

Queen's Law Virtual Symposium
Session 2: Reflective Practice: Legal Regulators & Law Societies Roundtable (June 22, 2026)

(Sharry Aiken) Awesome. So welcome back, everyone. Hope you all had a good break. This session is effectively a roundtable with law societies and regulators. It's a really unique opportunity to spark a conversation about reflective practice across the various roles in the spectrum of legal professionals. And I'm really excited to be moderating this conversation. In terms of how it's going to work, I will introduce each speaker in turn. And, just like the last session, our intros are exceedingly brief, primarily titles only, with apologies, but we really do encourage you to read the much more extended biographies available on the program website and in the final program document itself, to hear more about where people are coming from. So, to kick us off, we're actually going to start with Christian Hurley, who is Director of Admissions and Education with the Law Society of Newfoundland and Labrador here in Canada. Christian, you're going to be sharing your 12 minutes with Barbra, and I'm going to be keeping time. So, look forward to hearing your presentation.

1:16 (Christian Hurley)

Okay. I'm hoping that everybody can see my slides and can hear me okay. That's great. Thank you very much, Sharry. Barbra and I are going to give a few examples of how legal regulators are embedding reflective practice across the continuum of legal professional development. My focus is on bar admissions, when law school grads are entering the profession, while Barbra is going to focus more on the post-call context, through CPD.

Just to give you a very brief bit of context. Newfoundland and Labrador, where we are, what we are: we're a very small jurisdiction. Our practising membership is about 850 lawyers. We typically have between 25 and 35 individuals enter our bar admission program each year. So that scale matters. That means that I can move quickly. We can test new approaches, maintain fairly close contact with our students, our principals, and our volunteers. It means that we can have candid and timely feedback about what we see is working and what might need refinement.

So, in terms of reflective practice, it's a relatively new addition to our curriculum here. We started a standalone reflective practice assignment through our Bar Admission course back in 2022. Between 2024 and 2025, we developed a new competency framework that was governing entry to practice requirements. It identified ten competency domains, setting clear expectations for what we're looking for in terms of entry level competence. That went into effect this year. And so, together with that, we rolled out a revised reporting framework that was intended to help students engage with that new framework throughout their articling and included a new reflective practice assignment. But the key design shift is that it's no longer treated as a one-off exercise. We tried our best to embed reflective practice throughout the articling process.

The new reporting framework creates a series of reflective touchpoints. It begins with our education plan, so that's completed before the articling term starts. It encourages the student and the principal together to think about anticipated learning opportunities and areas for development. Around the 13-week mark, each student has an interview with a member of our Education Committee here at the Law Society. So that gives an opportunity to discuss supervision, experience, and any issues that they might have faced early on in their term. Next, we have a midterm report, which is the central reflective and developmental checkpoint. And then finally, at the end of the articling term, we have a final report which is submitted, wherein the parties assess their development over time. So, just to look a bit more closely at the midterm report, it's a good example of how we try to build reflection into ordinary regulatory reporting. For each competency domain that we have, the student and the principal together rate the amount of experience they received on a 1 to 5 Likert scale. The report doesn't ask just for that ranking. It asks them to describe the student's experience to support the ranking, so it has to be connected to evidence. If the ranking is 1 or 2, they need to describe what additional experience they're going to have to obtain in the second half of their articles, so turning a low rating into a planning conversation. So, in that sense, the form is doing two things at once. It's gathering information for us, but it also prompts self-assessment, feedback, and forward planning.

We also developed a reflection log as a companion tool. It's completely optional. It doesn't have to be filed with the Law Society. Its purpose is meant to be practical. So, by the time students are ready to file a report, they're not going to remember the specific examples that demonstrate growth. They might remember some general tasks, but the details are lost. So, this log encourages students to record experiences as they occur. And the point is to move from memory to evidence. It gives them material they can draw on when they're filing those required reports.

So, in terms of what it looks like in practice, this is just a quick visual sense. It's deliberately simple. Each page follows the same basic structure. There's a competency overview, there's space for reflections, examples, and space for notes on further development. And that structure just repeats across all ten competency domains. They can use point form, they can use narrative, whatever they feel most comfortable with. The value is in capturing the examples and the feedback close to the time at which they occur.

We also have an updated reflective practice assignment. So that has three required components. The first is that students are asked to identify a competency domain they believe they are strongest in and explain their choice with reference to specific examples and feedback. Second, where they need further development, what they found challenging, what supports, experiences or opportunities would help. And then third, they set two learning goals for the remainder of their articles. Each goal has to be specific, realistic and linked to a competency domain, with planned actions, needed supports, and a way to assess their progress. So, the assignment is not just a private reflection. One important feature is that you're supposed to review that with your principal before it's submitted, and we ask for confirmation that that occurred. So, the goal is to connect the student's self-assessment with the principal's observations so that growth can be identified. And when needed, the principal can create those learning opportunities for that development.

So, the change is, essentially, in a nutshell: we're aiming for a better supervision conversation between principal and student. Instead of general impressions, we're looking for competency-specific evidence. Instead of discovering issues late in the day, we're looking for opportunities for early intervention. Instead of relying on exposure by chance, we want more intentional learning opportunities. And instead of viewing articles as something to just complete, we're trying to frame the articling term as a period of professional development.

In terms of where we are now, at super early days, the new cohort just started on June 1st. So, we're going to wait and see how this plays out. But our aim is clear. We're not trying to create paperwork just for the sake of it. We're trying to cultivate habits. For us, the key idea is that reflective practice should not just be experienced as a form. It's a habit. So, if we can help students develop that habit early, then reflective practice becomes part of continuing competence after call. And ultimately that's how we, as a professional regulator, can help serve the public interest.

So that concludes my piece on the pre-call.

(Sharry Aiken) Thank you, Christian, and perfect timing. And I'm delighted to pass the baton to Barbra Bailey, Manager of Education with the Law Society of Alberta.

8:16 (Barbra Bailey)

Thank you. I'll just share my slides as well.

Thanks, Christian. I'm going to talk about an example of incorporating reflective practice into continuing professional development, or CPD, for lawyers.

I'm certainly not an authority on reflective practice, but I have been working with some scholars in this area, including Michele Leering, to incorporate it to some degree into our programming. So, a few years ago, our board decided to take a review of the CPD program to determine whether changes or enhancements should be made. And we've always taken a bit of a unique approach to CPD in Alberta. Whereas most jurisdictions in Canada and in many other parts of the world use a minimum hours-based approach to CPD, we have always taken more of a self-directed approach.

We have around 12,000 active lawyers in Alberta. And they determine their own CPD goals and needs based on their individual circumstances, which could include years of experience, practice setting, and whether there have been any changes to their practice setting or their area of practice, maybe because the law has developed or because they've changed practice areas. So, in this way, our approach has always included a degree of reflective practice.

We've also taken a broad approach to what qualifies as a CPD activity, beyond traditional activities such as formal training. So, we include things such as learning on the job, reading a book, mentoring another lawyer or student.

Those qualify as CPD activities as well. We don't accredit CPD activities, but we provide guidance in our rules as to what qualifies. And that's what I've got up on the slide right now.

So, when we completed our review in 2020, we concluded that the self-directed approach was still the best approach in our minds, but we wanted to enhance the program to make it more engaging for lawyers. In the past, they were required to submit a plan through an online portal, but there was little ability to edit or interact with the plan throughout the year. So, under our approach, lawyers don't have to show that they completed the activities that they include in their plans. They just have to file the plan with the Law Society. But we wanted to build in more opportunities and incentives for them to engage with the plan after submitting it. So, when we launched our new program in 2023, we added a number of new enhancements.

And the first was a new competency framework, which we call the Professional Development Profile for Alberta Lawyers, shown here. On the slide, you can use the URL or the QR code to find the full profile on our website. The profile provides more guidance to lawyers as to the competencies that the Law Society sees as being important to a safe, effective and sustainable legal practice. And because we have a unique approach, we also ended up building a custom online application to support these activities, which we call the CPD Tool. The landing page is shown here. It's available to Alberta lawyers to create their CPD plans each year and then track their progress throughout the year. So, our Professional Development Profile forms the basis of this tool, and the process of reflection is built in throughout.

So, you can see here the first step in the self-assessment process. Lawyers are asked to reflect on their professional development goals and needs for the year. The profile provides more guidance with respect to the competencies that lawyers should be considering, and it also allows them to add any other areas of focus to their plans that aren't included in the profile. So, lawyers are required to select at least two competencies from the profile, with at least one learning activity related to each. They may select more competencies and activities if they choose, and many do.

Within the profile and the tool, there are performance indicators for each competency to provide guidance on what the competency would look like in practice, and the performance indicators also serve to provide guidance for lawyers to better assess their proficiency levels in each of the competencies, and reflect on the competencies that they should be focusing on for the year, depending, again, on their individual goals and circumstances.

Shown here is the proficiency scale that we have adopted for this purpose. Lawyers can make ratings for each competency, and those remain private to them. They just serve as a guide for their own reflections on their needs and their progress over time. We also added an ability for lawyers to edit their plans throughout the year to reflect changes to their goals and circumstances that might happen mid-cycle. So, as I mentioned, lawyers also have the ability to track progress on their selected activities throughout the year. This includes being able to mark activities as having been completed, and then also include reflections on the effectiveness of each activity, or any other notes that they might want to record for themselves. These notes are, again, just private to the lawyer.

And lawyers also have the ability to complete a final year end reflection on their CPD plan as a whole at the end of the year, through the tool, to think about how their CPD activities impacted their proficiency levels in their selected competencies, and then whether they want to continue to focus on those competencies in next year's plan, or if they're ready to select something else. And they are invited to use the proficiency scale once more to rate their proficiency in each competency, to see if it has changed as a result of their activities for the year.

So, to support the transition to an increased focus on reflective practice in creating CPD plans, we also worked with reflective practice subject matter experts, including Michele Leering, of course, one of the organisers of this symposium, to create a short, free course in our Learning Centre on reflective practice and how it can be incorporated into CPD. Again, you can use the QR code here to find the course on our website. So, the course provides an overview of what reflective practice is and how it's incorporated into our CPD program. It also provides examples of how to engage in reflective practice, whether it's on a particular file or in a broader competency area, as well as some exercises to get lawyers used to this practice.

And then, just finally, our CPD Tool includes a feature that suggests some learning resources to get lawyers started, based on the competencies they select. And our staff lawyers are also available to provide supports and suggestions for how to carry out the CPD plan throughout the year.

We also do some random follow ups throughout the year to see how the lawyers are doing with their CPD plans. So overall, we've received positive feedback on our CPD Tool and the enhanced approach. The increased focus on reflective practice and the practice of tracking progress throughout the year are still relatively new for our bar. The track progress and the year-end reflection features are optional, so we do see a lower rate of uptake on those functions. But we have also seen usage has been increasing year over year. So, we hope to see that trend continue. And I think, as with anything, acceptance and habituation of something new takes some time.

But we believe these enhancements have been a positive change for our bar. And that concludes my remarks as well. Thanks.

(Sharry Aiken) Thank you so much, Barbra. So interesting to hear what's happening both in Newfoundland and Labrador and in Alberta.

We're now going to hear from Chris Walsh, through a recording, not in real life. Chris is the former Head of Learning and Development with the Law Society of England and Wales, and his full presentation is titled "*Helping our Members get Shopfloor Ready: How Embedding Reflective Practice Aims to Improve Professional Competency*." His full presentation is very rich, but unfortunately, it's 16 minutes, and so it's a little bit too long to share the full recording. (Editor's note – the full recording has been uploaded under Chris Walsh's name under the Abstracts tab on the Series website.) We're going to zoom in on Chris elaborating on how the Law Society of England and Wales has attempted to embed reflective practice into the life cycle through a digital continuing professional development diary. And Natalie, please play. It's about a five-minute excerpt.

17:12 (Chris Walsh)

So, it gives us a little bit of a flavour of what's going on over there. But, as mentioned as well, what we've also done is we've built reflection and action and next steps and plans into the diary itself. With every entry you're able to enter both reflections and some actions as well. We've tried to make it non-mandatory, so you can voluntarily update those reflections and then build onto it. So, there's a nice sequence and sense of a plan, in terms of what else has come from those reflections, and what other learning and development requirements have been self-identified by the member that they can take forward to improve their practice.

And we've also scaffolded the reflections in our FAQ. So, members have some hints and suggestions about what they should reflect on and how they should do it, and so forth.

Okay. And here, I'm sorry, apologies. I know this is quite text-heavy, but I just wanted to do a bit of a round robin update of how members have found the CPD diary, and for the most part, it's gone down really well. And so, as you can see here, it's that whole thing: it makes them stop and think. It makes them engage in those higher-level metacognitive practices, by thinking about their requirements and what's next, and identifying gaps and reflecting on their own needs. It's easy to use, but it also supports those longer-term developmental activities. And it is user friendly, and it helps them keep up to date with changes to practice, which is absolutely brilliant to hear, because it's a technical solution that makes life easier and saves a bit of time and keeps everything under one roof. But it's also supporting some more foundational and higher-level structural ideas, in terms of reflection and those kinds of things as well. So that's been good to see.

But one thing that I also wanted to talk you through is another product. So, it's not just a diary, it's not just a capture and a recording. It's a little case study, if you will, a very, very light touch case study of our in-house diploma. So, the diploma was a new product that we launched on Law Society Learning last summer, in the summer of 2025. So, it's not specifically just ring fenced for in-house practitioners. We just launched it for in-house because we knew there were lots of needs and requirements from that particular segment, but the design is consistent. So, it's in two or three parts. The first part is a series of modules that learners walk through at their own pace. It's self-directed, and they can pick and choose which order they take them in, with some low stakes, interactive, quiz style activities in the modules. That's very much about upskilling and knowledge acquisition. Then that led to a brief reflective piece, where members were asked to think about how the knowledge gained from the modular component would then feed into changes to their practice.

So, it was a very deliberate and intentional attempt to embed reflective practice into a landmark release. But it didn't finish there. The final stage of the diploma was a one-to-one, hour-long coaching session with a professional development coach who was either a practising solicitor, or had been practising, or was perhaps now an academic or a coach. So, they really had skin in the game. They analysed the learner's reflective statement, and they helped the learner identify an action plan they could take into practice to implement the learning from the diploma, and to also identify longer term learning and development needs as well. But the key part here was reflective practice embedded into the design of the course, which underpinned that final coaching session.

And again, apologies here about the overloaded text. I was trying to get everything nice and compact for you. So, this isn't user feedback. This is feedback from some of our coaches and our faculty on the reflective piece itself. And again, we were really pleased with how it went down. The faculty saw the value in the reflective piece in terms of how it was a deliberate pause. It was a moment for learners to really think about how they were going to approach the knowledge gained, and how their developmental requirements could be reinforced and underpinned following completion of the diploma. And of course, the entry went on to the CPD diary as well.

So, the reflective piece was a standalone assessment exercise, and we also provided some guidance and some scaffolding around that. So, members knew what to do, because I know it doesn't necessarily come naturally for our solicitor cohort. So, we provided some guidance around that as well. And the proof is in the pudding in the end as well. So, 89% of attendees found the course to be either extremely valuable or very valuable. And they specifically called out the reflective component as a very beneficial thing. So genuine professional growth was coming from those reflective moments. It was accessible. And of course, it was embedding metacognitive practices deliberately into the design of the course.

And here's just the final piece of feedback from one of the attendees.

So I know that's very much been a whistle stop tour through some of our attempts to embed digital CPD requirements to make life easier, and to embed reflective practice for our members, but also a case in action, if you will, of how, in a landmark product, we've also embedded reflective practice as part of that deliberate learning design approach to the solution, as a formal assessment activity that's embedded reflection and metacognitive practices, and enabled members to really take those competencies into practice.

(Sharry Aiken) So, all right. That's all we're going to hear from Chris. But to hear the postscript on this, do listen to the full recording. (Editor's note – it's under Chris Walsh's name on the Abstracts tab of the Series website.) So interesting as well to hear the very high level of satisfaction with the embedded digital diary. I wish I could report such high levels of satisfaction from my own students.

And on that note, we are going to travel across jurisdictions to Australia. We're going to hear from Alice Duggan and Lucy Fraser, both from the Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner. Alice is the Director of Detection and Intervention with the Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner, while Lucy leads the Lawyer Wellbeing Program. So over to both of you. I believe we're going to get started with Alice's slides there.

24:29 (Alice Duggan)

I'd just like to start by acknowledging the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation as the traditional owners of the land on which I'm speaking, and I pay my respects to their elders, past and present. So, the VLSB+C is an independent regulator of the legal profession in Victoria, which is in Australia. We regulate over 31,000 lawyers in over 2,500 law practices in the state. And I want to talk a little bit about how we embed reflective practice as a regulator, because if we want lawyers to do it, we'd better do it ourselves.

Our role as regulator is to protect consumers, promote a capable and ethical profession, and support access to justice. In practice, that means handling complaints, licensing lawyers, overseeing professional obligations, regulating trust money, and stepping in when standards are not met. It also means that we provide support and guidance to the profession about what those standards actually are.

Traditionally, regulation is reactive. Something goes wrong, harm occurs, and enforcement follows. That approach is necessary, particularly for serious or deliberate conduct, but it often means we're intervening after the damage has

already been done. And we wanted to stop that. We wanted to be better than that. We wanted to identify those risks sooner and act before that serious harm actually occurs.

Reflective practice is usually discussed as a professional skill for individual lawyers, but our goal was to embed it into our very system of regulating. So, to us, that means observing what's happening, identifying patterns, understanding the causes, and adjusting our action based on that learning. So, we use three different forms of reflection. Reflection on action, learning from past complaints, claims and interventions. Reflection in action, which adapts our responses as new intelligence emerges. And reflection for action, anticipating future risks and preventing harm. And so that's what we mean when we say reflective regulation.

So, over the past five years, we've shifted the focus internally for how we address issues that we see in the legal profession. And instead of only asking what rule has been broken, we're asking, where is that harm likely to occur? Why is this risk emerging, and what can we do to prevent it? So, this is where the early intervention and reflective practice come together. So, we use multiple sources. Our research, complaints, inquiries, trust data, examiner reports, stakeholder insights. And individually each of those is incomplete. But together they really reveal real patterns that aren't visible when they're isolated. The critical step is understanding the problem that's behind the problem. A single issue, like we see a lot of, delay or poor service, but it's actually looking at the deeper risks: weak supervision, poor systems, financial pressures, or gaps in capability. And so, we know that if we act only on those surface issues, then we're missing that driver of harm. We want to understand the cause so we can intervene more effectively. So, we're looking for warning signs like unusual financial patterns, failing systems, failing processes, supervision gaps, or unmanaged operational and personal pressures. It doesn't replace enforcement, but it strengthens how we're using it.

So, we'll put a link to this later, but our annual Risk Outlook is a real outward representation of this type of work. This is a communication we do annually to the profession. It's modelled on the UK. The SRA has a similar communication, and that outlines the issues that we're seeing. So, this year we're focused on things that might involve trust account and fraud risks, poor supervision, practice management failures, capability gaps, wellbeing pressures, consumer vulnerability, and new risks from technologies. The Risk Outlook isn't just a signpost to the profession about what we're seeing. It also provides actual resources on how the profession can address these risks. And so, this approach allows us to undergo a different way of working, by observing, acting, testing whether our response is effective, and then feeding that learning and that feedback into future programs.

So, this is our mindset of not just asking how much did we do - but asking about whether or not it actually made a difference or not? So, for us, this is captured in our Early Intervention Strategy, which is built on three core capabilities. That's focus, intelligence and intervention design. And together, we've gone from that reactive regulation model to a more targeted, preventative approach. And so, really importantly, this approach has allowed us to influence the profession very directly.

For example, our Costs Support Program works one on one with lawyers to improve how they communicate their costs to clients. Our ethics self-assessment tool has encouraged practitioners to identify their own gaps in practice based on those nine areas of risk. So, these are really practical interventions, and they're grounded in the issues that we're seeing in real time. And they're designed to address those problems early, before they escalate into formal regulatory matters. So, we've got this as a continuous learning cycle rather than a one-off program.

We've incorporated our Research Centre, which is led by a world leader in legal research, Professor Nigel Balmer. For example, the LULU, which is the Legal Understanding and Lawyer Use project, is a research initiative by the VLSB+C that explores how the public interacts with the legal system. So, this all reframes that central regulatory question and allows us to continue our approach to build both capability within ourselves, which is really important, as well as building it up with the profession.

So, I'm going to hand over to Lucy to talk more about how these programs support lawyers to actually reflect earlier, to learn faster, and to adapt in what they do.

30:37 (Lucy Fraser)

Yes. Thanks so much, Alice. I'd like to just delve into number four and five on this slide, the Lawyer Wellbeing Program and our Early Career Lawyer Capability Framework, to talk about some practical examples where we're supporting and embedding reflective practice into legal practice.

So firstly, lawyer wellbeing. At VLSB+C we have a dedicated Lawyer Wellbeing Program, which focuses on working with the profession to lead systems change, and this is very much a collaborative effort. So, we work really closely with the professional associations and with lawyers themselves, and we also work with wellbeing and safety experts in designing this program. A cornerstone of the work is our Systems Theory of Change for lawyer wellbeing. It was informed by what I'll show you on the next slide, which we call our messy map. So, this has poor wellbeing at the centre. And then it was built out of lived experiences of lawyers, asking what contributes to poor wellbeing outcomes among the Victorian legal profession.

There is a full report and information on our website, and it shows all of the factors, 45 identified at different levels of the system, that drive poor wellbeing in Victoria. It also is a point of reflection in itself, as we've rolled out this work for lawyers, as it helps to show lawyer wellbeing and the whole system that sits around it.

So, this was a key input into our Systems Theory of Change for lawyer wellbeing, which we developed with the profession to provide us with a long-term framework and outcomes to seek together to improve lawyer wellbeing. And this is part of the Systems Theory of Change on the screen. And I've included this just to highlight how this starts to embed reflective practice, and very much as a learning focus, and the link to wellbeing. So, you can see there that the outcomes are around reflective practice and debriefing as well.

So, we're currently supporting a pilot of training for solicitors to build reflective practice capability. And that's come out of this Theory of Change work. It's being piloted in both face to face and e-learning formats, and it focuses on reflection in action and reflection on action. It's been adapted from an earlier program that was developed by our professional association for barristers, and that program drew heavily on the learnings from health. So that's our lawyer wellbeing work, that's working towards embedding learning and reflective practice from that perspective.

The second example that I'm really keen to share is around our Early Career Lawyer Capability Framework. So, this is also all available on our website.

And we launched this framework last year to provide clearer guidance on the capabilities expected during the first two years of practice, which we call supervised legal practice. It responds directly to feedback from our early career lawyers and supervisors, who told us they wanted more structured support to make supervision more effective. So, as you can see from the extract on the screen, there are five core capabilities in the framework. And what's shown up here is the part that explicitly talks to reflective practice, although it very much is embedded across the whole piece of work.

In addition to the capability framework, we developed a Reflective Practice Template and guidance material. And while this has been designed with early career lawyers in mind, it can be used by all lawyers across the profession. And to highlight this, we included it as a referenced resource in our Risk Outlook that Alice was discussing before. The template is designed to be straightforward and accessible. It's based on the Gibbs model and focuses on helping lawyers to follow a structured process to build regular, reflective habits, to support learning and the processing of professional experiences. Insights can be shared with supervisors, but there's no requirement to do this, acknowledging that psychological safety is not present in every workplace.

So, in closing, Alice and I just wanted to highlight the broader piece of work that we're doing and really highlight that in more recent times we're embedding reflective practice in a much more direct way, and we're really keen to learn and keep going with this discussion today, because we still acknowledge there's lots to do from here as well. Thank you.

(Sharry Aiken) Thank you so much, Lucy and Alice. It's so interesting to see the commonalities across jurisdictions and regulators. We're now going to hear from the College of Immigration and Citizenship Consultants, based in Canada specifically. Beata Pawlowska, who is Director of Professional Standards, Research, Education and Policy. Cassandra Barber, who is Assistant Professor with the Department of Surgery and Education Scientist with McMaster University. And Megan Marshall, Senior Manager, now, of Practice Ready Ontario. But all three are

working together in relation to professional identity formation and immigration practice. So over to you, Beata, to kick us off. Actually, I'm going to ask Cassandra to kick us off. Sorry about that, Cassandra.

36:24 (Cassandra Barber)

Excellent. Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here this afternoon and present, or this morning, wherever you are located, because I know we have some Australian colleagues on the call.

All right. Across many professions, there's an increasing recognition that professional expertise alone is no longer sufficient for contemporary practice. Professionals today are working in environments characterised by uncertainty, complexity and constant change. They are required not only to apply knowledge, but also to navigate ambiguity, respond to human complexity, and make decisions that can have significant consequences for the individuals and the communities they serve. So, practitioners routinely encounter situations where there is no single right answer, and where decisions extend beyond technical or procedural consideration.

This raises an important question: what does it mean to be a competent professional in these environments? And we suggest that the answer requires us to broaden our understanding of competence itself. Rather than viewing competence as something that is achieved once technical skills have been acquired, aligned with the broader literature, competence is developmental, relational, and continuously evolving through a professional career. Reflective practice provides a lens through which we can begin to understand that evolution.

So, the first slide serves as a conceptual anchor for the presentation, by introducing reflective practice as a connecting thread between how professionals develop, how they exercise their responsibilities, and how they ultimately serve the public. With that broader framing established, Megan will now begin to discuss how reflective practice develops over time, and why the transition into professional practice is such a critical period for supporting long term professional growth.

38:17 (Megan Marshall)

Thanks, Cassandra. I think we've heard a great deal of information so far from our colleagues, and we're hoping to build on this, and from the regulatory perspective.

So, I think we can say, if competence is developmental, it's relational, it's continuously evolving throughout a professional's career, then maybe the question is becoming, how does that development actually happen? And you've heard a lot of great examples today. One place to look for that transition from learning is when we're looking at folks in early years of practice, when they're transitioning from learning into independent practice.

If we look at the top of this slide that you see on the screen, these early years can be challenging. We have professionals that are building confidence. We have professionals that are making decisions in increasingly complex situations. They're usually navigating uncertainty for the first time. And as a college, and as a regulator, you would see that transitions can be periods of heightened risk. And that's true across all regulated professions, not just immigration consultancy or law. The technical knowledge may be there, but the professional judgement is still developing or continuing to develop. And that's where reflective practice is really becoming important. It's really helping professionals make sense of their experiences. It's helping professionals learn from uncertainty and developing their judgement and their self-awareness and their confidence, so that they can effectively practise.

But I would say, in addition to that, over time, all of those collective, individual reflections are accumulating. And they're really contributing to a stronger professional identity, stronger competence, and ultimately better outcomes for the public. And I think that this is actually where the regulatory lens becomes really interesting.

So, if we can say reflective practice contributes to professional growth and public protection, then we can also maybe bridge that further to say that regulators actually have a really important role to play in this. And it's not just by telling professionals what to think, but by creating the conditions that are supporting reflection throughout their professional careers. We've heard some of it so far. That could be through education, or continuing professional development, or mentoring, or competency frameworks, or other opportunities that are supporting growth. But that's kind of the key. So, from this perspective, reflective practice isn't just about reflection as an individual learning tool.

It's part of the entire regulatory infrastructure, in our view. And that's what's helping connect stronger practitioners, stronger practice and stronger public trust, ultimately.

40:57 And I'm going to pause here, because I'm actually going to turn this over to my colleague Beata, who's actually going to explore this concept in more detail on the coming slide. So over to you, Beata.

(Sharry Aiken) Thank you, Megan. Yeah. If we can jump to the next slide. Exactly.

41:16 (Beata Pawlowski)

What is truly foundational to our model, as we are trying to implement reflective practice for immigration practitioners at the college, is truly this idea that public interest regulators can and should create conditions under which reflective competence develops and, by all means, needs to be sustained throughout the professional career. And as Cassandra mentioned at the beginning, and I think Megan has reiterated, the model really positions reflective practice at the intersection between professional identity formation, professional competence and public protection.

We are a federal regulator with about 12,000 licensees. And so that's actually really important for us as well. So, our model, as we are trying to implement within the college, and we have a couple of programs that already have implemented aspects of reflective practice, we certainly recognise that reflection is one of several processes through which licensees develop values, or sense of purpose, understanding of their responsibilities to the public interest, and their professional competence.

And that it certainly extends beyond technical proficiency, which Cassandra has mentioned, and many speakers today as well, to include judgement, self-awareness, ethical reasoning, and relational and moral dimensions of practice, so important in early practice, but also later on. The model also recognises that immigration consulting practice is shaped by lived realities of both practitioners and those navigating the migration system, which of course is in line with Michele Leering's scholarship. And that's, from a regulatory perspective, really significant, important. And we certainly are recognising that at the college as well.

Public interest regulators are not passive observers of professional development. They have to be really active and engaged in it. And it's truly foundational to ensuring that licensees and professionals really appreciate and understand and can develop professional competence in this area, through establishing competency frameworks, which we've heard. Of course, we have a competency framework at the College as well. Education, mentoring, standard setting, continuous professional development, speciality programs, and any other learning activities, really. Regulators can intentionally, and really emphasis on intentionally, create conditions that support reflective competence through a professional career. So really, ultimately, our model illustrates that the intersection between professional identity formation, professional competence and public protection does not emerge in isolation. Quite the opposite. It is shaped and sustained through the structures, expectations, developmental opportunities that regulators can and should establish.

So, if we view this in this way, reflective competence may support both individual and system level outcomes. If we look at the practitioner level, of course it may contribute to more responsive, people-centred service, and of course support access to justice objectives. At the higher regulatory level, it really may strengthen public protection, public safety and integrity of the profession overall.

So, in closing, again, the model that we are embedding within our college and our educational activities for our licensees shifts the attention from whether reflection matters, to how public interest regulators can intentionally create the conditions under which reflective competence develops and is sustained throughout the professional career. And as I have mentioned, we have implemented several reflection aspects into our programs, mentoring, specialisation program. And I think that's all for us for now. Over to you, Sharry, and thank you.

(Sharry Aiken) Thank you so much, Beata, Megan and Cassandra. And by the way, tomorrow morning you'll have an opportunity to hear from the Graduate Diploma in Immigration and Citizenship Law, which is accredited by the college. And hear how we attempt to introduce and integrate reflective practice into the pre-licensing education program.

But now I'm going to ask Natalie to play the recording of Naomi Horrox's presentation. Naomi is Executive Director of Professional Development and Competence with the Law Society of Ontario, and her presentation is titled "Encouraging Reflective Practice at the LSO." So, let's hear from Naomi. It's about five minutes.

45:48 (Naomi Horrox)

Good afternoon. I'm Naomi Horrox, Executive Director of Professional Development and Competence at the Law Society of Ontario. The Law Society is the regulator of lawyers and paralegals in the province. I'm pleased to contribute to this panel. While I'm unable to join you live today, due to a Call to the Bar ceremony, I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this way.

Reflective practice is central to the Law Society's approach to professional competence, not as an abstract concept, but as a practical tool that directly shapes how legal professionals assess risk, make decisions, and adapt their practice over time.

I'll briefly highlight how reflective practice is built into two Law Society continuing professional development programs: Foundations of Sole Practice, and Shared Pathways. Foundations of Sole Practice is a mandatory 30-hour CPD program for lawyers and paralegals entering or transitioning into sole practice. It's designed to build competence across core areas such as professional obligations, business management, client relationships, and risk assessment. The program moves beyond theory into the realities of practice, and reflective practice is critical to how that learning occurs.

First, reflection is embedded throughout the course. This is done through sole practitioners speaking directly to the viewer to share their experiences, and within filmed roundtable discussions of a group of sole and small firm practitioners. The focus is on solutions and lessons learned. Participants are then prompted to consider how concepts apply in their own practice context, how they would handle challenging client situations, make decisions, or assess competence in real life scenarios.

Second, participants are supported by the Mistletoe Path Journal, an optional but strongly encouraged companion resource. This is a self-reflection aid, where the viewer is prompted to consider the content they've learned in each module of the course. They can note their own responses and takeaways that they can apply in their own practice. The journal provides a structured space to reflect on professional identity, career goals, client relationships, business decisions, and wellbeing.

Similarly, the Business Matters journal, another resource included with the Foundations course, prompts legal professionals to think deeply about what they want to do in their sole practice, and then how they want to do it. Importantly, these and other resources in the course consistently move participants from reflection to action, asking what steps new sole practitioners will apply, change or prioritise next.

They also reinforce that reflection is ongoing. In a sole practice setting, where external feedback may be limited, this kind of structured reflection helps lawyers and paralegals build self-awareness, judgement, and accountability as core professionalism skills. While Foundations focuses on reflective practice in the context of individual practice, management and competence, the Law Society is also applying these principles in broader contexts.

Shared Pathways demonstrates a broader application of reflective practice. This program is the Law Society's Indigenous Cultural Training Initiative, approved earlier this year and soft launching in fall 2026. It's designed for lawyers and paralegals to develop a foundational understanding of Indigenous histories, cultures, legal traditions and contemporary realities. Its aim is to strengthen competence across all areas of practice, recognising that legal professionals increasingly engage with Indigenous clients and legal issues, and that this competence is essential to improving access to justice and building trust. The program addresses historic context, the impacts of colonisation, and forward-looking approaches to reconciliation. Reflection is integrated throughout the course and supported by an optional self-reflection journal. This journal asks participants to examine what they knew or did not know about Indigenous histories and legal structures, and how their prior education and experience may have shaped those perspectives. It then invites critical reflection on how learning about Indigenous legal orders might expand their understanding of law. Importantly, the focus turns inward. Where might one's own practice unintentionally create barriers? How might legal processes exclude or misunderstand Indigenous perspectives? From there, participants are

asked to identify concrete changes in their practice, such as adopting trauma-informed approaches, adapting communication, or revising workflows to better serve Indigenous clients and communities. The journal concludes with the forward-looking commitment: what will practitioners do differently in the year ahead? As with Foundations, it's a private, optional space, allowing for candid engagement with materials that may be complex or uncomfortable.

What distinguishes Shared Pathways is that reflective practice is not only used to support individual competence, but to engage with broader questions of law, justice, and the role of lawyers and paralegals in systemic change.

Across both programs, reflective practice is not an add on. It's how learning translates into professional competence. In Foundations, it supports lawyers and paralegals in building effective independent practices. In Shared Pathways, it supports deeper understanding and meaningful engagement with reconciliation. In both contexts, its value lies in action, shaping how legal professionals practise, how they make decisions, and how they contribute to a more responsive and just legal system.

Thank you again for the opportunity to contribute to today's discussion, and please don't hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions about these important initiatives.

(Sharry Aiken) Okay. Just before moving to the final presentation of our roundtable, I wanted to remind everyone that the Q&A box is open at the bottom of your Zoom screen. I see that we have two questions already, but I want to encourage anyone else to please post questions for specific panelists in the Q&A box, because after we've heard from everyone, we'll be turning to the Q&A box to hopefully engage in a bit of back and forth and discussion.

So, it's my pleasure now to call on Deborah Wolfe, who is Executive Director of the National Committee on Accreditation and Law School Programs at the Federation of Law Societies of Canada, to speak a little bit about modernising Canada's assessment policies and assessment tools for internationally educated lawyers and law graduates. So over to you, Deborah.

52:00 (Deborah Wolfe)

Thanks. I'm getting some notifications that my internet's a little bit unstable, so hopefully I can run now for about ten minutes and give you a little bit of flavour about what's going on. Sharry gave you my title and the organisation name. And for those of you outside of Canada, the Federation of Law Societies of Canada is the national association of the regulators in the provinces and territories. They have the statutory authority, the legislative authority in Canada, and they together ask the Federation to do certain tasks. We are only involved in activities that the law societies want us to be involved in.

One of those is celebrating 50 years this year, and that is the evaluation of the credentials of individuals who are educated outside of Canada, or in what we call a Canadian civil law program, and who wish to practise law or enter bar admissions in a common law jurisdiction in Canada. And that's nine of the provinces, the three territories, with one other province, Quebec, practising a mix of civil law and common law. And we have nothing to do with their programs in terms of the credentialing of internationally-educated applicants. The NCA has been around for 50 years this year. And it started with sending everybody back to law school, and saying, we don't trust your education, where you earned it. You need to go back to law school. In about the '80s and '90s, there was some pressure from society, from immigrant serving agencies and from fairness commissioners, to stop that practice. And so, the NCA started to offer examinations. They were JD style exams. They are JD style exams.

And so essentially people now were doing everything virtually, in a secure lockdown environment, writing JD exams in order to prove their competency to enter into the bar admissions programs in the common law jurisdictions. They could be brand new graduates. They could be ten-year graduates. They could be 40-year graduates, from all sorts of jurisdictions around the world. In fact, every year we have about 95 to 105 jurisdictions represented in where people are educated. It's quite a diverse cohort of people that we have, and about 3,000 to 3,500 applicants every year. This system really is not ideal for adult learners, to have them just write JD style exams. And so, over the past almost ten years, we've been looking at how do we improve the process of the NCA. What can we do to make it more appropriate for adult learners?

What can we do to ensure that people who are educated outside of Canada are better prepared for bar admissions? We know that the people who go through the National Committee on Accreditation, the NCA, and who earn a certificate of qualification, are not succeeding at the same level as Canadian graduates. And I think we would all say, okay, a little bit, that makes sense, because somebody who is educated in the Canadian system is set up for Canadian bar admissions. And people who are coming from other places would not have some of the benefits that people would have going to a Canadian law school, but the difference is too great. And so, we were looking at this and said, we have to better prepare people for bar admissions.

So, we undertook a major project, well, a series of projects. We have what's called the National Requirement for Canadian Common Law Programs, that sets the standards for the Canadian law schools and what their programs have to, how they have to prepare Canadian graduates for bar admissions. That National Requirement also applies to the NCA. And so, we have to take that National Requirement and translate it into a policy that we can use to evaluate the credentials of individuals who are applying to the NCA. Looking at that policy, and sorry, at the National Requirement and our policies, we said we really need a competency profile. And so, we spent about a year and a half, two years, putting together a competency profile.

Now, when Sharry asked me to participate in this panel, I was really hesitant to participate, because we don't do anything around reflective practice and I knew nothing about it. And so, I have to say, it's been a real learning experience going through this. Thank you, Sharry. Thank you, Michele, for inviting me along, because listening to the presentations, reading the materials, it's been quite illuminating. And I think someone else talked about how they are going through reflective practice. And I was, over the last two weeks, as I've been thinking about what I'm going to say, one of the things I was going to say is, we, the NCA, our committee, and there are a couple of committee members sitting here in this group, we need to be reflecting on what we're doing. We've gone through these major projects. We need to reflect on what we've developed for our internationally educated colleagues, what we're changing, and each stage of what we're changing. We need to stop and say, is this right? Are we on the right track? Are we going the right way?

We can also, as we go through and start to make our changes, and I'll come back and I'll explain our changes in a moment, I was also thinking that we could, even without it being part of our policy or our National Requirement, we could start to send emails to our applicants and say, okay, you've now written your first exam. Why don't you stop now and think a little bit about this? There's some excellent questions that we see here from the other presenters that we could just lay out. There's links that, you know, I looked at the Law Society of Alberta's website and there's a really nice course and a couple of videos there that we could point people to. I would think that 90% of them are going to ignore us. But even if 10% of them say, hey, this is a reasonable thing, or a valuable thing to do, I think that it'll be worth our time. It's not something that we're doing now, and I think we would bring it in as we change our process and move away from JD style exams to our new process.

So, what are we doing? We have a competency profile that's based on the National Requirement for Canadian Common Law Programs. That adds to it some aspects that we think that people who are educated outside of Canada are not getting, that everyone in Canadian law school is getting, for example, a little bit of introduction to practice management. Practice management is really the realm of bar admissions, but we need to prepare people to start to do that.

And now we are looking at what type of exams. We're going to be moving to a mix of multiple choice, which is a little bit controversial in some areas, as well as what's called alternative testing instruments. We are, for the first time, going to be bringing in oral testing for our people coming through. There's been a lot of criticism from practitioners and judges in Canada about the language competence of individuals who've come through the NCA. I had mentioned earlier that there's 95 to 105 jurisdictions represented every year, and people are speaking a multitude of languages. And even if their jurisdiction officially has English as one of their official languages, that doesn't mean that they took their law in English, or that they took all of their law in English. So multiple choice, written questions, oral questions, combined with a couple of online courses.

We're dividing out our legal research and writing course. It's going to be legal research, and then legal writing and drafting.

And we've just introduced a new *Indigenous Peoples in the Law* course. This is key and vital for lawyers who are going to be practising in Canada, to understand the environments in Canada for Indigenous peoples, and our obligations to what was called the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. So, for those of you outside of Canada who aren't familiar with it, I do encourage you to look up the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. And there are specific calls to action for the Federation of Law Societies of Canada. And part of our obligation to that is by bringing in this new course.

So, next steps, and good, wind down. I think I have about two minutes to go. Our next steps are, we're working away. We're running our current system, and thousands of applicants, through our current system. We're bringing online this new system that's going to change the way that we're going to be examining applicants. And there will be a transition period. We're going to be starting piloting exams sometime in 2027, and we will move to the new system in 2028. But we're going to be continuing the current system, because somebody who started in the current system with the old JD style exams, we can't just say you're done; you only have six months to go. We're going to let them move through that process fully.

And I am really interested in hearing the questions and moving through this journey with everybody here. Thank you.

(Sharry Aiken) Thank you so much, Deborah. And, you know, full disclosure, I'm sure we had an ulterior motive in bringing you into this roundtable, with the hope of that kind of cross-pollination that you referenced in your talk. So, thank you so much for joining us, and also, in particular, for emphasising the importance of the competency profile, which is the foundation, truly, of all reflective practice. Right. And I know that the NCA has put an awful lot of work into that.

So, we have some time for discussion and some back and forth. I have a few questions in the Q&A and also a couple in the chat.