NO RIGHT ANSWER

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1. Introduction
The Postgraduate Diploma in Law ('PGDL') is a one year (FT) or two year (PT) Level 7 award designed for non-law graduates interested in becoming a solicitor or barrister. Being new to law, a key threshold concept is "thinking like a lawyer" or legal reasoning [1].

2. What is the Issue?
Students new to law often assume there is one correct answer [1]. They should be inducted into a common law system of reasoning, work through problems and assess propositions. An inherently uncertain process - legal reasoning does not demand a single right answer [2]. This can lead to better student outcomes where the PGDL marking matrix recognises components of legal reasoning for higher grades [3]. As a practising lawyer, the ability to weigh risk, calculate prospects, see the multifaceted nature of problems and construct properly arguable contentions are essential for professional conduct and evolution of the law.

3. Threshold Concepts
Threshold concepts were first introduced by Meyer & Land who provide the seminal iteration [4]. They are akin to a portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something. It represents a transformed way of understanding, or interpreting, or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress [5]. Defended against the Meyer & Land key criteria legal reasoning has been identified as the most important threshold concept for the first year of legal education [1].

4. Legal Reasoning
Distilling previous definitions from commentators, legal reasoning can be defined as identifying and applying the relevant legal principles concerning a legal issue to the circumstances at hand to derive a legally supportive conclusion [4]. A major empirical study [1] identified four increasingly complex levels of understanding in legal reasoning,
i.   A formulaic process for predicting a legal outcome,
ii.   Interpretative process of arguing for an outcome serving the needs of the client,
iii. Dynamic, responsive and innovative process for allowing existing laws to reflect changes in society,
iv.   Means by which law can be changed for the good of society.

5. Legal Reasoning within the Curriculum
Legal reasoning cannot be taught or developed in isolation. It should be embedded into the teaching of substantive law subjects as a critical initial step [5]. One study found the IRAC approach to problems i.e. **I**dentify the Issue, set out the **R**ule, **A**pply to the facts and **C**onclude too simplistic and formalistic in nature, instead, a model of legal syllogism was favoured as a better fit to the characteristics of a threshold concept [4]. Another paper advocates developing teaching practices to support legal reasoning skills through problem and core-based learning. The latter involving the application of knowledge to real world scenarios leading to higher levels of cognition on Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956). Along with, the encouragement of students to be active and interactive in small group discussions, with the opportunities for feedback, student reflection and the development of metacognitive skills. In addition, the incorporation into the curriculum discussion about the role of legal professionals in society [6].

6. Research Question
To what extent does the approach to teaching legal reasoning in a Postgraduate Diploma in Law correlate with student outcomes?

Do you want to know more?

7. Research Proposal/Method
i.   Study of 10-15 law students across one academic year on the PGDL at NTU. Selected by reference to previous education and those least likely to reason legally.
ii.   Qualitative interviews (Students) focusing on students' understanding of legal reasoning and approach to problems – three in total (start, mid-study and end).
iii. Qualitative interviews (Module Leaders) focusing on how legal reasoning is embedded into each module to identify nature and extent in consistency of approach across the course (IRAC or Syllogism approach?)
iv.   Qualitative interview data collected from students analysed to identify nature and extent of any improvements in students' development and understanding of legal reasoning across the course.
v.   Findings from (iv) cross-referenced with summative results of students and position on PGDL marking matrix to identify any correlation between teaching of legal reasoning (iii) and student outcomes.

9. Conclusion
Legal reasoning is an essential threshold concept for postgraduate law students and an invaluable skill for success in the legal profession. It is relevant and difficult. This research will focus upon the extent teaching legal reasoning on the PGDL at NLS correlates to student outcomes.

8. Impact!
Inform approach to teaching legal reasoning across a one year post-graduate law course to improving student outcomes and identify any further research necessary.

REFERENCES: [1] A Gerlese and others, 'A threshold concepts focus to curriculum design: supporting student learning through application of variation theory' [2011] Australian Learning & Teaching Council, Final Report; A Gerlese and others, 'A threshold concepts focus to first year law curriculum design: supporting student learning using variation theory: Nuts and Bolts. **[2]** D Yuratich, 'Ratio! A Game of Judgement: using game-based learning to teach legal reasoning' [2021] 55(2) The Law Teacher 213, 216. **[3]** PGDL Marking Matrix, Dr Richard Watkins, Nottingham Trent University. **[4]** K Yin & C De Maio, 'Transformative, troublesome and liminal: does the presentation of legal reasoning in the legal studies curricula in higher education institutions satisfy the characteristics of a threshold concept?' [2022] The Law Teacher, DOI: 10.1080/03069400.2022.2101086 **[5]** J Meyer & R Land, 'Threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge: An introduction' in J Meyer and R Land (eds), 'Overcoming barriers to student understanding: Threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge [2006] Routledge **[6]** A Haarala-Muhonen and others, 'Law students' descriptions of legal reasoning' [2022] The Law Teacher, DOI: 10.1080/03069400.2022.2057754