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## Practice Report

# Perspectives on Performance: The Value of Introducing Two-Way Appraisals in Law Clinics to Create an Authentic Learning Experience

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### Abstract

In the practice of law, appraisals are recognised as an important part of the performance management process. In this practice report, we discuss the introduction of a ‘two-way’ appraisal process in our clinical legal education (“CLE”) modules. This paper argues that an appraisal process can provide a valuable opportunity for tutors to offer students formative feedback, whilst also acting as a forum for tutors to receive invaluable feedback from students about their experience of working in a University Law Clinic. We argue that in addition to being a rich source of feedback for both students and supervisors, ‘two-way’ appraisals increase the authenticity of the student learning experience and can develop student employability. Drawing on the authors’ experience of introducing an appraisal process in Lancaster University’s Law Clinic, this practice report provides practical tips to introduce an appraisal process in CLE modules and a discussion of both the benefits and the limitations. The authors also reflect on the student view of participating in an appraisal by considering the results of a small-scale ethically approved survey with third year and postgraduate Law Clinic students.

**Keywords:** appraisals, authentic learning, employability, feedback

### I. Introduction

Appraisals are a key tool in legal practice, and they frequently serve multiple purposes, including to motivate employees, identify areas where further training or professional development is required, and communicate organisational priorities.<sup>1</sup> In this article, the authors reflect on their experience of introducing an appraisal process in Lancaster University’s Law Clinic. As is common in appraisals in the world of work, the appraisal includes both a developmental and an evaluative element.<sup>2</sup> As well as being asked to evaluate their performance in the Law Clinic at the half-way point of the course and set future goals, students are also encouraged to focus on experiences and skills to develop throughout the remainder of their time working in the Law Clinic. However, the appraisal is a two-way process, and students are also asked to provide feedback to their tutors about how they can improve and further develop the Law Clinic.

Drawing on the authors’ experience of introducing an appraisal process, the authors argue that the introduction of an appraisal process in clinical legal education (‘CLE’) modules provides rich formative feedback for students and invaluable information for tutors regarding the future development of the Clinic. In addition, the use of an appraisal process in Clinic is

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<sup>1</sup> Ellen Rubin and Amani Edwards, ‘The performance of performance appraisal systems: understanding the linkage between appraisal structure and appraisal discrimination complaints’ (2018) 31(15) *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 1938.

<sup>2</sup> Patrick Kampkotter, ‘Performance appraisals and job satisfaction’ (2016) 28(5) *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 750.

an authentic learning experience that can help prepare students for the world of work and develop their skillset. In this paper, the authors also reflect on student feedback from a small-scale ethically approved survey, which indicates that students find the appraisal process to be employability-enhancing and a beneficial touchstone to both give and receive feedback at the mid-way point of the module.

## II. The clinical context at Lancaster University

We have introduced an appraisal process into all the Law Clinic modules at Lancaster University's Law School. The Law Clinic modules are studied by approximately 40 third year undergraduate and postgraduate law students and the appraisals are formative in nature. The Law Clinic modules are assessed by way of participation (such as client interviewing skills and contribution in workshops and to casework), a portfolio of work (legal research and legal letter writing) and a reflective journal. The appraisal is designed to act as a learning tool to allow students to work on their own performance<sup>3</sup>, and therefore do not form a direct part of the assessment process.

The Law Clinic modules are designed to simulate legal practice, making the learning experience as authentic as possible to working in a law firm. In the Law Clinic, students interview members of the public about their legal problems. Before conducting client interviews with members of the public, students embark on a rigorous training programme. Students receive training on access to justice, professional conduct, legal letter writing, legal research skills (including using practitioner research databases), using a case management system<sup>4</sup> and client interviewing skills.

The Law Clinic offers advice on a range of legal areas, including education law, family law, contract disputes, consumer rights, property matters, wills and probate and employment law. This means that students are exposed to a broad spectrum of legal problems. Client interviews are conducted by way of face to face, telephone, or virtual appointment. In the client appointment, the student advisors will conduct a fact-finding interview to elicit key dates, issues, and relevant details. After the appointment with the client, students research the legal issue and draft a written letter of advice. The advice given is 'one-off' in nature, and the students are not expected to conduct full casework or representation for the client. A supervising practitioner observes client interviews and supervises all written work.

In general, before working in the Law Clinic, the students have not had any opportunity to interview members of the public or draft legal advice letters. It is therefore important to monitor student performance, allowing for feedback and guidance, to ensure that the Law Clinic provides a high standard of service to members of the public and to ensure that students feel supported.

## III. The practicalities of the appraisal process

Lancaster University's Law Clinic runs over two terms (20 weeks). The authors decided to hold the student appraisals during week 10, which is the mid-way point of the module. The timing of the appraisal meeting is a strategic decision, because by the time students are asked to engage with the process and reflect on their experiences, they have completed their 4 weeks of Law Clinic training and have gained six weeks of experience of working with clients.

### The appraisal form

To help structure the appraisal process, we designed an appraisal form that is broadly based on the appraisal forms that students might be asked to complete while in graduate employment. For reference, a copy of our appraisal form is attached in Appendix A.

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Bennett, 'Assessment to Promote Learning' (2000) 34 *The Law Teacher* 167, 168.

<sup>4</sup> Clio Case Management is currently used.

Students complete their appraisal form in advance of their appraisal meeting, which takes place in the last week of term one (week 10). While the contents of an appraisal form can be modified depending on its purpose, for an appraisal to be effective it is essential that the process considers both an appraisal of performance, alongside guidance on future areas of development.<sup>5</sup> An appraisal can be used as an avenue to celebrate student achievement and to work with students to identify areas for development. The appraisal form we designed aligns with this model.

The appraisal form is split into two sections. Section one is for the students to complete, allowing them to reflect on their performance, and section two is for the students to receive feedback from their tutors.

### Section one – the student's perspective

Section one of the form focuses on four key elements: (1) student successes; (2) student challenges; (3) future objectives and (4) student feedback.

Firstly, students are asked to highlight any key achievements and identify key areas that they have worked on during their time in the Law Clinic (e.g. a contract law case, a family law case, etc). The number of cases that each student has worked on at this stage will differ, however when the appraisal takes place, it is usual for all students to have conducted one or two 'real' client appointments. Research suggests that in a well conducted appraisal, there should be a celebration of achievement where good performance is identified.<sup>6</sup> This is especially important in CLE modules. Students are completing essential work for their community by offering free legal advice, and therefore it is important that the value of their work is acknowledged and celebrated. The Law Clinic collects client feedback, and this is shared with the students as part of the appraisal process so that they can see the impact of the work they are completing. The celebration of success and good performance is also intended to build student confidence and encourage self-esteem,<sup>7</sup> which is particularly important as CLE is a new and unfamiliar way of learning for the students.

Secondly, students are asked to identify any challenges faced during their clinical work to date. The purpose behind this is two-fold. It allows students to identify any areas they would like to develop, while highlighting to tutors whether amendments are needed to our training programme, or a higher level of support is required. Both the recognised areas of development, along with the identified training needs, can then be addressed in the second term of Clinic. In the past, because of student feedback gathered from the appraisal process, we have introduced more drop-in sessions for students to discuss their Law Clinic work. In addition, often students will highlight in the appraisal process that they would like to work on a particular area of law. If the Law Clinic receives a case that corresponds with the student's request, we can try, as far as possible, to accommodate this.

Thirdly, students are asked to draft future objectives for their second term of work in Clinic and explain why they are setting these objectives. For example, if there is a particular skill that students feel they would like to develop further, they can note this on their appraisal form. We discuss these objectives with students in the appraisal meeting, and students are encouraged to update their objectives as appropriate following discussion with their tutor. It is important for students to take responsibility and ownership over the areas of skill development that they would like to work on. Academic literature suggests that the ideal feedback process is one which facilitates student self-assessment and reflection in learning<sup>8</sup>, as 'when self-selected objectives are set, students take ownership of these and strive towards their achievement.'<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Pat Feast, 'Appraisal as an effective means of assessing student performance in clinical legal education at the University of Portsmouth' (2018) 25(1) *International Journal of Clinical Legal Education*, 196, 203

<sup>6</sup> Feast (n5) 203.

<sup>7</sup> Carol Withy, 'Feedback engagement: forcing feed-forward amongst law students' (2013) 47(3) *The Law Teacher* 319, 321

<sup>8</sup> Withy (n7) 321

<sup>9</sup> Feast (n5) 207

Finally, the students are asked for their feedback about working in the Law Clinic, including whether they are receiving appropriate feedback. By seeking student feedback about the clinic, this ensures that the process becomes 'two-way'. This has several benefits, as discussed further in Section IV of this practice report.

## Section two – the tutor's observations

Students submit their appraisal form one week before the appraisal meeting. Tutors then complete section two of the appraisal form, which provides an assessment of the student's performance at the interim stage of the module and outlines additional areas for development. Tutors consider the student performance against the Law Clinic learning outcomes; for example, we provide feedback on the student's technical skills, including their legal research and drafting, and their business skills, including their client focus, problem solving and communication. At the appraisal meeting – which lasts around 20 minutes – we discuss the student's feedback, their future objectives, and the tutor's assessment of the student's performance. All appraisal meetings are held with the students on a one-to-one basis.

### IV. Rationale for introducing an appraisal process

#### Enhancing the authenticity of the student learning experience

We decided to introduce an appraisal process in the Law Clinic to provide students with an authentic learning experience. 'Authentic learning' is a term that is commonly used in Higher Education pedagogy, but there is no unanimous consensus regarding the meaning of the term. To avoid authenticity becoming another education buzzword, we need to ensure that we set a clear definition of authentic learning. We use Arnold's definition of authenticity, which states that learning and assessment might be deemed 'authentic' if it has one or more of the following features:

- it is relevant to the student's future employment;
- it has relevance for the advancement of the discipline;
- it is relevant to our collective future (for example, the assessment might invite students to grapple with some of the big issues in the world, such as climate change or access to justice); and/or
- it is relevant to the student's individual aspiration.<sup>10</sup>

The introduction of appraisals in the Law Clinic might be deemed an authentic learning experience because it is both relevant to the student's future employment (as appraisals are a feature of many graduate roles) and relevant to the student's individual aspiration (for example, by encouraging students to reflect on their learning to date and set future learning goals).

Engaging students with authentic learning experiences such as an appraisal process has several benefits. First, it can enhance student employability, as students participate in realistic, complex tasks.<sup>11</sup> Authentic learning experiences such as appraisals can also develop key employability skills such as communication skills and critical thinking.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Lydia Arnold, 'Expanded assessment Top Trumps' (2022) <https://lydia-arnold.com/2022/11/14/expanded-assessment-top-trumps/>

<sup>11</sup> Popi Sotiriadou et al, 'The role of authentic assessment to preserve academic integrity and promote skill development and employability' (2020) 45 (11) *Studies in Higher Education* 2132, 2134.

<sup>12</sup> Parmjit Singh, Roslind Thambusamy and Mohd Ramly, 'Fit or Unfit? Perspectives of Employers and University Instructors of Graduates' Generic Skills' (2014) 123 *Social and Behavioral Sciences* 315.

The introduction of authentic tasks can also enhance inclusivity. Although University students have access to a myriad of employability-enhancing extracurricular activities, the only opportunities that we can be certain are available to all students equally are those that are embedded into the curriculum.<sup>13</sup> For example, it might not be possible for students with caring responsibilities or who work alongside study to engage with employability-boosting out of hours extracurricular opportunities such as mooting or sitting on the executive of a student-led society. However, by exposing students to authentic learning opportunities in the curriculum, this can act as a proxy for work experience and/or extracurricular activities, which is a powerful tool to enhance accessibility.

### Providing an opportunity for formative feedback

The value of formative feedback in Higher Education is well-documented, with many authors arguing that providing students with opportunities to receive formative feedback is the single most beneficial measure to improve student learning.<sup>14</sup> Gould and Day note that effective feedback provides a foundation to develop learner autonomy, along with setting a framework for high achievement.<sup>15</sup>

Formative feedback is the process of monitoring the development of student learning, whilst also offering support for that learning.<sup>16</sup> Formative feedback allows students to identify their strengths and areas to develop, while concurrently providing a forum for tutors to consider the areas where students are struggling with their learning, allowing them to address any training needs.<sup>17</sup> Academic literature contends that feedback should be a 'process' in which students are actively involved,<sup>18</sup> and Bols and Wicklow note that '*...it is only by engaging in real dialogue that students will truly reflect on, and accelerate their learning.*'<sup>19</sup> By asking students to complete the appraisal form, identify their objectives and attend an appraisal meeting to discuss progress, we have ensured that student participation and interaction is at the heart of the feedback process.

When appraising a student's performance in the Law Clinic, the authors carefully considered how to maximise the impact and effectiveness of the feedback provided. Randall and Mirador note that effective formative feedback must be developmental in nature.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Glover and Brown state:

For feedback to be formative it should involve not only identification by the learner of the gap between the desired goal and present state, but also provide the information needed to close the gap with sufficient explanation to enable students to use this information.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>13</sup> 'Authentic assessment' <<https://staff.sussex.ac.uk/teaching/enhancement/support/assessment-design/authentic>>

<sup>14</sup> Alastair Irons, *Enhancing Learning through Formative Assessment and Feedback*. (Routledge: New York, 2007). See also: John Hattie and Helen Timperley, 'The Power of Feedback' (2007) 77 (1) *Review of Educational Research* 81–112, and Graham Gibbs and Claire Simpson, 'Conditions under which assessment supports students' learning' (2004) 1(1) *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education* 3-31.

<sup>15</sup> Jill Gould and Pat Day, 'Hearing you loud and clear: Student perspectives of audio feedback in higher education'. (2013) 38 (5) *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 554-566.

<sup>16</sup> Paul Black and Dylan William, 'Assessment and classroom learning'. (1998) 5(1) *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice* 7-74

<sup>17</sup> Josh McCarthy, 'Enhancing feedback in higher education: Students' attitudes towards online and in-class formative assessment feedback model'. (2017) 18 (2) *Active Learning in Higher Education* 127-141, 127

<sup>18</sup> Carol Withey, 'Feedback engagement: forcing feed-forward amongst law students' (2013) 47 (3) *The Law Teacher* 319, 321

<sup>19</sup> Alex Bols and Kate Wicklow, 'Feedback – what students want' in Stephen Merry, Margaret Price, David Carless and Maddalena Taras (eds) *Reconceptualising Feedback in Higher Education: Developing dialogue with students*. (Routledge, 2013) 21

<sup>20</sup> Mick Randall and Jo Mirador, 'How well am I doing? Using a Corpus-based analysis to Investigate Tutor and Institutional Messages in Comment Sheets' (2003) 28(5) *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 516, 523

<sup>21</sup> Chris Glover & Evelyn Brown, 'Written Feedback for Students: too much, too detailed or too incomprehensible to be effective?' (2006) 7 (1) *Bioscience Education* 1, 15

Gibbs and Simpson stipulate that effective feedback must be frequent, timely, sufficient and detailed, and should focus on learning (rather than marks) by explicitly relating the feedback to future tasks.<sup>22</sup> Nicol and MacFarland-Dick argue that effective feedback should relate to performance objectives, criteria and expected standards.<sup>23</sup> It was therefore important for us to design the appraisal form in a way that ensures that the feedback given is effective, clear, detailed and focused on development and future learning. When introducing the appraisal process, we also carefully considered the timing of the appraisal. By holding an appraisal at the mid-way point in the module, we can provide students with detailed formative feedback that they can then act on in advance of their next term working in Clinic and the submission of their summative assessment for the module. Through the appraisal, we can have an honest and open conversation with students about how their Law Clinic experience is progressing, enabling them to refine and improve their practice in the following term. As Feast argues, '*giving feedback on a regular basis via the appraisal system motivates the students to strive for improvement and helps them to meet the challenges of achieving excellence.*'<sup>24</sup>

Any feedback given during the appraisal process therefore 'feeds-forward' into the student's future work and future assessment. It is well-recognised in academic literature that formative feedback will only be effective if students have the opportunity to act upon it to improve their future work and learning.<sup>25</sup> There must also be opportunities for students to close any gap between their current skills and their desired performance in the Law Clinic.<sup>26</sup> We therefore decided not to hold the appraisal as a summative exercise, as this would not give students the opportunity to act upon the feedback given or have time to work on any areas of development identified. Glover and Brown acknowledge that when feedback is summative it does not assist learners in acting to close any learning gap.<sup>27</sup> As one of the purposes of our appraisal process is to act as a learning tool for student development, the mid-point appraisal timing and its formative nature is fundamental.

### **Appraisals as a two-way process: the importance of receiving student feedback**

As the appraisal process is 'two-way,' it allows students to provide the Law Clinic tutors with feedback at the mid-point stage of the module. The appraisal meetings are an invaluable sounding board for tutors to gain insight into the student experience and receive feedback directly from students.

Accessing this rich source of student feedback is invaluable when determining the future development of CLE modules. For example, we ask students to tell us about their training needs and whether there are any further areas of support they require. This is essential to continually monitor the effectiveness of our training programme and adapt if necessary. Additionally, we ask students to comment on whether they are receiving sufficient feedback from supervisors. This is vital, as we use a wide range of both in-house and external supervisors, so we want to monitor the consistency and the richness of the feedback provided to students and ensure that if there are any problems or inconsistencies with feedback, these can be addressed. Finally, we ask students to provide us with feedback and to suggest possible areas of improvement, to ensure that the appraisal is truly 'two-way'.

Again, the timing of the collection of student feedback is deliberate. Brookfield argues that '*unless you have information about how students are learning and which activities are helping*

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<sup>22</sup> Gibbs and Simpson (n14).

<sup>23</sup> David Nicol and Debra MacFarlane-Dick 'Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: A model and seven principles of good feedback practice' (2006) 31 (2) *Studies in Higher Education* 199-218

<sup>24</sup> Feast (n5) 196.

<sup>25</sup> Gibbs and Simpson (n14)

<sup>26</sup> Nicol and McFarlane-Dick, 'Formative Assessment and Self-Regulated Learning: A Model and Seven Principles of Good Feedback Practice' (2006) 31 (2) *Studies in Higher Education*, 199, 205-213

<sup>27</sup> Gibbs and Simpson (n14).

them learn, you can't make good choices about what to do next in class.'<sup>28</sup> If feedback was only collected at the end of the module, this would not allow us to act on the feedback given. Whilst end of module feedback might help our *future* cohort of Law Clinic students, it would not have the same benefit for the current cohort.<sup>29</sup> Conducting an appraisal process has therefore enabled us to identify any problems early on and resolve these, thereby enhancing the student experience.

## V. The student view

We conducted a small-scale ethically approved survey with our Law Clinic undergraduate and postgraduate students regarding their experience of participating in the Clinic's appraisal process. We asked students to answer a series of questions and provide responses using a 5-point Likert scale ('strongly agree', 'agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'). All students participating in a Law Clinic module were invited to complete the survey (invitations to participate in the research were sent to approximately 40 students). Students were advised that the completion of the survey was optional and had no bearing on their studies or grades. In total, the survey drew 10 student responses. Due to the small size and self-selecting nature of the student responses, we acknowledge that we cannot draw any determinative conclusions regarding the student view of engaging in authentic tasks via an appraisal process. However, the survey data highlighted in this paper provides a foundation for discussion and further study into the introduction of appraisals and work-based learning exercises in CLE modules.

The student responses to the questionnaire were overall very positive in respect of using appraisals in CLE modules. Students agreed that the appraisal process is a useful way of receiving feedback from tutors (90% 'strongly agree': 10% 'neither agree nor disagree'). It was evident from the responses that students felt that there was a need to receive formative feedback from their Law Clinic tutors (90% 'strongly agree': 10% 'agree'). Students acknowledged that it is important for tutors to identify areas of performance development in the Law Clinic (90% 'strongly agree': 10% 'agree'), and that it is important to receive feedback about strengths (80% 'strongly agree': 20% 'agree').

Qualitative feedback from students also provides insight into the student experience. For example, one student noted: '*The appraisal process increased my awareness of my strengths and weaknesses, whilst providing feedback on how my skillset could be improved in the future*'. Similarly, another confirmed that: '*the appraisal process beneficially allowed me to discuss my progress, become more aware of what I need to do in future to improve my practical skillset and allowed me to reflect on my experiences within the Law Clinic*'.

In our survey, we probed students regarding the link (if any) between engagement in an appraisal process and skills development. Previous research suggests that appraisals are effective in encouraging students to focus on self-development'.<sup>30</sup> Our preliminary research supports this view, as 90% of the students who completed the questionnaire confirmed that they 'strongly agreed' that the appraisal process allowed them to review the skills they had gained from working in the Law Clinic. The students noted that the appraisal process had helped them learn from their experiences (80% 'strongly agree': 20% 'agree'), enabled them to identify key areas for development (70% 'strongly agree': 30% 'agree'), and supported them in reflecting on what they had learned in the Law Clinic (70% 'strongly agree': 30% 'agree'). For example, one student reflected: '*The appraisal process has helped me identify areas that I need to develop; it made me more comfortable speaking about my performance and has given me confidence in my abilities and skills*'.

<sup>28</sup> Stephen Brookfield *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher* (Jossey-Bass, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. 2017) 99

<sup>29</sup> Brookfield (n28) 98

<sup>30</sup> Feast (n7) 207.

Interestingly, when asked whether the appraisal process helped students with other aspects of their Law degree, there were mixed results (40% 'strongly agree': 30% 'somewhat agree': 30% 'neither agree nor disagree'). From this, it appears that the students may not currently consider that the skills developed through participating in an appraisal are transferable to the learning required in other modules. This was an interesting insight, and on reflection, it might be that the Law Clinic tutors should spend more time discussing with students the transferable skills developed through the appraisal process, making explicit connections with other aspects of learning on the Law degree.

### **Developing student employability and professionalism**

By introducing appraisals in our Law Clinic modules, our students are also given experience of practice, which enhances employability and professionalism. The introduction of appraisals has increased our students' exposure to the operation of law in practice, and it is another way that we ensure that the Law Clinic is an effective transition for our students from university to the world of work. The students surveyed acknowledged that the Law Clinic appraisal process will assist them in preparing for their future careers (90% 'strongly agree': 10% 'agree'). For example, one of the students confirmed: *'The Law Clinic appraisal process has enhanced my employability because appraisals are so commonly used by employers, so I know what to expect in the future'*. Another noted that the appraisal was *'...thoughtful as to my progress and future potential'*, and a third reflected that the appraisal has *'given me real life practise of what I will face when I'm employed'*. This supports the existing literature which confirms that engagement in authentic learning tasks such as an appraisal process can enhance student employability and be used a proxy for work experience.<sup>31</sup>

## **VI. Appraising the limitations**

### **Time and Resources**

Whilst this practice report aims to promote the benefits of introducing appraisals in CLE modules, we acknowledge that there are some challenges when introducing the process. First, developing an appraisal form that works takes time (although we have provided our example appraisal form as an exemplar in the Appendix to this practice report). Scheduling and running the appraisal process also requires time commitment. This can be challenging, as academics have multiple competing commitments on their time. For example, the Law Clinic staff team at Lancaster University also convene and teach across the law degree curriculum and develop and run other clinical and public legal education initiatives. Introducing and running authentic learning activities such as appraisals therefore may adversely affect the time available for legal research and scholarship, which is still often the 'coin of the realm' when considering career progression.<sup>32</sup> As with the introduction of any time-intensive authentic learning task, there therefore needs to be sufficient resource planning and support to ensure that the implementation runs smoothly.

### **Candour of the student feedback**

One of the benefits of our appraisal process is that it promotes a 'two-way' dialogue with students. As previously discussed, student feedback is invaluable, as it helps shape the delivery of the Law Clinic modules. However, one concern is how candid the students felt they

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<sup>31</sup> Sotiriadou et al (n11) 2134.

<sup>32</sup> Andrea Curcio, 'Assessing Differently and Using Empirical Studies to See if it Makes a Difference: Can Law Schools Do it Better?' (2009) 27 *Quinnipiac Law Review* 899, 904.



could be in their feedback about the module, especially because any feedback offered is identifiable.

Positively, 100% of the students surveyed felt that their feedback would be acted upon by their tutors, and the responses confirmed that students felt comfortable providing feedback (90% 'strongly agree: 10% 'agree'). One student noted that: *'The appraisal process was straightforward, in a relaxed environment, where I could share my achievements and my concerns comfortably'*. Similarly, another reflected that the appraisal meeting was: *'Very useful and calm. Not stressful.'*

However, despite the positive responses from the students, we are aware that not all students may feel comfortable providing identifiable feedback and not all students completed the survey. We therefore also implement other methods of receiving feedback from students to maximise the quantity and depth of the feedback received. These methods include the use of anonymous exit tickets after training workshops, an open-door policy so that students can approach us on a one-to-one basis at any time throughout the course, informal discussions with students after all client interviews and an end of module survey which asks students to reflect on their experience in the Law Clinic. We also ensure that we discuss the appraisal process in the initial student training, making clear that this is very much a two-way, collaborative process between academic and student.

## VII. Conclusions

Despite the possible limitations, a two-way appraisal process has numerous benefits for students and staff alike. An appraisal process is an effective way of offering students formative feedback, celebrating their successes, whilst providing an opportunity for tutors to give guidance on how students can improve their performance in the Law Clinic. Ensuring that the appraisal process is a 'two-way' conversation also allows tutors to receive invaluable feedback from students about their experiences of working in the Law Clinic.

For the appraisal to be an effective formative exercise, the timing of the appraisal is key. There must be time for students, and tutors, to act upon the feedback given. As a result, the 'mid-point' of a module works well for using an appraisal as a method of formative feedback.

Introducing appraisals in CLE modules can enhance the authenticity of the students' clinical experience because appraisals are used in many graduate roles and their use encourages students to focus on their individual aspirations and future goals. The introduction of authentic tasks such as appraisals can increase student employability and augment skill development.

Although there are limitations to introducing an appraisal process – predominantly surrounding time and resource commitments – the authors' small-scale survey indicates that students consider that participating in an appraisal process in CLE modules is beneficial, employability-enhancing and an effective method of both giving and receiving feedback.

**VIII. Appendix: The appraisal form**

Student Appraisal Form	
<b>Student name:</b>	
<b>Appraising Supervisor(s)</b>	
<b>Period covered by review:</b>	

**SECTION 1 – STUDENT TO COMPLETE**

*This section should be completed by the student in advance of the Appraisal Meeting and should form a basis for discussion during the Appraisal Meeting.*

*You should focus on the cases that you have worked on to date and highlight any key achievements made or challenges faced. You may wish to identify key things that you have learnt to date from your work in the Law Clinic, whether there are any areas where you performed better or worse than expected and whether you have received appropriate feedback. Please ensure that you provide specific examples. Please also use this as an opportunity to provide your feedback about how the Law Clinic operates, or any training needs you have.*

**Overall comments**

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**Key cases**

**Future objectives**

*Think about why you are setting these objectives. For example, are there particular skills that you think you need to develop further?*

**You should discuss these objectives with your supervisor and update or amend as appropriate.**

Signed .....(Student)

Date .....

**SECTION 2: SUPERVISOR TO COMPLETE**

**Overall comments on student's performance**

*Please provide an overall assessment of the student's performance at the interim stage and outline any additional areas for development.*

*Please consider the student's performance in relation to the following technical skills: legal research, application of the law and drafting.*

*Please consider the student's performance in relation to the following business skills: client focus, problem solving, communication, leading and managing and relationship building.*

Signed ..... (Supervisor)

Date .....