

# Implementing Research Based Teaching in an LLM program

Abstract to the conference "RESEARCH IN LEGAL EDUCATION: STATE OF THE ART"

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## Thematic strand

Legal education scholarship and the nexus between teaching and research

## Abstract

Research-based teaching is high on the agenda of university education development in many disciplines. In legal education, this approach can address some of the challenges that lawyers increasingly experience in the Danish labour market (Madsen 2008; Hammerslev 2010; Hammerslev 2011), but are comparable to challenges faced by lawyers in other countries (Dezalay & Garth 2004) and by graduates of other disciplines.

These changes challenge traditional legal education, and law school curricula are in close competition with business law and political sciences programs. This need for adjustment of legal education is also voiced by employer organizations. They express their wish for graduates with

thorough academic competences, better innovation skills, the ability to think and work interdisciplinarily, and a better understanding of how the law is used to solve complex, “real life” problems (Det Juridiske Fakultets Aftagerpanel 2013; jf. Det Juridiske Fakultets Aftagerpanel 2016; 2017). In short, employers follow a sentiment already formulated in 1950 by the American legal philosopher Lon Fuller (1950, p 36): “[w]hatever it is we want the student to get, it is something more durable, more versatile and muscular, than a mere knowledge of rules of law.” In order to address these challenges and demands, the course design follows a problem oriented, research based approach. By this we mean that students learn to research by conducting their own research projects under the supervision of researchers (Healey & Jenkins 2009, p 8), and the researched problems being complex problems lawyers are dealing with in practice.

The paper presents the course design and its pedagogical underpinnings that address these issues. The course in question, which is held for the first time during fall semester 2017, is an inquiry based LLM course connected to an e-journal at the University of Copenhagen. The course implements several didactic features considered beneficial for student learning regarding academic writing, research skills as well as innovative and entrepreneurial competences. As students choose their own research problems, they retain ownership over their learning. Through extensive formative peer feedback and supervisor feedback (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick 2006) aided by rubrics (Andrade 2005; Andrade & Reddy 2010; Andrade & Warner 2012), students are guided through their research process, while retaining autonomy over their research process. After receiving a thorough review of their exam papers, students can then voluntarily revise and submit their articles to the

newly established peer reviewed *UCPH Fiscal Relations Law Journal*.<sup>1</sup> The course was developed by the Research Group on Law Teaching and Learning (University of Copenhagen), and the Research Group for Fiscal Relations (University of Copenhagen).

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<sup>1</sup> <http://jura.ku.dk/firejournal/english/>.

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