

LEGAL EDUCATION, LEGAL PRACTICE AND ETHICS

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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines how principles of legal ethics and professional conduct are currently taught in Australian law schools and posits that the existing model is not adequate for two main reasons: (1) it does not account for the heterogeneity of the student body and the changing role of law schools; (2) it promotes an understanding of and compliance with the legal professional rules rather than preparing students for the multitude and variety of ethical dilemmas that arise in practice. The author proposes changes to the academic curriculum such that students are introduced to a broader concept of ethics, and that such exposure is scaffolded into all law subjects, rather than the current model which favours the teaching of legal ethics as a stand-alone subject. Further the author posits that experiential learning is the most efficient and expedient method of teaching principles of ethics to the student cohort. The paper closes by outlining the advantages of this teaching model to the academic staff, the student cohort and the legal profession: these range from the flexibility and adaptability of the model, the promotion of professional conduct, and mental wellbeing and resilience.