that I have incorporated into my teaching.

I will produce slides and a hand-out for this seminar which will be forwarded to any colleagues who express an interest in the teaching methods but are unable to attend the seminar.

A number of colleagues have already expressed interest in my teaching methods and I have mentored them on how they might incorporate similar methods into their modules.

- Disseminating the Experience of my Innovative Teaching Methods to Colleagues Outside of QUB

I am planning on presenting a paper on my teaching methods at the next year's Association of Law Teacher's Conference in England, the largest conference in the UK for those that teach law at a higher education level.

I am currently drafting an article for the Law Teacher, the leading journal for legal academics. In this article I am discussing the experience of incorporating these two teaching methods into law teaching.

(c) Professional development activities you've undertaken and the impact of these activities on student learning (350 words maximum)

I have engaged in a number of formative professional development activities that have impacted on how I approach student learning.

The first of these activities involved my participation in an international conference on the pedagogy of criminal law. This conference involved the participation of criminal law higher education teachers from across the globe. Two key themes emerged from this conference. The first was that criminal law teaching is often to large cohorts and for such teaching to involve interactive learning opportunities criminal law teachers should embrace developments in pedagogical technology. The second theme was that the teaching of criminal law found in most textbooks and lecture theatres is unrepresentative of criminal law in practice and that efforts should be made to provide an educational experience that better reflects the realities of practice. In 2016, an edited collection based on the conference proceedings was published (G. Gledhill and B. Livings, 2016). It includes a chapter from myself on the use of interactive technology in lectures.

I gained experience of client counselling by attending the England and Wales Client Interviewing Competition. This is a national competition involving students from over two dozens laws schools in England and Wales competing against one another. I attended in the capacity of an academic criminal lawyer sitting on the judging panel. I sat on the panel alongside a trained counsellor and a solicitor. I learned much from this experience and attended twice more. These experiences helped me to develop the skills to allow me to set up client counselling at Queen's.

To further inform my understanding of criminal law in practice, I have also met with solicitors and barristers to discuss how they engage in client counselling and how they assess witness statements. I did not spend long as a practitioner myself so I think it is important for me to learn as much from practitioners as possible so that I can pass this information on to my students. The insights I have gained from these meetings have further helped me to make the scenarios that I design for students as realistic as possible.

**Teaching Awards 2017
Guidance**

The following are suggestions of the type of information you might wish to include in your analytical application - it is not an exhaustive list. You may also wish to draw upon educational literature within your application.

<p>How you are promoting and enhancing the learners' experience</p>	<p><u>Evidence of</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how you stimulate and inspire learners • how you develop, organise and present resources • how you assess learners appropriately
<p>How you support colleagues and influence support for student learning</p>	<p><u>Evidence of</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ways in which you contribute to the development of colleagues within your area e.g. mentoring, membership of Working Groups/Committees, developing policies etc • how you contribute to institutional initiatives • your contribution to regional/national/international initiatives
<p>Professional development activities you've undertaken and the impact of these activities on student learning</p>	<p><u>Evidence of</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • professional development activities undertaken • how you have used these activities to review and enhance your practice • how this has led to improvements for your learners.