

material often thinks he does. It is only when he is called on in class or when he faces an exam that he realises there is a problem. The branching format tests comprehension at every step, and its interactivity makes learning fun.

The online classes were also successful. It was clear both from the way the chats progressed and from the student interviews conducted that students felt more comfortable expressing their opinions in these online classes than in traditional face-to-face classes. Another advantage was that the software used allowed the students to download a transcript of the class. This meant that they could concentrate on what was being said without worrying about taking notes. Online chats do have major drawbacks. They are costly in terms of faculty time and energy. An even greater drawback is that the online chat format does not seem suited to large law school classes.

The course demonstrated that online instruction is viable for some types of law courses. Obviously there needs to be much more work done before we can say precisely what can and cannot be taught effectively online.

#### **Of caterpillars and butterflies: the introduction of metamorphosis at the UWA law school**

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The purpose of this paper is to report on an innovation in learning recently introduced at the University of Western Australia (UWA) Law School. Metamorphosis is a program that attempts to foster metacognition in the learning of law by introducing students to the theoretical basis of the processes of learning.

Small group seminar teaching was introduced in first year units in the UWA Law School as a substitute for the traditional lecture/tutorial mode of teaching. The impetus for this change lay in dissatisfaction with the traditional lecture mode of teaching that promoted

a culture of passive and often shallow learning and a growing sense of alienation between teachers and students that had accompanied a rapid increase in the size of the law school. Small group seminar teaching was introduced in order to promote active learning, to support the development of generic and discipline specific skills and to expand the contextual and critical content of the curriculum.

The Metamorphosis program was prompted by our recognition that, if small group teaching is to succeed, we need not only raise the awareness of teaching and learning issues amongst staff, but foster a better understanding of the processes of learning amongst the students. The problem we identified after our introduction of small group teaching was that students often misunderstood what we were trying to do and were confused as to their role in the teaching and learning process.

Metamorphosis is a valuable strategy in improving the learning experience for first year law students. The feedback from participants has been positive, and a marked increase has been noticed in confidence in the in-class performance of Metamorphosis participants. If these results are sustained, then we must ask whether, and if so, how, these benefits can be provided to the wider student body.

Legal education is unique in that it seeks to attain a very wide range of learning outcomes. These range from mastery of a body of knowledge, through understanding, the ability to order knowledge in a coherent framework, generic skills, legal skills, professional, ethical and social qualities, as well as characteristics which will allow students to be life-long learners.

Traditionally, law has been taught by lectures and tutorials. This method of delivery has been found to be largely ineffective in fostering the wide range of desired learning outcomes. In particular, legal education requires a

deep approach to learning that is not encouraged by traditional legal education. Different law schools have tried various methods to overcome this problem. One means is the introduction of seminar or small group teaching.

The focus of the Metamorphosis project is upon student learning. Small group teaching in general places more responsibility upon the students for their own learning. Law students, however, come to the study of law with very little knowledge and appreciation of the processes of learning and with an orientation to learning that may well be inconsistent with a small group teaching approach. Accordingly, if law students are to profit substantially from the use of small group teaching, they need to reflect upon the following questions: What orientation to learning do I bring to the study of law? How does my orientation to learning affect the learning outcomes I hope to achieve? How does the small group method affect my approach to the study of law? What study practices do I need to adopt both within and outside class to maximise the effect of the learning experience and ensure quality learning outcomes?

The aims of Metamorphosis are to promote in law students an understanding of the pedagogical principles of small group teaching, to develop in law students a more sophisticated conception of learning and their own approaches to learning so as to foster a deep understanding of law; to enable students to critically reflect upon different approaches to teaching and to provide ongoing support to law students in the difficult first year of law.

Our intention was to pilot the Metamorphosis program with a small group of students and extend it in subsequent years to the entire first year cohort. The first part of the program was a formal half-day workshop that was designed to introduce students to a range of pedagogical theory and to initiate students into a process of reflection about their own learning. It was conducted at

the end of the fourth week of semester when we believed students would have overcome the initial strangeness of being law students and would be beginning to grapple with the process of learning. We asked students to reflect on their understanding and experience of learning and teaching by describing good and bad experiences. We also asked them to describe their conception of learning. The next session of the workshop gave students an introduction to some learning theory. The materials we distributed at the workshop included articles giving a more detailed description of the ideas we introduced. In the next session the participants completed a number of inventories to help them identify their own learning preferences.

The objectives of the next workshop were two-fold: first to foster in students the habit of self-reflection about their learning that had been initiated in the first workshop, second, to promote the process of informal peer mentoring that had begun in the first workshop. The second workshop took place after the mid-semester rush of assignments had been done and students were beginning to focus on their exam preparation. The final workshop was held at the beginning of the 'swot vac' week. Our objective was to help students apply the process of self-reflection to the usual exam preparation activities. We drew on the ethos of peer mentoring that had been growing in the earlier sessions. We asked participants to prepare for the workshop by writing an answer to an old examination question we gave them. At the workshop the students were asked to do an exercise in peer assessment. The purpose was to help students develop the ability to engage in self-assessment.

In the third workshop we asked Metamorphosis participants for some feedback on their experience of the program so far. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Undoubtedly, the greatest value of the program had

been the way it has influenced students' attitudes to each other, to the staff and to the law school in general. Many students commented that Metamorphosis had had a positive effect upon their learning. Students' comments also reflect a greater appreciation for other students' diversity.

Given the interim feedback, we feel at this point that Metamorphosis has enhanced the experience of studying law for many of our participants. Whether it accomplishes its aim of transforming participants into self-directed, reflective learners, remains to be seen. A more critical evaluation must await the further evaluation of the program. There is little doubt, however, that the program has enhanced the experience of first year law for many of our participants.

The feedback also suggests that amongst this group of students, at least, there is a better understanding of the objectives of the small group learning method. There has been a significant shift in the culture of learning amongst the student body as a whole since small group teaching replaced lecturing in first and second year classes. This continues to evolve as the students exposed to this method of teaching move through their degree. We believe that the Metamorphosis program has a role to play in nurturing this change, as a supplement to, but by no means a replacement for, a changed culture amongst staff and students to the teaching and learning of law. Given the often-alienating culture of law school, there may well be a place for Metamorphosis, at least in its capacity as a support program, throughout the undergraduate law degree.

The Metamorphosis program has been a valuable learning experience for the authors and one that has given them considerable insights into the experiences of first year students in law. It has emphasised that even this

exceptionally talented and apparently confident group of students experience a deep level of insecurity when they begin their legal studies. The students had given their teachers valuable feedback on life in that difficult first year of law that they would have been unlikely to give on formal student evaluations.

The original intention had been that Metamorphosis would be extended to all first year students. The authors are now not so sure that this will succeed. It seems that a very important component of the success of Metamorphosis so far has been that the learners wanted to be involved. This created a strong atmosphere of enthusiasm and trust, when participants realised that others shared their expectations, fears and hopes. Whether this same atmosphere of goodwill could be generated amongst a group of people who attend compulsorily seems to the authors to be highly doubtful.

**Producing multi-media teaching/learning materials for teaching legal ethics and professional responsibility in Australian law schools: and the lesson is...soldier on**

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The aim of this article is to encourage law teachers to produce interactive teaching/learning materials in law and to share the lessons that they learn from their work to enrich what we know about the development of, and student learning with, multimedia teaching/learning products. It describes the process of the creation of an interactive CD-ROM designed to teach law students and trainee legal practitioners legal ethics and professional responsibility.

The aim was for the package to include the following items: two videos that could be played and accessed as a central part of the teaching/learning package; background information about