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Abstracts from the Clinical Legal Education Interest Group

Preparing Students for the Challenges of the Legal Profession

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Teaching the standard professional skills such as drafting, advocacy and ethics to undergraduates is a challenge to any instructor in an academic institution. However, there is another challenge i.e. preparing them to navigate the hazards of professional practice. This paper will focus on the problems arising in the practice of a litigation lawyer, with reference to Malaysia. It will attempt to deal with problems in practice such as temptations in relation to clients money; relations with clients, colleagues and judges; risk of committal for contempt; risk to life and limb; depression arising from losing cases; winning clients and losing clients; disciplinary proceedings, among others. It will inquire into whether aspiring lawyers should be taught to cope with such problems or to solve them. If it is found to be necessary to teach such skills, perhaps a common syllabus may be adopted in law schools of the common law countries.

Teaching Survival: Strategies for improving lawyers' workplace satisfaction

Colin James

This paper discusses proposed research on Australian lawyer's wellbeing and satisfaction in the workplace. I discuss what we know about workplace satisfaction for lawyers in Australia, compared with the worrying findings about the legal profession in the United States. The paper examines the likely causes of dissatisfaction including how universities traditionally teach law and what students are not told about legal practice. I propose ways to teach law that can help graduate lawyers not only make wise career choices but develop strategies to cope better with stressors and to be more resilient in their workplace. Clinical legal education could help students develop professionally as well as personally to improve their chances of having a happy and productive life at work.

Teaching conveyancing on line: Pitfalls and practical lessons

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Law graduates in New South Wales must undertake practical legal training, combining coursework in basic knowledge areas and professional experience if they wish to be admitted to practice. For those seeking vocational qualifications involving study in a specific area of law as is required for licensed conveyancers, the practical experience component must be obtained in an office environment under the supervision of solicitors

or licensed conveyancers. The ability to gain practical experience is limited for those not employed in legal or conveyancing offices, as lack of experience restricts opportunities to find work in the field. Computer mediated communication was utilised in a pilot program to provide practical experience, by creating a virtual office in which distance students could carry out basic conveyancing processes involved in the sale and purchase of residential property. This paper reflects on the design and delivery of the on-line course and considers its pedagogical value for students.