

Student Law Office

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Reflective thinking exercises - Taking stock

This is an exercise in starting to reflect (i.e. consciously evaluate) the Student Law Office experience. You are still in the very early stages – but your thoughts now will be of value when you come to look back on the year as a whole.

Divide into groups of two or three and take 15 minutes to discuss the following. You don't need to agree your answers – use the discussion to bounce ideas off one another.

- **The aspect of the SLO:**
 - That has taken me by surprise
 - That is just what I was expecting
- **“You have to laugh, don't you.”**
 - The worst thing that has happened so far
 - The funniest thing
- **You have been taught various “formal” legal skills (advocacy, conferencing, drafting, negotiation, research etc.)**
 - Which skill do you feel you have performed best so far in the SLO?
 - What skill do you find most challenging in practice?
 - (Difficult question) Is there a “skill” that you haven't been taught on the LLB that you find you are having to use in the SLO?

[Quote from Neumann, paraphrasing Donald Schon, the originator of the concept of the “reflective practitioner”: *Effective lawyers do not practice law. They solve problems, using law as one among many professional tools. “Thinking like a lawyer is not the same thing as solving problems like a professional.” “Thinking like a lawyer” is a label used by doctrinal teachers for a collection of textual interpretation skills and heightened forms of scepticism. Although these are certainly useful in professional life, they are only part of the mental processes needed to solve professional problems.*]

For next week, come prepared to discuss any one of the following in relation to the SLO or the degree as a whole:

- *The life of law is not logic but experience:* Oliver Wendell Holmes

- *We have discovered in our teaching of the law that general propositions are empty. We have discovered that students who come eager to learn the rules and who do learn them, and who learn nothing more, will take away the shell and not the substance. We have discovered that rules alone, mere forms of words, are worthless: Karl Llewellyn.*
- *"I have always been able to concern myself with public affairs without moving the length of my nail from myself The mayor and Montaigne have always been two, with a very clear separation. For all of being a lawyer or a financier, we must not ignore the knavery there is in such callings. An honest man is not accountable for the vice or stupidity of his trade, and should not therefore refuse to practice it." Michel de Montaigne "Of Husbanding Your Will,"*