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# Student Law

## **If you fancy a global legal career then get a language and learn cross-border law**

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Published at 12:01AM, October 15 2015

Demand is growing for a new generation of transnational lawyers able to work within and across jurisdictions.

The International Bar Association (IBA) is keen to promote cross-border legal education as foreign laws and international law increasingly influence traditionally domestic practice areas, such as trusts, family and environmental law.

The association invited leading figures from the legal and academic worlds to its first Academics Forum in Vienna, Austria, to discuss trends in transnational legal education and the role of universities, law firms and the IBA in educating international legal practitioners.

Applications are also still open for the 12-week LawWithoutWalls (LWOW) programme, invites students from around the world to solve problems, via a virtual platform, through the prism of their very different perspectives on access to justice.

Now in its sixth year, LWOW brings together academics, lawyers, arbitrators, venture capitalists, entrepreneurs, regulators, judges and technologists to create a global, transdisciplinary think tank around technology, innovation, and law. Last year, the programme worked with 100 students from 30 law and business schools, including 18 LLM students from University College London (UCL).

A non-profit organisation, it welcomes applications from non-participating law schools but it can only offer a limited amount of scholarships. Students wanting to join the LWOW Original programme would have to fund their travel to the two-day KickOff session at the IE University in Madrid in January and the final ConPosium at Miami University in April. However, the LWOW X programme is entirely virtual.

Anna Donovan, a former M&A lawyer and now lecturer in company law at UCL, is one of LWOW's mentors. A student on its inaugural course, she now runs the programme for UCL. "Students love it because it is a break from traditional learning and gives them an opportunity to be creative," she says.

“They learn fantastic soft skills such as organising international meetings and being culturally sensitive while building an international network that will last for life. I see a huge difference in their confidence, their team working, how they look at problems. It also challenges their perspective on the role of a lawyer and opens their eyes to the more entrepreneurial activities open to them.”

Sarah Hutchinson, who co-chairs the IBA’s academic and professional development committee, says there is an increasing trend for students and lawyers to seek dual-qualification so they can practice in more than one jurisdiction. “The natural progression,” she says, “is that undergraduate law schools will need to broaden their curriculums to prepare law students for the increasingly international nature of legal practice.”

She flags up innovative examples of transnational legal education including the LLB Honours law degree offered at Middlesex University’s campuses in Dubai and Mauritius, both civil code countries, and the four-year dual civil and common law LLB taught in English at Spain’s IE University.

Nottingham Law School entered into a partnership with Radboud University in the Netherlands last year, offering a dual LLM programme in corporate, insolvency and European law and an LLB/LLM in European law where students spend two years studying in Nottingham and their final year at Radboud, gaining a qualifying law degree and a master’s over the three years.

Stephen Denyer, head of City and international at the Law Society, is a member of the IBA’s management board. “Understanding the fundamental principles of both the common and the civil law codes so you aren’t caught out by how things may play out differently will become a requirement for the lawyer of the future,” he says. “Most countries now have a very tight employment market for young lawyers and most recruiters give credit to the level of people’s comparative law knowledge as well as their linguistic and cultural skills.”

IBA officers Tony King and Kathryn Rousin, who have extensive experience of the UK graduate recruitment market, are chairing sessions at the Vienna Forum.

“If I were advising a student with aspirations to work internationally,” King says, “I would say get a good English law background but also learn about the headline differences between key jurisdictions through a comparative law course. Take every opportunity to develop language skills and study and work abroad. It is hard when you are 18 and don’t know which firm or specialism you want to work in but start laying the foundations from the start so you develop an international vision.”

Rousin agrees: “Employers are looking for aptitude and a global mindset.” What is needed, she says, is more dialogue between academia and the profession. “My sense is the profession feels

people coming through law schools are not necessarily that well equipped for the practicalities of legal practice, so both sides need to look at what can be done to bring it to life and expose students to more commercial thinking.”

It was that need for lawyers to have a commercial and an international outlook that was behind Eversheds’s decision to be LWOW’s global law firm partner. James Batham, head of the Eversheds innovation team, says: “LWOW is a unique programme that pairs some of our young lawyers with a client to mentor a group of international students from the top law schools around the world.”

The idea is to pitch a legal business start-up plan to a panel of venture capitalists, academics and practitioners. “It’s a win-win opportunity for everyone involved,” he says, “because everyone works collaboratively in international teams across countries, time zones and languages, harnessing the most up-to-date technologies. But more than this, they learn to be commercial and to think like a client not a lawyer.”

The programme gives students “unequaled” access to the top legal and business brains in the world, he says. “We are passionate about nurturing talent and about building the lawyers of the future to be more rounded individuals with core commercial skills — not just for our own talent pool, but to benefit the whole legal sector. LWOW is the future of law.”

**LWOW applications close October 30. For info contact associate director Erika Pagano at [erika@lwow.org](mailto:erika@lwow.org)**