

# The Trials of Studying Law: A Collaborative Project to Scaffold First Year Law Students' Transition to University

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# Academic Skills at KCL – the (brief) back story

REVIEW OF  
INSESSIONAL AND  
ACADEMIC SKILLS  
PROVISION AT KCL  
DURING 2023

AMALGAMATION OF  
INSESSIONAL AND  
ACADEMIC SKILLS  
TEAMS

GREATER VISIBILITY  
ACROSS THE  
INSTITUTION

# What we know about Law

Law had highest correlation between overall satisfaction and academic support of all KCL faculties (NSS and PTES data 2023)

Previously little interaction with faculty and no academics engaged in promoting academic literacy/ skills development

Lack of awareness in faculty on how to support students

# What the transition sessions needed to achieve

Compliment	Level	Deliver
Compliment the Legal Skills module	Level the playing field	Deliver bespoke and meaningful content

# The students

Come from diverse backgrounds and different educational contexts

Imposter syndrome & identity crisis

Workload & burn out

Move from level 4 to level 6

# Context

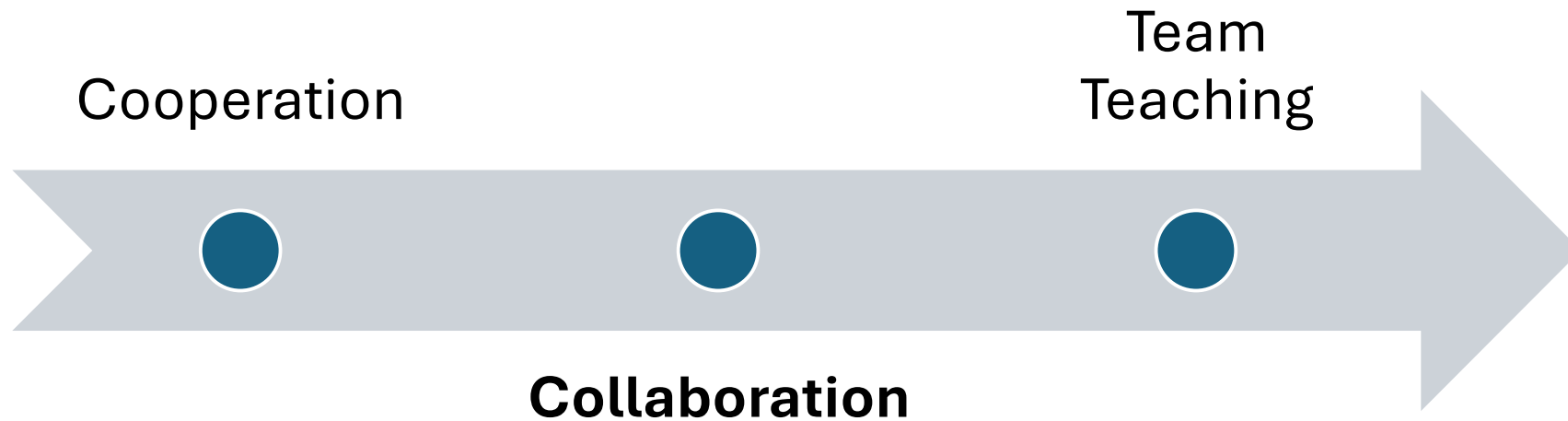
The 1<sup>st</sup> year of the LLB at King's has 4 compulsory credit-bearing modules and 1 compulsory non-credit bearing module: **Legal Reasoning and Legal Skills**

The aim of this module is to introduce you to the teaching methods and expectations applicable to higher legal education and to the legal study skills you will need to successfully study law as an academic discipline. The module offers you the opportunity to develop and practice key skills, including transferable skills and methods of reasoning to ensure that you reach your fullest potential whilst studying for a Law degree at King's.

Some of the skills you will develop on the module are doctrinal, such as how to find the authoritative sources of the law, how to read statutes and cases, and how to construct legal arguments. Others relate to legal technique, **assessment** and your **broader law school experience**.

Crucially the module will help you become a successfully **autonomous, critical** and **reflective** learner.

# What does successful collaboration mean to us?



(Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998)

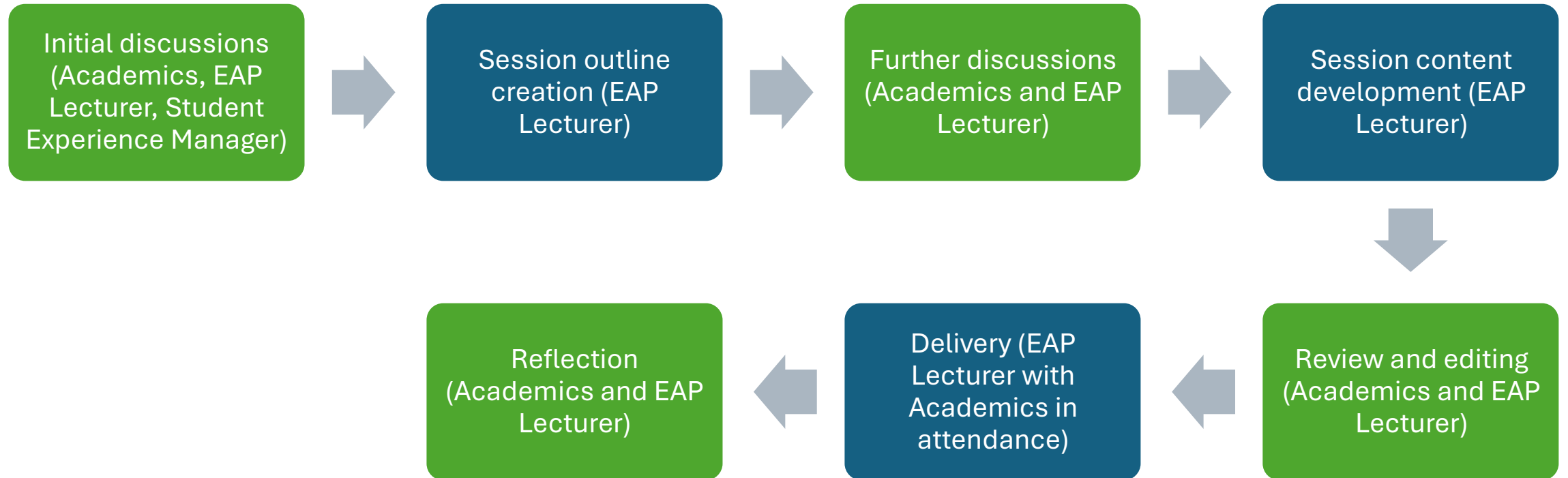
A dynamic collaboration brings together [...] different perspectives to create a richer, more comprehensive perspective than any single one could construct alone.

(Barron, 2003)

Collaboration [...] describes a more equal relationship between participants. Here both parties have input into the creation of materials and course design, yet it is again delivered by the EAP practitioner.

(Tibbetts & Chapman, 2023)

# Our Collaborative Approach



# The workshops

## Getting Started at University

- Welcome week
- Time management and developing autonomy

## Academic Reading and Note-taking

- Week 1
- Approaching academic articles and note-taking methods

## Revision Skills

- Final week of Semester 1
- Revision techniques for formative exams in January

# What worked?

- Two innovative approaches:

## Week in the life

- Illustration of time blocking method or 'unscheduling'
- Used a real Y1 Law timetable

## Contract Law concept-map

- Illustration of revision concept-mapping technique
- Created by Contract Law Lecturer

# Timetables: A-levels vs. 1<sup>st</sup> year University

Compare the two timetables. Is the university timetable in line with your expectations? What does it suggest about university study? What are the potential pitfalls for students?

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
09:00 -10:00	History	English	German	Maths	English
10:00 -11:00	History	English	German	Maths	Supervised Study
Break					
11:30 -12:30		Maths	Supervised Study	German	History
Lunch					
13:30 -14:30	Maths	Supervised study	English	History	German
14:30 -15:30	Maths		English	History	German

A sample week from an A-Level student's timetable

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
09:00	Elements of the Law of Contract Lecture	Public Law Lecture	Criminal Law Lecture	European Law Lecture	
10:00					Legal reasoning workshop
11:00					
12:00					
13:00				European Law Tutorial	
14:00		Public Law Tutorial		Criminal Law Tutorial	
15:00					
16:00					Legal Reasoning Lecture
17:00	Contract Law Tutorial				

A sample week from a 1<sup>st</sup> year Law student's timetable

**Lectures, tutorials  
+ preparation and  
reflection time +  
assessments +  
daily life**

**What else would you  
need to add?  
KCLSU clubs/societies?  
Sports activities?  
Part-time job?  
Family responsibilities?  
Social life?**

**What other changes  
might you make?  
E.g. studying early in the  
morning**

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
09:00		Elements of the Law of Contract Lecture	Public Law Lecture	Criminal Law Lecture	European Law Lecture			
10:00	Chores: cleaning, tidying, grocery shopping etc.	Reflect	Reflect	Reflect	Reflect	Legal reasoning workshop		
11:00		LUNCH	Prep for Criminal Law	LUNCH	LUNCH	Public Law formative essay		
12:00		LUNCH	Prep for Public Law	LUNCH	Prep for European Law	European Law Tutorial	LUNCH	
13:00	Prep for Contract Law	Contract Law Tutorial	Public Law Tutorial	Travel home	Criminal Law Tutorial			
14:00			Travel home			Public Law formative essay		
15:00			Prep for Criminal Law	Prep for Criminal Law	Prep for Criminal Law	Legal Reasoning Lecture		
16:00							Travel home + DINNER	Reflect
17:00	DINNER	Travel home + DINNER	DINNER	Prep for European Law	Prep for Legal Reasoning	Travel home + chores		
18:00	Prep for Contract Law	Prep for Public Law	Prep for Criminal Law		Travel home			
19:00					DINNER	DINNER		
20:00								

# Feedback on session 1

Did the session meet your expectations?

4.36 / 5

How useful was the session?

4.42 / 5

"Found the timetable section very useful!"

"the discussions were nice and the timetable information was very useful"

"Some of my personal tutees told me that they still use the time blocking technique and that they've found ways to adapt it to their own needs."

*(Senior Lecturer in Law – 5 months after the session was delivered)*

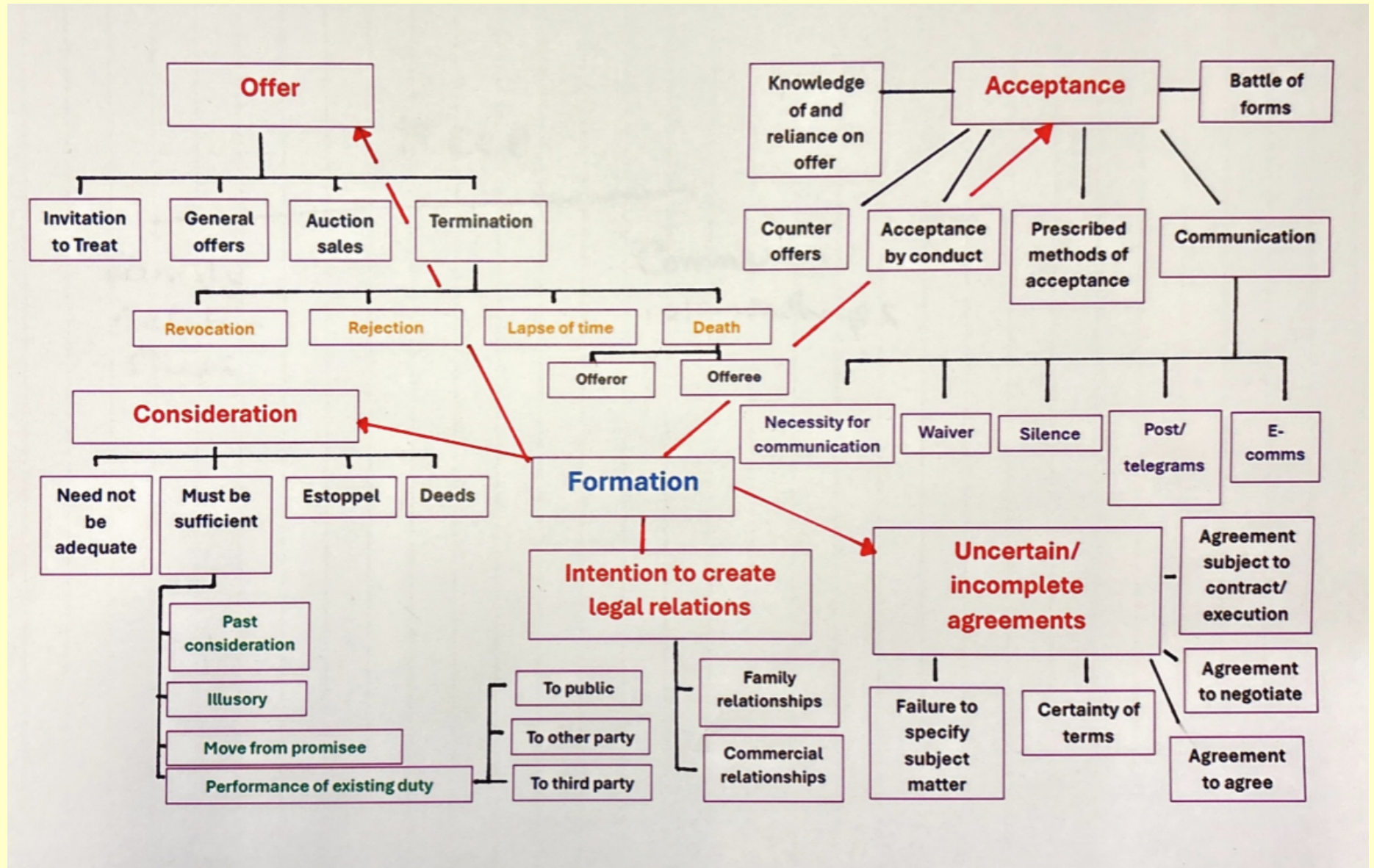
# Identify legal issues: Contract Law

- Making choices about what to study by identifying key topics will kickstart your revision process and will likely help with the identification of legal issues when in the exam.
- In groups, you have 5 minutes to create a **concept (mind) map** of the legal issues you have encountered in **Contract Law** without looking at your notes. Consider where issues may overlap or occur together.



# Michelle's Contract Law Concept Map

- How does your concept map compare? Did you miss anything important?



# Feedback on the revision skills session

What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in this session did you find most affirming and helpful?

17 positive comments about the **concept mapping task** (vs 1 negative)

8 positive comments about **procrastination** (vs 4 negative)

6 positive comments about **use of polls/quizzes/QR codes** (vs 2 negative)

6 positive comments about **discussing with peers**

4 positive comments about **revision plans/schedule** (vs 3 negative)

The interactive parts were great, really made me think.

The planning that was prepared in the presentation that took into account social activities

Mind mapping as a revision technique - sounds useful to have in open book [exam] as well.

The lecturer's mind map examples and showcasing different study techniques

Discussing their own personal experiences with struggles such as procrastination

# What didn't work?

In feedback for all 3 sessions...

- ... we had a comment or two about the content not being Law-specific enough.
- ...some students felt the content was 'obvious' or that they already knew it all.

Session 2 (Academic reading and note-taking) received positive feedback overall:

Expectations: 4.44 / 5  
Usefulness: 4.25 / 5

But we agreed that it felt like the least successful of the sessions.

Student expectations  
Academic reading vs. legal reading

Next year: reframing it and taking a cue from sessions 1 & 3 by creating more context: 'Preparing for your first tutorial (seminar)'.

# What have we learnt?

## **Me, as an EAP practitioner:**

- The needs of Law students
- Taking on board feedback from academics in the process of materials development
- Using the expertise of others but also being clear in my own expertise

## **Ideas that have been reinforced:**

- Students value subject-specificity over generic advice – relevance needs to be clear
- Input from academics legitimises what we say and do
  - Law students are motivated and eager to participate

## **The Law academics:**

- Where our expertise can enhance their own
- How what is simple or obvious to them, may not be so to students
- The value of having core messages reinforced by another voice

# What's next for the LLB Transition project?

## 2024-25

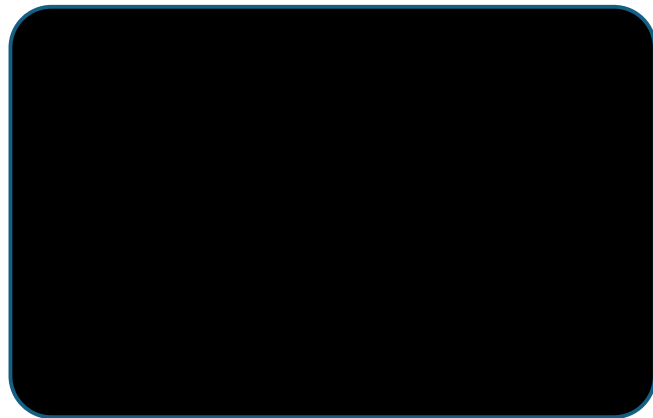
3 sessions:

- Getting started at university
- Academic reading and note-taking
- Revision skills

## 2025-26

- 2 x pre-arrival sessions: 'What it means to be a Law student at King's', 'Reading & writing for Law'
- 2 x welcome week/week 1 sessions: 'Time management' and 'Preparing for your first tutorial (seminar)'
- Revision skills (as 2024-25) + a refresher session in March

# And beyond that?



**First Year Transition Project** with the  
Faculty of Social Science and Public  
Policy and **Integrated Academic  
Literacy project** for Nursing Midwifery  
and Palliative Care

**Evaluation and Impact**

# Thank you

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