



Law Society
of Scotland

Tech in the LLB roundtable April 2021



This is a summary of a virtual roundtable discussion with representatives from LLB providers, legal firms and members of the LawscotTech Advisory Board. The purpose of the roundtable was to explore how technology is included within the law degree right now and what the plans are for the future and how the LawscotTech programme may be able to facilitate this area.

Main question

Law firms' feedback is often that newly qualified solicitors need to know more about tech. But what do firms actually mean by tech; is it the operational technology that firms use – everything from Office to practice management system, e-discovery and research tools, or is it a deeper strategic understanding of law and tech?

Key points:

- It is not realistic or practical for the LLB to consider specific operational tech as this is so varied with firms but it's useful if students understand that various tools exist. Using research tools may be a good introduction and understanding why these tools are used would be important too.
- It is important to introduce concepts such as project management, systems thinking and solution design which all relate to technology to encourage this way of thinking. It may be too early to do this during the LLB but equally the Diploma is only 26 weeks and only so much can be covered in this time. Honours courses and/or DPLP electives may be useful in this regard. Some universities are offering degrees such as LLB and Computing Science. Please see [Professor Auchie's article](#) in the Journal Magazine on transactional learning for further insight on this.
- Certain areas such as contract law are fundamental if a student is to specialise in legal technology. An understanding of supply chain is also important.
- A big consideration for Law Schools is to decide what learning fits where: LLB/LLM/Diploma. One approach is to focus LLB on the basics of law and technology and how the two disciplines relate to each other to create a foundation. More focused legal technology comes in at the Diploma or LLM stage. Whilst the LLM may be the best place for such learning only a small minority of solicitors undertake such.
- At some Law Schools legal tech is included in the first-year core module, Public law, and Legal Systems so that all LLBs start to develop an awareness of its uses and applications early. An understanding of law and technology may be taught pervasively (e.g. within Contract Law). The Society recently updated both the Foundation Programme (LLB) and PEAT 1 (DPLP) learning outcomes. This has placed a greater emphasis on technological awareness during these stages. Each university must meet these outcomes and, as well as doing so, they are specialising law and technology content within their courses.
- Universities need to work in partnership with the profession and be responsive to the needs of practitioners to create the lawyers of the future. There are examples of universities working with law firms and tech start-ups delivering hackathons and workshops. Other examples include the development of student societies focusing on Law and Technology and

universities creating collaborative communities with start-ups, law firms, and other local businesses.

- All but one of the LLB providers runs a law clinic. One provider offers a clinical LLB. Law clinics allow students to offer advice and assistance to clients. It was noted that clinical programmes could be utilised to give students hands-on experience of some of the technologies that they may face in practice (e.g. document management systems, case management systems etc).
- Technology is having a massive impact on criminal law. Many crimes now have a digital or technological element. Examples were given where it is difficult for the law to keep up with cases. Digital evidence is now written into the LLB Outcomes.
- IP law can be a useful area to get an understanding of technology and its impact. There is enough precedent in this area to provide students with useful context.
- It can be challenging to access material on some areas of technology for the LLB.
- Examples were given of where technology is taught e.g. at one university legal technology is covered as part of Commercial Awareness and focuses on the use/potential/risks of using Artificial Intelligence in legal practice. Another noted that there was a focus on technology in their employability course.
- An overview was given that there was a difference between legal technology which likely sat better in DPLP and the law and technology which likely sat better in the LLB.
- Technology may help some elements of the law become more relevant for younger people. Examples were given about complex legal problems arising from the increased importance of technology in client's daily lives. It was thought that sometimes examples such as driverless cars or the copyright of YouTube videos may be more obviously relevant than certain historical cases.

Thank you to everyone who participated

Sarah Arnell, Robert Gordon University
David Christie, Robert Gordon University
Seonaid Stevenson, Glasgow Caledonian University
Callum Murray, Amicus
Lynsey Walker, Addleshaw Goddard
Sam Moore, Burness Paull
Alan Stuart, Stuart & Co
Alan Moffat, Ampersand Advocates
Rossana Ducato, Aberdeen University

Niamh Nic Daied, Dundee University
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