“It is important to back up the legal theory with recent and relevant cases so students can appreciate the relevance to their work.”

Joanne Mackay and Paul Ryan

School of Business

Property Law and Business Law in the Conveyancing program

Conveyancing students are part time experienced practitioners in the legal and conveyancing field, along with others looking for a career change. Many students have not studied since attending secondary school and often this was many years before. It is important to establish a rapport with the student cohort to support their return to study as mature age students, and grasp the legal analytical style. The student teacher relationship is paramount – being approachable is vital, as is recognising different personalities and learning styles in a large classroom.

The challenge is to engage this group while introducing legal reasoning, property law theory, the legal system and requirements of small businesses. The advantage is students are motivated to learn something new and understand the law behind their existing work. They apply the legislation and cases to the problems in their conveyancing files or scenarios proposed in class. Often they are amazed to discover the rules behind the procedures they engage in everyday, as well as mastering legal research skills useful for their future.

It is important to back up the legal theory with recent and relevant cases so students can appreciate the relevance to their work. Discussion of real file stories helps to improve their professionalism. Encouraging those working in the field to discuss their problem files and procedures also helps everyone in the classroom. Sharing of information and establishing networks are a great bonus to these students, although usually not part of their expectations of the program. Such discussions assist confidence building and presentation skills. Conversely, perception is required to be aware of students whose confidence drops as a result of engaging with experienced fellow students. Demonstrating understanding of their work practices and their client cohort builds mutual respect and empathy. Engaging with them while delivering theory and facilitating practice stories, works better than being a remote fountain of knowledge.

Adapting business law concepts to the world of conveyancing is more comprehensible than delivering a generic introductory law course, eg. choosing conveyancing legislation and cases to teach statutory interpretation and precedent.

As well as the interpersonal skills required, keep students abreast of changes in the law and allow them to practise what we preach. Simple things such as a:-

- topic quizzes online and reflections after class
- consideration and updating of conveyancing precedents
- quick email summary to all students of recent cases after a conference
- detailed analysis and application of a relevant case
- summary of new documentation introduced to practice
- practical application of the law at an auction.