

E-LEARNING IN AUSTRALIAN LAW SCHOOLS

STEPHEN COLBRAN, ANTHONY GILDING

ABSTRACT

Technology and social change are disrupting traditional modes of delivery, pedagogy and educational business models of Australian law schools. Stakeholders such as law schools, law societies, accreditation bodies, quality assurance regulatory agencies and the judiciary face challenges produced by new modes of delivery of legal education and potential new non-university providers. This study examines the first survey of the use by Australian law schools of blended learning incorporating distance education and e-learning both as supplements to and replacements for on-campus face-to-face instruction.

In the United States, meta-studies reveal that blended approaches to learning produce marginally better outcomes than face-to-face on-campus instruction or e-learning. Unblended face-to-face on-campus instruction and e-learning produce similar outcomes.

E-learning is pervasive in Australian law schools although, it is argued, more systematic law school policies, support and program-wide practices are warranted as law schools adopt a broader use of e-learning methodologies in blended approaches to instruction. E-learning in a small number of law schools predicts practices that may evolve across the sector as more law schools provide students with flexible blended learning options. Law schools are yet to meet the challenges of mobile learning, data analytics and Massively Open Online Courses (MOOCs).