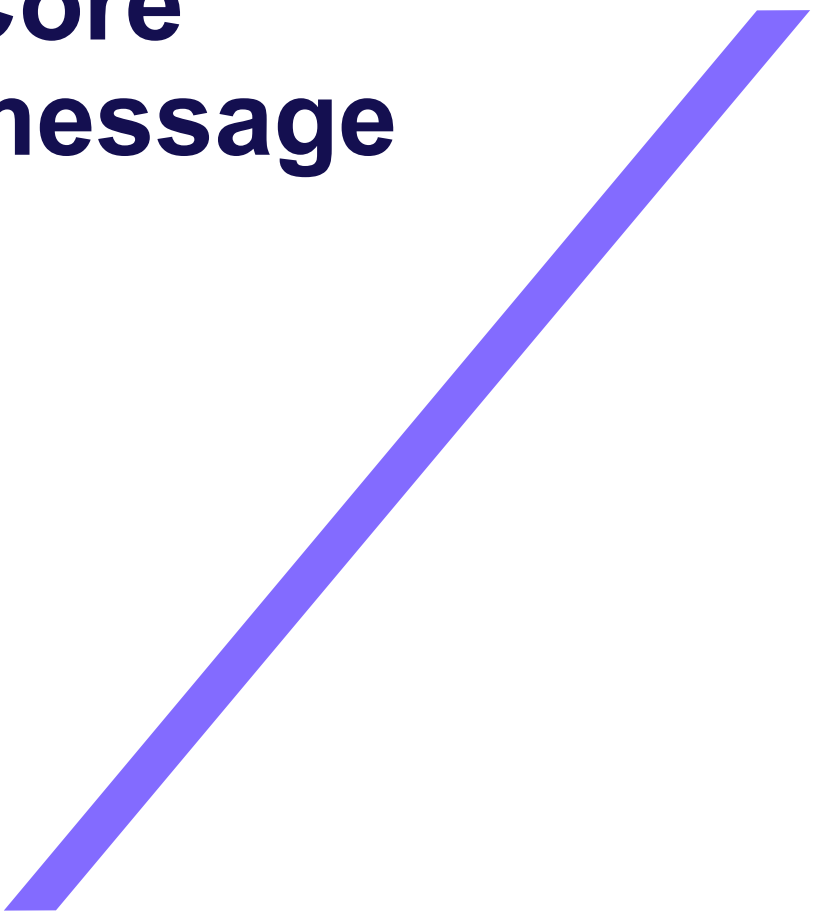


Becoming and teaching the reflective lawyer

**Dr Paula Zito, Senior Lecturer in Law
Law School, College of Business and Law, Adelaide
University**

**Australasian Law Academics Association Conference 2026,
Melbourne Law School
University of Melbourne
1-3 July**

**Core
message**



- Reflective practice is not just taught
- It must be lived in our teaching

**My
approach**



- Two dimensions:
 - My own reflective practice
 - Modelling reflection for students

**My lived
experience**



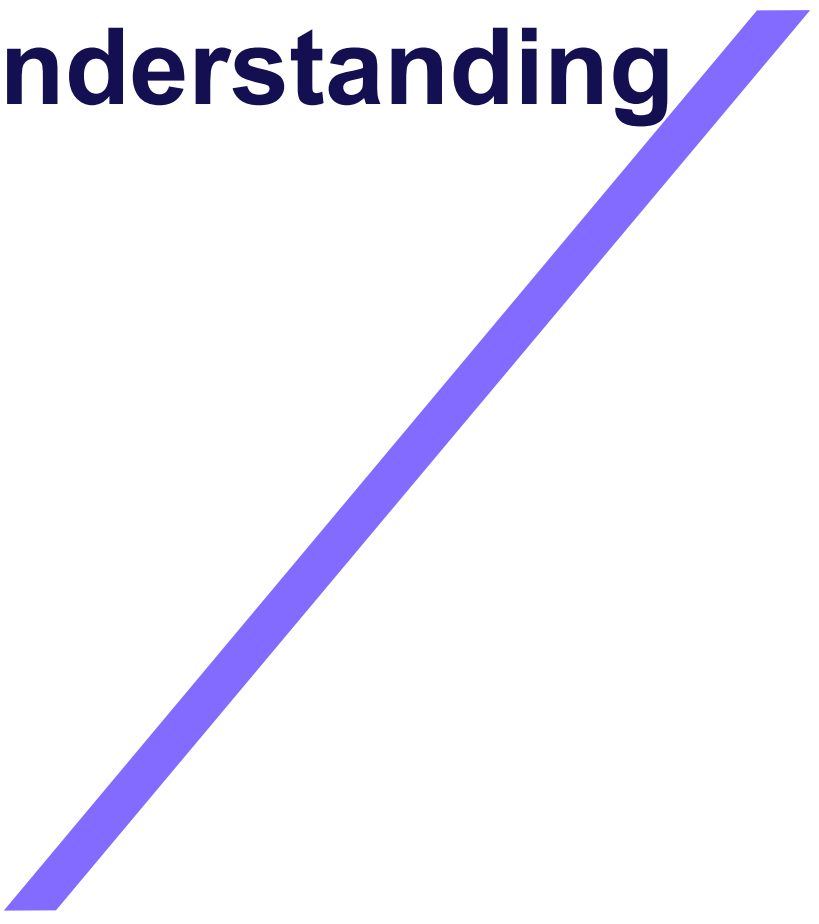
- Reflective journalling – action research
- Clinical legal education:
 - Legal Advice Clinic
 - Law Professional Placement
- Shapes my teaching – holistic and integrated

Starting Point



- Reflection often seen as:
 - An add on
 - A skill for students only
- But this has limited impact

Shift in
understanding



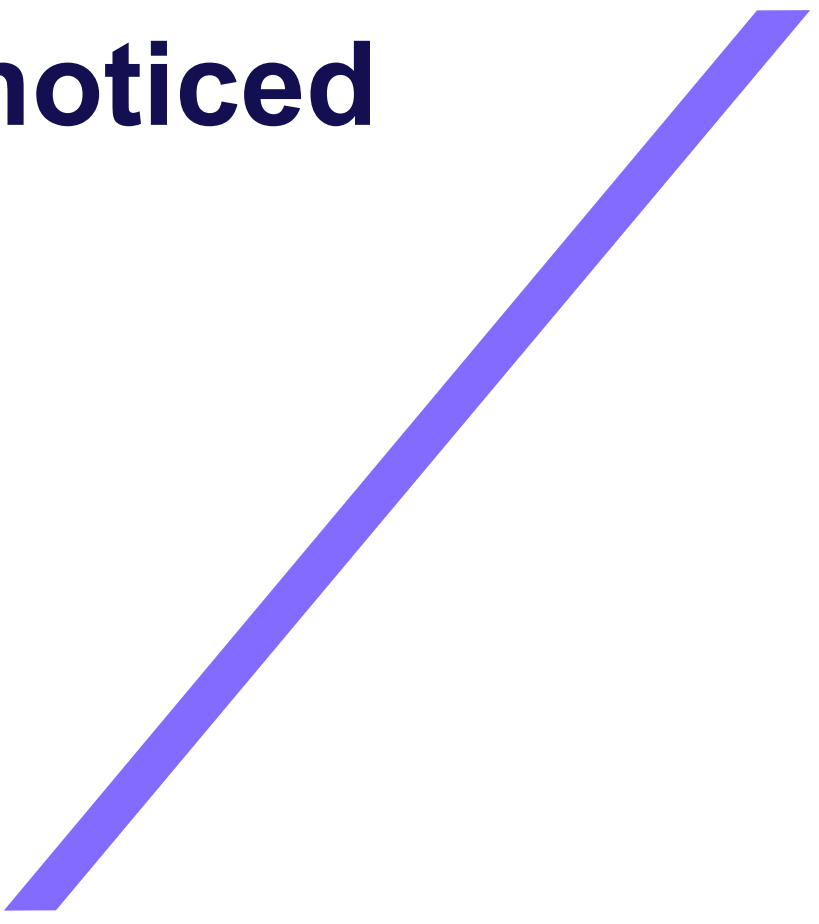
- Through practice, reflection becomes:
 - Ongoing
 - Intentional
 - Central

**What
changed**



- Reflection became:
 - Practical
 - Visible
 - Transformative
- It shaped how I teach

**What I
noticed**



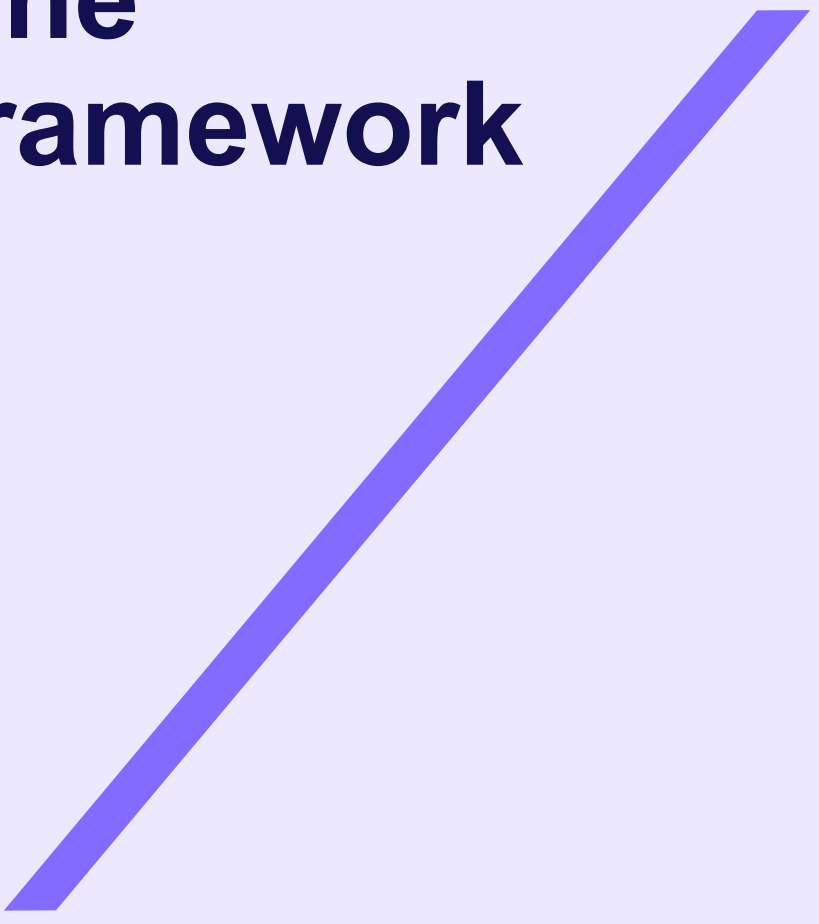
- Patterns in:
 - Participation
 - Valued reasoning
 - Responses to challenges
- Teaching is not neutral

Reflective practice



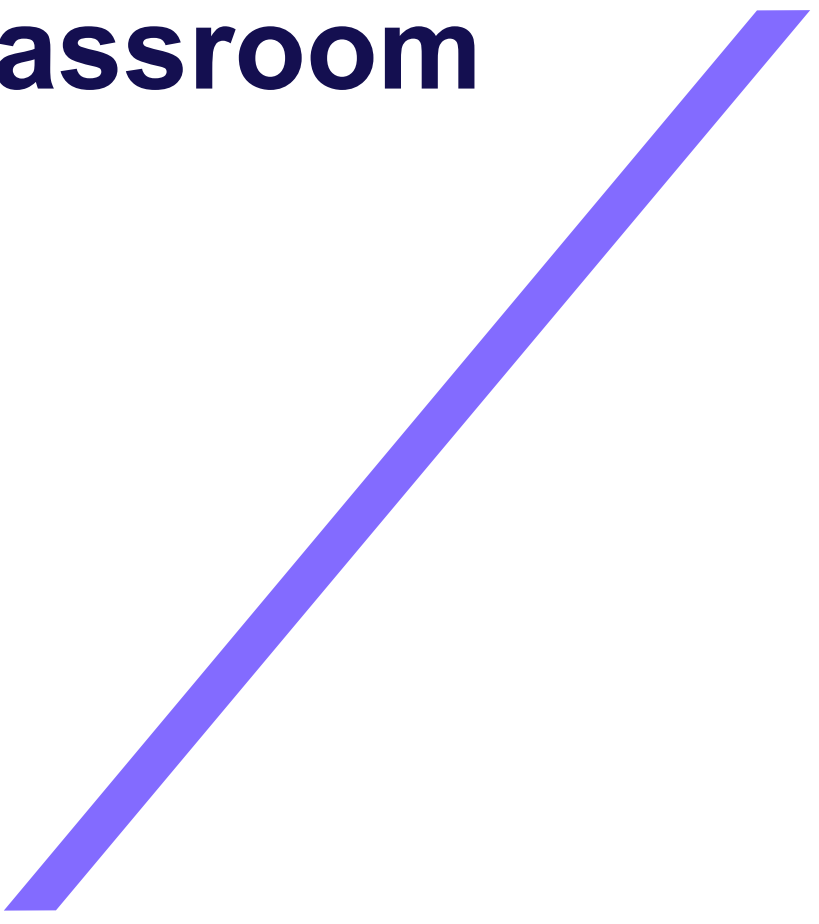
- Reflection shapes professional identity
- Requires critical examination of beliefs and assumptions
- Must be visible in teaching
- *Students learn reflection by seeing it – Susan Brooks*

The framework



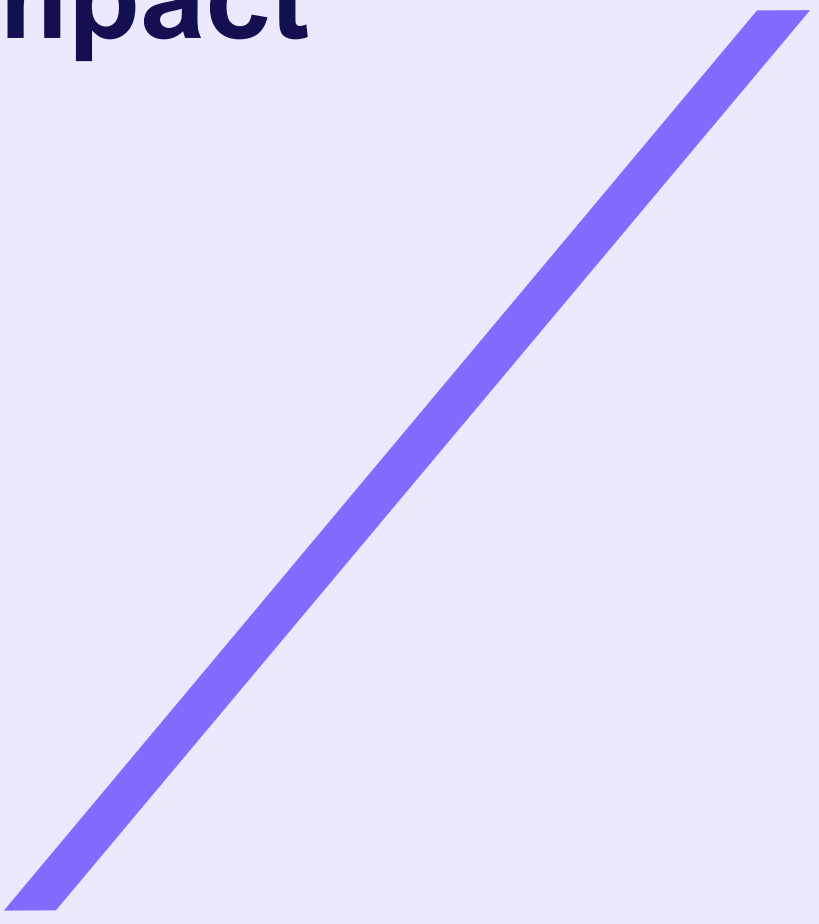
- Leering's three dimensions:
 - Reflection on practice
 - Critical reflection
 - Self reflection
- Holistic approach

**In the
classroom**



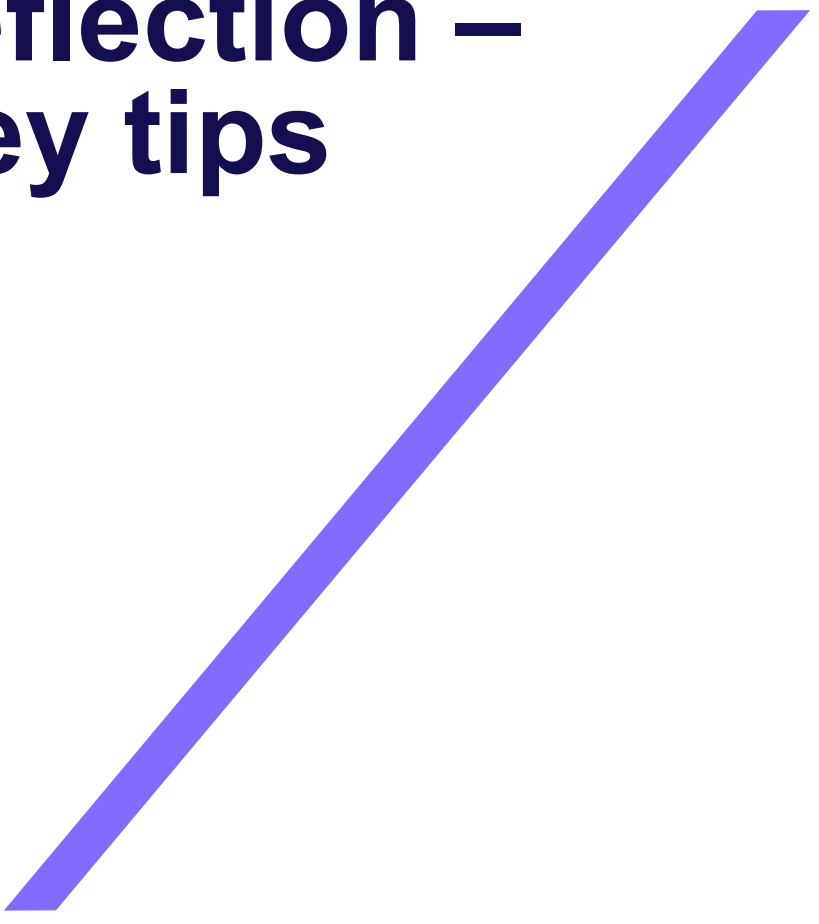
- Modelling reflection
- Working *with* students
- Supporting professional identity development
- Students engage differently

Impact



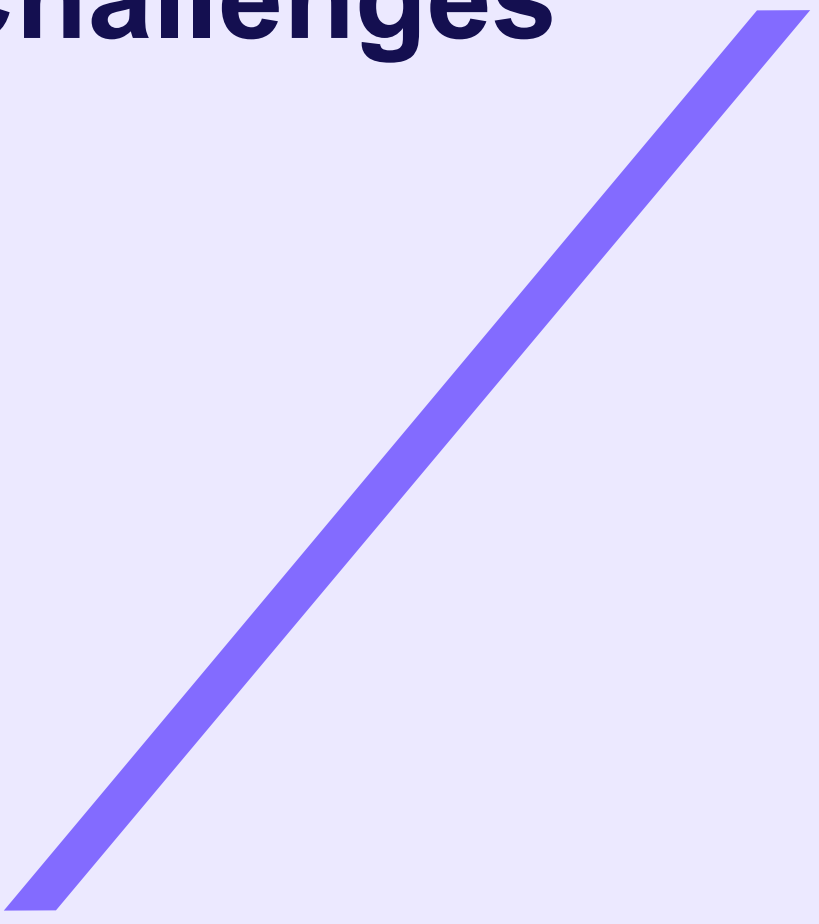
- Students become more:
 - Self-aware
 - Confident
 - Client-centred practitioners
- Not just learning law-questioning *what sort of lawyer they want to be?*

Teaching reflection – key tips



- Teach and guide reflection explicitly
- Use clear prompts
- Encourage deeper thinking (not just description)
- Provide and encourage regular practice
- Model and support throughout

Challenges



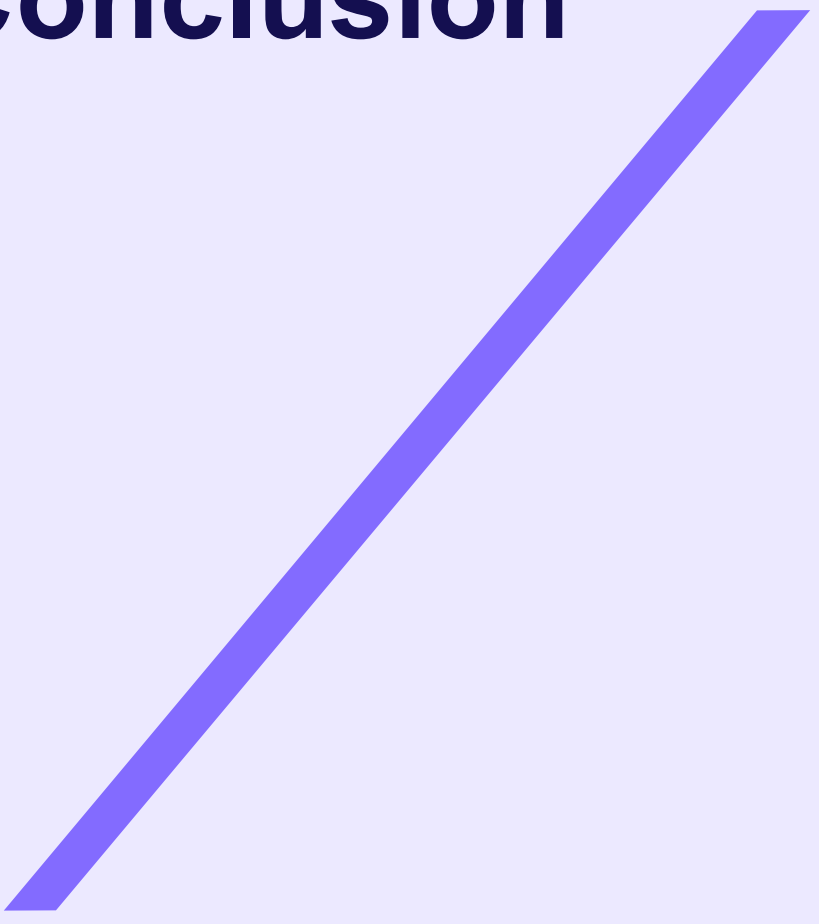
- Time pressure in already full law curricula
- Student discomfort with uncertainty and ambiguity
- Difficulty assessing reflection meaningfully
- Tension between structure and authenticity

Key

Takeaway

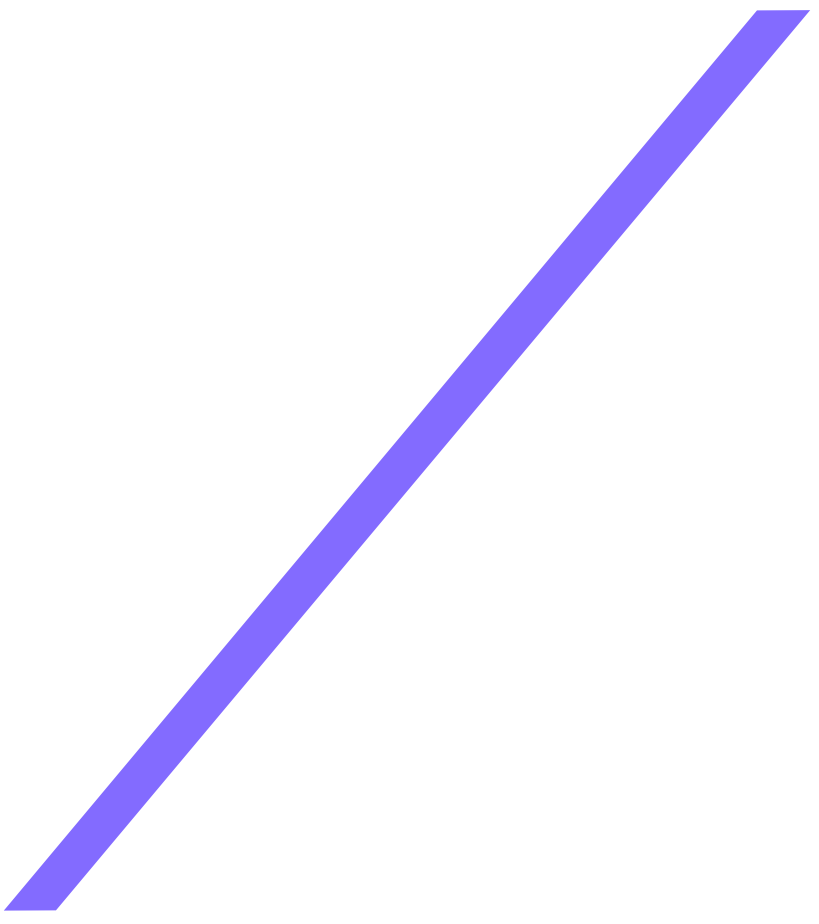
- Reflection must be integrated in our teaching practices
- It must be visible in how we teach
- Not just something we encourage
- *We must do*

Conclusion



- Reflective practice is a practical, transformative teaching approach
- Shapes teaching, learning design, and student engagement
- It is both personal and relational
- Supports students in becoming reflective practitioners
- *Must be central to teaching not an add on*

Publications



- Zito, P. “When *Less* Groupwork Assessment is *More*: Capturing Students’ Diverse Funds of Knowledge in an Ultimate Year Law Course,” *The Law Teacher* – forthcoming 2026
- Zito, P. “Reflection as Formation: Ethics, Professional Identity, and the Clinical Legal Educator,” in Weinberg, J and Fischer Doherty, K. eds. *The Future of Clinical Legal Education in Australia: New Clinics and Emerging Models* – forthcoming 2027
- Atkinson, M and Zito, P. “Beyond University Walls: Bringing Workplace Professionals into the CLE Classroom,” *The International Journal of Clinical Legal Education* – forthcoming 2026

Becoming and teaching the reflective lawyer

Dr Paula Zito, Senior Lecturer in Law
Law School, College of Business and Law, Adelaide University
LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/drpaulazito

**Australasian Law Academics Association Conference 2026,
Melbourne Law School
University of Melbourne
1-3 July**



Australian University Provider Number PRV14404 / CRICOS Provider Number 04249J