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The University also acknowledges and is grateful to the Traditional Owners, Elders and Knowledge Holders of all Indigenous nations and clans who have been instrumental in our reconciliation journey.

We recognise the unique place held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original owners and custodians of the lands and waterways across the Australian continent, with histories of continuous connection dating back more than 60,000 years. We also acknowledge their enduring cultural practices of caring for Country.

We pay respect to Elders past, present and future, and acknowledge the importance of Indigenous knowledge in the Academy. As a community of researchers, teachers, professional staff and students we are privileged to work and learn every day with Indigenous colleagues and partners.

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From Prison Classrooms to Negotiation Tables

Reflective Practice as Core Legal Competency

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What reflective practice actually looks like



- *The gap*: typically, legal education treats reflection as a supplement or compliance exercise (e.g., end-of-subject reflective journal, mandatory reflection log, professional identity statement, placement or internship reflection).
- *The claim*: reflective practice is a core professional competency, constitutive of ethical judgment (not decorative) and should be formative (not summative).
- *What it actually looks like*:
 - A disorienting moment you can't explain away
 - Interrogating the assumptions that moment exposes
 - Trying something different in response
 - Noticing what changes, personally and professionally.

Two places, one journey



ANU Legal Literacy Program



What prompted it

- Law students wanted genuine clinical experience.
- Men in Canberra's new prison wanted to better understand the legal boundaries of their detention.

What I designed

- Law students working alongside sentenced men inside Canberra's new prison.
- A genuine project: scope, schedule, risks, weekly reflection and review.
- Structured weekly reflections and written feedback to stakeholders.

What followed

- Student and detainee feedback led to the program being refined and embedded.
- Featured on ABC Radio National Life Matters (2010).
- Conference paper with a former student and detainees (2012).
- Now an ANU undergraduate subject.

Prison, Prisoners and the Law (ANU LLM)



The design

An intensive immersion that brought together practitioners and policymakers, and current and former detainees, in facilitated dialogue followed by a self-assessment.

What students said

‘I saw prisoners as victims, and I’d never understood that before.’

‘I had an “us and them” attitude. I see now I could’ve been the one in their situation.’

‘We’re mostly just very lucky, by accident of birth, or because we don’t get caught.’

‘I make judgements about things I don’t know much about, and once I’ve learned more I see how wrong my initial thoughts were.’

‘My first reaction was scepticism ... now I kind of expect to be told no. Perhaps I’m learning to be not as cynical.’

‘I place a high value on people I regard as “experts” ... at the expense of people who aren’t as articulate or persuasive.’

‘What do we value as a society? Who do we decide to punish, and why?’

The self-assessment questionnaire

1. What happened that most surprised you?
2. What patterns can you recognise in your experience?
3. What was the most fulfilling part of it? And the least fulfilling part of it? What does that suggest to you about your values?
4. What happened that contradicted your prior beliefs? What happened that confirmed your prior beliefs?
5. How do you feel about that experience now compared with how you felt about it at the time?
6. What does the experience suggest to you about your strengths?
7. What does the experience suggest to you about your weaknesses and opportunities for development?
8. How else could you view that experience?
9. What did you learn from that experience about how you react?
10. What other options did you have at the time?
11. Is there anything about the experience that was familiar to you?
12. What might you do differently as a result of that experience and your reflections on it? What actions do your reflections lead you to?

Your turn



- Call to mind **one recent moment** in your teaching or practice that didn't go as you expected, or that has stayed with you.
- Hold onto that moment, and ask:
 - What surprised you?
 - What assumption or value did it expose?
 - What might you do differently, and what does that say about the educator or lawyer you're becoming?
- *Share your responses with the person beside you.*

Prison classrooms to negotiation tables

What we do

- Melbourne Law School JD Program
- Disputes & Ethics
- A negotiation plan
- A live, unassessed negotiation
- An assessed reflection-on-action
- *The evolution: from personal reflection to practice reflection, and reflection tied directly to skill*

Why this matters in the polycrisis

- AI will absorb some doctrinal work and much routine work.
- However, AI cannot do what we're teaching: read a room, hold judgment under pressure, and reflect.
- Arguably, reflection is the meta-skill that makes every other skill improvable.

Reflective practice as core competency



- If we teach ‘not only law’, students can reshape law’s place in society, but only if they can reflect.
- In a polycrisis, the work of justice (people-centred, more-than-human) is judgment under uncertainty. Reflection is how that judgment is formed.
- **So make reflective capacity foundational, not supplementary:**
 - Educators: design reflection *in*, from the first encounter, not the final assessment
 - Institutions: resource it, assess it, and treat it as a core professional competency.
- *If we're serious about forming lawyers who can serve justice in its relational dimensions, reflection has to be core.*



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