Simulation and Experiential Learning in Law:

Student Client Interviewing

**STUDENT CLIENT INTERVIEWING**

Student participation in client interviewing helps to develop the graduate attributes of academic literacy, research literacy, and critical self-awareness and personal literacy. Students in the law department have the opportunity to develop the skills of client interviewing by taking the Communication Skills for Lawyers module as part of the undergraduate curriculum. They also have the opportunity to develop the skills of client interviewing in the context of extracurricular activity. Client interviewing activity helps to deepen disciplinary knowledge and understanding, reinforces learners’ engagement with a learning community by mirroring real-world professional practices, and enhances students’ employability and transferable skills.

**COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR LAWYERS**

The undergraduate ‘Communication Skills for Lawyers’ module is concerned with communication skills in the context of client interviewing and advocacy. The course involves the use of DVD recording, analysis and reflection upon learning. Weekly small group workshops establish an effective and supportive community of learning, and allow students to develop their oral skills and receive feedback through a combination of self-assessment, peer assessment and tutor-led assessment. Assessment includes a client interviewing exercise in the context of a fictional case study.

**Student Feedback on Communication Skills for Lawyers**

‘Without doubt one of the best learning experiences ever. The best module that Brookes has to offer.’

‘Brilliant, useful skills that can be used in all departments or walks of life.’

‘Overall the module was hugely beneficial. I think it will be of use regardless of whether we pursue legal careers or not.’

‘The subject matter of the module was really fascinating. So useful seeing a more practical side of law’;

‘The only real opportunity in the course to gain practical experience.’

‘Law needs as much practical skills exposure as possible. It is not something that any other module provides.’

‘The only module I’ve done whereby I can test my knowledge in real life situations.’

‘Found it very useful watching, criticising and learning from other students. Feedback each week helped to progress and improve.’

‘The workshops were incredibly useful as by the end of them everyone’s confidence was greatly improved.’

‘I really enjoyed this module. I found it challenging but also very useful … it has given me confidence to present…’

‘I would feel far more confident conducting a client interview having undertaken this module.’

‘This course was one of my favourites, nerve wracking as it was. I really enjoyed it.’

‘Huge amount of transferable skills … a great experience.’

**CLIENT INTERVIEWING COMPETITIONS**

All Brookes law students also have the opportunity to participate in the Oxford Brookes University Client Interviewing Competition, with the winners representing the University in the National Client Interviewing Competition for England and Wales. The competitions involve students in teams of two interviewing and advising a client about a fictitious legal problem. In the National Competition students are observed by panels of three judges, each consisting of one ‘academic’, one ‘practitioner’ and one ‘counsellor’. In 2009 and 2011 Brookes students achieved third place in the National Final. In 2010 Brookes students won the National Final and represented England and Wales in the International Final in Hong Kong, where they came second in the world.

**STUDENT FEEDBACK ON CLIENT INTERVIEWING COMPETITIONS**

‘The Client Interviewing Competition is a wonderful learning tool as it provides a bridge between the academic study of law and the practical aspects of a career in law. As students, having the opportunity and support necessary to enter such a competition has enhanced our learning experience.’