



MEET YOUR DEEN – THE PERSON BEHIND THE PROGRAMME

Host: Sultan Hassan

Guest: Patricia McKellar

Transcript: Podcast - Episode 1

Sultan Hassan (Host):

Thank you for joining us. Law in Real Life is a podcast series from Undergraduate Laws at the University of London, exploring what studying law looks like beyond textbooks, exams and courtrooms. Law does not exist in a bubble. It shapes societies, shows up in everyday life, and opens up far more paths than we often expect.

This series brings legal study into real-world focus through honest conversations with people who use their legal knowledge in all kinds of ways. Across the episodes, you will hear from academics, alumni, professionals, current students, and partners from recognised teaching centres. Everyone has a personal connection to Undergraduate Laws, and each guest brings their own experiences, from careers and social impact to personal growth along the way.

Whether you are thinking about studying law, already part of the Undergraduate Laws community, or simply curious about where a law degree with us can take you, this podcast is here to show the human side of legal education: the people, the possibilities, and the real-life impact of studying law at a distance.

I am your host, Sultan Hassan, Laws Student Engagement and Support Officer, and I am so excited to welcome you to our very first episode of Law in Real Life.

I am delighted to be joined by Patricia McKellar, Dean for Undergraduate Laws at the University of London. Together, we will be exploring what law in real life really means for our students and some of the exciting developments shaping their learning experience.

Before we dive in, I would love to start by hearing directly from Patricia's perspective. Whether you are studying by distance learning or in person at one of our recognised teaching centres, it is not every day you get to hear from the person who oversees Undergraduate Laws and whose vision helps shape your journey. Patricia leads an incredible, diverse global community of undergraduate law students, many of whom may never meet her in person, but whose experience is deeply influenced by the work and direction she leads.

So, I would like to begin right at the heart of the student experience. Patricia, a very warm welcome. Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule. Now, when you think about the core experience every undergraduate law student should have, what matters most to you?

Patricia Mckeelar (Guest):

Thank you, Sultan. Yes, well, what matters most to me is that we are delivering a law degree of the highest quality, and one which is valued by employers in the global market. Our programme has been delivered since the 1890s, so we are over 120 years old. The current student numbers are around about 14,000 students, and we have students in maybe over 100 countries, so I think we must be doing something right. We have a long and proud tradition of delivering law in the world.

Now, of course, one of the reasons that students come to us is because of the up-to-date and relevant content which we provide within our curriculum. We have lots of choices of modules which students can study, and we also have a range of pathways which students can follow. For instance, they might wish to study more international law, they might wish to study more commercial law, and they might wish to go down perhaps a more jurisprudential route. So, there are choices that students can make which will give them different paths through the programme, but we also provide a huge amount of student support as well, and I think this sets us apart from other programmes.

We do this either through our virtual learning environment and also through our Student Experience Team. Our students will certainly find this once they go on to our virtual learning environment, where they will see all the support that is offered. We also, in terms of our quality, have a very robust and secure assessment process as well. This is very important to us because we do want our degree to be seen as one which is valued, so that our students have a high-quality degree in order to go out into the marketplace and are effectively employment ready.

One other thing that really matters to me also is the accessibility of our programme. I really want everyone who is capable of completing this programme to be able to take this programme, especially those who perhaps have not had the same life chances in education, which we know occurs throughout the world in terms of secondary education. I want them, if they are capable, to be able to take our programme and complete it. So that is again one of my core issues and I think it matters to me.

Sultan:

We have heard what you value most in the foundation of the programme. You have spoken about the variety of the modules that you offer, the secure assessment processes, and the accessibility. But legal education does not stand still, and nor does the world our students are preparing to enter. The past few years have brought major shifts in technology, teaching, and the profession itself. With that in mind, I would like to explore where the programme is heading. How do you hope that the undergraduate law experience will evolve over the next few years?

Patricia:

Well, you know, one of the things we have to make sure is that our content is employment ready as well. Effectively, we have to make sure that we are covering in our modules areas of law which the students will need when they go out into practice. So we are always on the lookout, we are always researching what new modules we will have to deliver for students to make sure that they are employment ready. So, for instance, this year we have introduced a new module in Alternative Dispute Resolution, ADR. We are all aware that in many countries in the world the courts are getting completely clogged up and are looking for different ways to resolve disputes. Alternative Dispute Resolution is one way of doing this. So, we are again making our students ready to go out into the marketplace with those qualifications.

We are also looking more, in terms of the future, at more kind of business-focused content. Again, our students are going to go out and hopefully many of them will be practising law, and we want them to be business ready effectively. We are hoping to introduce a module which will help students understand business structures, perhaps employment law, and also areas of digital law as well. We all know how AI is pervading our lives at the moment, and digital literacy also is so important for us as we go into the workplace. So, these areas will be covered, I am hoping, in the future in some more modules.

The other area of interest for us is local content. We deliver an English law degree, so effectively students are studying English law, but we know that we are delivering this in many different countries. What we are looking at now is seeing what kind of local content we are going to be able

to provide for students who are studying our programme. Currently we are doing this through micro-credentials, and micro-credentials are additional qualifications which students can study while they are doing their law degree, which are certified by the University of London, and the certificate is granted for those micro-credentials.

One of the micro-credentials we have just launched is an Introduction to Pakistani law that was launched in September 2025, and students are now enrolling for that micro-credential. Now, hopefully that is something we can expand in future as we go through, and that is again an evolution of the programme. We are also looking at more flexibility for students as well, to allow them to study at their own pace. For instance, some of the changes we have introduced this year, which I think will be very helpful for students, are that there will be two study years, one starting in November and one starting in May. The students will be able to sit the same number of exams regardless of when they study on the programme, and that has been a change from previous years. We are always looking to make that more flexible for students so that it fits in with their lifestyles.

Sultan:

Thank you so much. You have really touched on programme development. Part of that development is preparing students for a rapidly changing legal environment. You have talked about getting them employment ready, the new module for ADR, becoming more digital, the new technologies, and the new client expectations. For example, with the Introduction to Pakistani law and the new global challenges transforming what it means to be in the legal profession, what new skills or experiences do you

feel future law students will really need the most, and how are we working towards that?

Patricia:

You know, I think the skills that students acquire while they are going through our programme are extremely important. Obviously we provide the legal content a student requires to know, but it is those skills which will actually take them just to a kind of higher level. Those are things like skills of application, skills of analysis, problem-solving skills, communication skills, and particularly critical thinking skills and critical reading skills. These are the types of things which students will practice as they go through our programme and which will really set them up for practice.

But of course, in this world that we live in now, we have to look more towards digital skills as well, digital literacy skills that I mentioned earlier, and indeed AI literacy, because this is going to pervade every aspect of our lives. I think one of the most important things that students have to know in terms of AI literacy is how to ask the right question. That is something which we really work on with our students to make sure that they are able to analyse a particular situation, ask the right question, and make sure they are able to apply the law to their answer. That will go a huge way to help them understand the way that AI is going to infiltrate every aspect of their law.

Now, you also have a Skills Hub in the programme as well, which has been developed by the university. It is a whole range of wonderful skills and practice activities to help students acquire those skills, and that is something which is available to all students who undertake our programme. I just pause a little there because, of course, there are also professional legal skills as well which are important for our students too. I have been talking up to now perhaps more about general skills which are important, but the professional legal skills are really important too.

Again, in terms of the micro-credentials here, we have introduced recently a mediation skills micro-credential which students can undertake with the LLB programme. They can do this additional qualification, and we are planning a range of professional legal skills as we go forward. The next one we are looking at is client interviewing skills. There will be other skills we will cover as well, for instance advocacy skills and advanced research skills. So those are ones to look out for in the

future, which will certainly advance our students' knowledge of skills to take them out into the profession.

Sultan:

We have explored the heart of the undergraduate law experience, the changes on the horizon, and the skills that will really shape the next generation of lawyers. So, before we wrap up, I would like to bring it back to the students listening right now, those kind of navigating through their studies day by day, balancing commitments, and looking for ways to make the most of everything that the programme offers. What is one thing students can do today to get the most from their law degree and stand out in the legal world?

Patricia:

Yes, you are right. We give the students a huge amount of information on the virtual learning environment. There is one place in the virtual learning environment which I think is visited least, and that is the further reading. This is where I think students can really stand out. Students think, I will just do what I have got to do, get through that, and that is it. But actually, to get a full picture of a topic or a subject, that further reading will just widen your knowledge and give you that kind of extra boost to your understanding.

That can make a huge difference to you in your exam. There is no doubt about that, but it can also make a huge difference when you go into the profession. If you have got that wide background to what you have been studying, it will undoubtedly help you as you go forward in the profession.

Sultan:

Thank you, Patricia, for sharing your insights and for giving our students a clearer picture of both where the programme is today and where it's headed.

Patricia:

Thanks, Sultan, for having me on the podcast. I think this is a wonderful new venture for UG Laws, and I am actually really looking forward to hearing the future podcasts and all the exciting guests that you are going to be interviewing in future. So, thanks very much for this initiative.

Sultan:

And to all our listeners, thank you for joining us. We hope today's conversation helps you feel more connected to your studies and excited about the opportunities ahead. This is Law in Real Life. Until next time, keep exploring the law beyond the textbook.