Teaching Legal Ethics UK Workshop
“Different learning approaches, Values and Wellbeing”

This workshop, the 8th in this series, took place on Friday 4th March 2016 at 2 – 10, Princeton Street, London. It contained four interactive workshops and an opportunity to consider future activities of this community of practice.

The four workshops were:

- Caroline Gibby: Introducing Ethical practices within the Student Law Office: the function of the firm meeting
- Hugh J McFaul: Distant Virtues: Legal Ethics in Distance Learning Education
- Graham Ferris: On the how and why of value informed legal education
- Caroline Strevens: Values and Wellbeing.

Abstracts are available on the International Forum on Teaching Legal Ethics and Professionalism website at: http://teachinglegalethics.org/teaching-legal-ethics-uk-1. Workshop presentations, where available, will also be posted on the Forum website.

All sessions engaged participants in active engagement with the type of activities students are working with and stimulated intense and wide-ranging discussion. The usual group of legal academics were joined on this occasion by an undergraduate student and two philosophers. They both enriched and broadened the discussion.

Towards the end of the day we considered what might be the most important topics to address in future TLE-UK workshops. Two issues emerged.

Theme 1: Legal ethics and the SQE

The Solicitors’ Regulation Authority proposes two stages of Outcome-assessing examinations. To simplify: SQE1 is to cover the knowledge and is pitched at the equivalent of end of degree. The LETR Recommendation 7 (virtually unanimously agreed with by commentators) was that: ‘The learning outcomes at initial stages of LETR should include reference (as appropriate to the individual practitioner’s role) to an understanding of the relationship between morality and law, the values underpinning the legal system, and the role of lawyers in relation to those values.’ (my emphasis). Given that the proposed SQE1 is planned to be an MCQ-based assessment I would argue that it is incapable of assessing the qualitative and critical elements inherent in Recommendation 7.

The fact that SQE2 will be more sophisticated and use OSCEs does not ensure that students think and reflect about issues of ethics and morality in the initial stage of their legal education.

The workshop proposal is to explore what is necessary to meet the LETR recommendation and to develop proposals to put to the SRA in the next stage of their consultation.

Theme 2: Interdisciplinarity and Professional Ethics for Lawyers
The participation of two philosophers who brought insights and a different perspective to our discussions suggested the value of a workshop which drew together the approaches of educators in different professions. The medical and teaching professions are obvious examples but there may be others.

Proposals around the issue of well-being (of students and professionals once qualified) are invited.

In the meantime, colleagues may be interested in an initiative of Brendan Larvor and John Lippitt of Hertfordshire University. They are interested in developing real world experiential and applied learning within the learning experience of philosophy students and see the clinical work available to some law students (and others, such as medical students) as a fertile source of development. They blog at https://manifestvirtue.wordpress.com/2016/02/09/keeping-it-real/ and are planning a workshop on 18 June 2016. You may be interested in responding to the blog or, if you are interested in participating in the workshop please contact Brendan Larvor at b.p.larvor@herts.ac.uk.

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