

Jackson Walkden-Brown Video Capsules for First Semester Law Students

An introductory law subject taught by Jackson Walkden-Brown, called the Australian Legal System (ALS), is undertaken by all law students in their first semester of law school and features a suite of video capsules.

Although these videos were targeted specifically for first semester law students, the principles underlying the videos are likely to be transferable to first semester courses in other disciplines.

Jackson's hope is that academics responsible for coordinating first semester subjects in other disciplines can adapt this idea for their own courses.

The project involves three categories of videos. The first is a series of short (2-5 minute) videos showcasing key faculty members providing general information relevant to first semester students.

The second is a series of medium length (15-30 minute) videos showcasing a broad range of academic staff discussing key concepts relevant to the ALS curriculum that align with their expertise.

The third is a series of lengthy (60-90 minute) casual interview-style videos showcasing a small number of experienced senior academics discussing 'big picture' issues relevant to law and modern society.



"An engaging video presented by Senior teaching fellow Craig Smith"

The Subject

ALS is a compulsory subject in the Bachelor of Laws program. The subject examines the nature and sources of law. The role and function of the primary institutions of Australian government (parliament, the executive and the judiciary) are addressed and considerable attention is given to analysis of the Australian Constitution.

The basic methods of the law are examined with respect to the common law tradition, the doctrine of precedent, and the principles and rules of statutory interpretation. Examples of other topics include indigenous legal traditions, legal theory, international law and legal ethics.

In simple terms, the role of an ALS teacher is to equip his or her students with all of the foundational knowledge and skills necessary to undertake all of the other courses in their law degree. The curriculum provides students with an introduction to many areas of law that are covered in more detail in subsequent compulsory subjects.

Whilst there are obviously significant differences between an introduction to law course and introductory courses in other disciplines, there are presumably many common threads, enough to warrant consideration of this video capsule approach in other contexts.

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Associate Professor Libby Taylor records a video for her students

The Essentials

The Essentials video series serves to introduce a number of key faculty members. The most important video is a welcome from the Executive Dean. Other key executive staff videos include the Associate Deans of 'Learning and Teaching' and 'Student Affairs and Service Quality'.

The Coordinator of the Legal Skills Program provides a brief overview of Bond's innovative and integrated approach to teaching legal skills. This will likely be expanded into a suite of videos introducing all of the different legal skills modules.

Importance was also placed on creating videos that introduce important administrative staff that students will have contact with in their first semester.

These videos are made available at the start of the semester and can easily be updated in future semesters because of the short and straightforward nature of the recordings.

The Experts

This video series serves two purposes. The first objective is to have experts discussing key concepts relevant to the ALS curriculum that align with their expertise.

The fact that ALS covers such a broad range of topics, most of which are explored in greater depth in subsequent compulsory subjects, means that there is significant scope to allow academics to provide a broad overview of their subjects in a contextual and introductory manner.

For example, our constitutional expert provides a detailed explanation of the fundamental power dynamics in our system of government, our legal ethics expert provides some practical insights into professionalism and common ethical dilemmas faced by practicing lawyers, and our international law expert provides an introduction to the internationalisation of legal education and the impact of globalization on modern legal practice.

The second, more general, objective is to introduce our new students to a broad range of academic staff, giving them a taste of Bond's academic culture and the significant expertise that exists within the faculty.

Bond is, comparatively speaking, a relatively small law school with a unique culture. First year students are generally motivated to learn about the teaching and research expertise existing within the faculty.

These videos provide a great platform to showcase this expertise, as well as introduce the varied personalities and backgrounds of Bond University's Faculty of Law staff. The distinctive 'individualities' of the academics shine through in these videos, as most academics have strong convictions about their areas of expertise.

The videos are made available at a time in the semester when the relevant/aligned aspect of the curriculum is introduced.

The Veterans

The veterans' video series serves to inspire new Bond Law students by introducing some of the broader aspects of legal education and legal practice. The interviewees were carefully chosen academics who were best suited to an interview style, and comfortable with a free-flowing intellectual discussion about law and society.

Jackson has entitled this series of videos 'Life and Law', to reflect the broad-based rationale underlying the category. The videos are intended to promote and encourage ethical and professional approaches to the study and practice of law. These videos are made available at the start of the semester, but are not compulsory viewing.



Associate Professor Danielle Ireland-Piper on camera

The Goal

This video capsule project is a work-in-progress that will be expanded and refined for future semesters. Jackson hopes that the videos will form an integral part of the 'welcome to the Bond family' message conveyed to first semester Law students.

It is integral that Bond University does everything it can to provide new students with a comprehensive and inspiring introduction to legal education. The Faculty of Law at Bond University is a unique law school with a spirit of innovation and commitment that should be showcased to influence new students, in the most direct and creative manner possible.

Students should be made aware from day one that our primary goal is preparing them to succeed, lead and inspire in a rapidly changing global legal environment. It is Jackson's hope this project assists, in a small way, that endeavour. ■

Jackson currently coordinates the Introduction to Law subject at Bond University. He was admitted to practice as a solicitor of the Supreme Court of Queensland in 2003. Jackson took up a position as a part-time teaching fellow at the Faculty of Law at Bond University in 2004, whilst practicing at the Brisbane office of Minter Ellison Solicitors.

Now an Assistant Professor and PhD candidate, Jackson's principal areas of research and teaching include Animal Law and Entertainment Law. He also teaches Australian Legal System and has a keen interest in jurisprudence and political philosophy.

Jackson has extensive practical experience in the pro-bono sector and an on-going relationship with a number of community legal centres and volunteer organisations in Queensland. He also practices as a solicitor with a firm specialising in entertainment law.