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The Law Teacher

Meet the winner of the Teaching Law with Technology Prize 2020

--Manuscript Draft--

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Abstract:	Interview with Linda Chadderton - winner of Thomson Reuters in association with the Association of Law Teachers Teaching Law with Technology prize 2020
Order of Authors:	Linda Chadderton, LLB Law

Meet the winner of the Teaching Law with Technology Prize 2020

The Association of Law Teachers and Thomson Reuters 'Teaching Law with Technology Prize' 2020 prize winner was Linda Chadderton, of the University of Central Lancashire. In this interview, Linda tells The Law Teacher about her winning project, Legally Bound, a legally themed escape room.

Tell us a little bit about your background?

Following completion of my law degree I joined the civil service working on government projects. As part of that work I had the opportunity to write training material and to travel the country and give presentations to staff. I think this gave me a taster of things to come! I completed my legal practice course at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) part time, like many of our students juggling work, commuting, and studying. I started my legal career at a high street firm in Blackburn specialising in claimant litigation. Following qualification, I went to work for DWF as a defendant litigator working in-house at RSA Insurance plc in Manchester for 15 years. Being made redundant in 2016 helped me evaluate my next chapter, serendipity bringing me full circle back to UCLAN as a law lecturer in 2017.

How did you come up with the idea for your legally themed escape room, Legally Bound?

New to teaching, I was encouraged by colleagues to attend the Association of Law Teachers conference in Keele in 2018. The theme being diversity and innovation. I was inspired by the attendees' passion for teaching. I thought about how I could engage the students in their learning experience in an innovative manner. During my first six months at UCLAN I had witnessed how students were more engaged when they enjoyed the activities they undertook in class. I was also aware that in the first few weeks at University it could be difficult for students to make friends and actually communicate with each other. I took this innovation, engagement and communication as my goal and applied it to one of the Legal Systems workshops. The module leader also impressed upon me the need to get the students to engage with the core textbooks for the module. I started to devise a series of clues and activities which would not only consolidate the students' learning but get them to communicate and use team work to progress through the workshop. I wanted to immerse them in the learning process, get them to work as a team and have fun at the same time. I needed funding to purchase the equipment to run the escape room and shamelessly approached the Dean of the Law School with a 'Dragon's Den' style pitch. I felt very lucky to secure the funding, I had only been at the University 10 months when I pitched the idea to the Dean. I also received great support from the Legal System module leader and our school's IT technician. It was only following the creation of the escape room did I realise there was a pedagogic term for what I was doing - gamification!

Tell us about the key features of 'Legally Bound'?

Legally Bound takes place in UCLAN's Moot Court room. The students undertake the escape room in groups of 10. They are shown into the room and given a scenario to read which explains that they are a legal team representing a client (university lecturer) who whilst undertaking research stands accused of profiling her students in breach Article (22)4 of the GDPR. They are told their client has proof of her students' consent which is stored on a memory stick hidden in the Court room. They must locate the memory stick by solving clues against the clock failing which in the absence of proof to the contrary their client will be found guilty. The clues range from the physical - codes hidden in jigsaws and padlocked safes to the virtual - using an Oculus quest headset and a virtual court chatbot.

How important was the use of technology in the project?

The use of technology was important to me. Our students are digital natives, they have grown up with the internet, mobile phones, social media and online gaming. I wanted to appeal to this digital awareness but at the same time offer a unique way of learning. We expended a lot of energy on trying to get students to turn off their devices in previous workshops, but I wanted to give them an opportunity to explore different technologies within the escape room workshop. Knowing that some of them would be familiar with virtual reality (VR) I wanted to embrace this and embed clues within the videos. The VR not only introduced them to different members of the law staff team but also allowed them see different areas on campus and even the local (Harris) museum where the VR clues were filmed. I also wanted the students to think about how the technologies could be used. We created a 'virtual court' and judge that the students had to appear before and communicate with to obtain the final code to unlock the last box to reveal the evidence to exonerate their client. This virtual court was in fact a chatbot masquerading as a judge. Hopefully not a taste of things to come but an interesting concept for them to experience. We also used audio clues where students had to use their phones to call a number to obtain information from a pre-recorded message. The physical clues (padlocked safes, codes in jigsaws, information gleaned from textbooks etc) complimented the technologies used. As the students were racing against the clock they had to embrace all the technologies used quickly and in doing so they experienced a variety of digital technologies in a fun, informal and comfortable environment which added to the positive experience.

What have been the main challenges and opportunities created by 'Legally Bound'?

Writing the escape room took relatively little time but sourcing all the equipment, creating the videos for the Oculus quest, and developing the chatbot probably took the most time. Actually timetabling around 20 workshops of 10 students a time within two days was a fete in itself. I also had to run all of the escape rooms over the two days with colleagues on the module observing as I was the only one who knew how it worked in its entirety. We wanted to make the escape room as accessible as possible. We had profoundly deaf and visual impaired students undertake the escape room and improved it following their feedback.

We trialled 'Legally Bound' at the Law and Emerging Technologies Conference at UCLAN. I was approached by firms to run the escape room as a team building exercise. We have also used a modified version on applicant days. I have been approached to collaborate with other schools within UCLan to create an immersive experience for their students. Following the success of the escape room I received a 'Golden Rose' University award for creative teaching voted for by the students. I was delighted that UCLAN supported my application to the Times Higher Education awards (most innovative teacher). In 2020 I was honoured to receive the ALT Thomson Reuters prize for Teaching Law with Technology. I am also delighted to have been invited to be one of the keynote speakers at the ALT Conference 2021.

How has 'Legally Bound' helped students?

Legally Bound created a team working opportunity for the students. In feedback they highlighted not only their enjoyment of getting to know other students, but also the module team and other members of staff. The VR headset was used to show 3D videos filmed around UCLAN and in the local museum featuring members of the School of Justice. They met (virtually) tutors from all first-year modules and the Dean of the School of Justice whilst undertaking the clues.

They also enjoyed the problem-solving aspect of the escape room. Working against the clock seemed to focus their attention and time management skills. Interestingly, the teams

that worked well were those that realised they needed to delegate tasks to each other and rely on each other's individual strengths. An example was the use of the Oculus headset. Students that were familiar with VR headsets took the lead and completed the tasks set in virtual reality. We wanted the students to use the textbooks more effectively and set questions which had to be looked up in their core texts. Some students had not engaged fully with the core texts previously and it was encouraging to see them doing so with vigour.

Using gamification immersed the students in the experience. They had to accurately answer questions relating to the materials taught on the module and this not only consolidated their learning but helped them explore the subject with their peers. They were unable to escape the learning process even if they escaped the room!

What was the best reaction you received to 'Legally Bound'?

Legally Bound received great feedback from the students and staff. Some asked to undertake escape room workshops in their other modules, and I was stopped in the corridor on numerous occasions by students in other years asking me when they were going to do 'our escape room!'

The best comment was probably 'its fun and cool!' but the majority listed 'teamwork' and 'communication' as the best feature. One student admitted it was the first time he had opened a textbook on the course which was a little worrying given they were 5 weeks into the semester.

Most students enjoyed the technology used (chatbots, quizzes, virtual reality) but they also really enjoyed the more physical aspects of the escape room. I used safes which could only be unlocked once a code had been uncovered, audio messages left on an answerphone and replica guns hidden inside law books. The biggest surprise was the students' reaction to the jigsaw which replicated the court system but had codes embedded within it. Had I known they would react with such joy to the jigsaw I would have added a few more in! Completion of the jigsaw also saw the students crowded round together interacting with each other.

What are your plans for developing the project in future?

During the pandemic we were unable to run the physical escape room and I planned to develop an interactive OneNote version. Due to teaching commitments in the first part of the semester the development of the OneNote escape room had to take a back seat but I have now developed a trial OneNote escape room which I hope to present at this year's ALT conference. Going forward I hope to develop the escape room for use by colleagues in other schools. Working on the escape room has given me a great insight into using technology within the classroom. More recently I developed teaching materials using virtual reality. I took some of the fundamental contract law cases and devised a street in virtual reality. Students can now 'walk' down the street and visit shops which represent such cases as *Carlill v Carbolic Smoke Ball Co*, *Fisher v Bell*, *Partridge v Crittenden* etc. They can pop into shop and pick up a smoke ball, see a knife displayed in a shop window or read an advert in a newspaper, whilst hearing about the legal principles involved.

Do you have any advice for anyone thinking about developing a similar project at their institution?

Whether you are thinking about developing a physical escape room or using software to replicate an escape room experience I would encourage anyone to think about how you can use gamification to engage with the students. The writing of the clues and activities takes relatively little time, it is the organising and setting up of the room that takes a little longer. I

would also readily admit that I am not the most tech-savvy individual (the irony is not lost on me being a recipient of the Teaching Law with Technology prize!) so although I knew what activities and tasks to use and what the end design should be I did not always know how the technology could be harnessed to get the results I wanted. It was a voyage of discovery. The school was lucky to have an e-learning specialist and I would often bounce ideas of him and seek his assistance in creating the content (chatbot, stand alone platform).

I also think that using gamification when we are back on campus may be a great way to get students communicating, using teamwork, and interacting following a period of what for many, in my experience, has been a lonely and isolating experience. The return to the classroom will be a very much welcomed return and I hope to engage the next cohort of students with an updated version of Legally Bound.

Law Teacher interview – Linda Chadderton (law lecturer - University of Central Lancashire)

- Tell us a little bit about your background?

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- How did you come up with the idea for your legally themed escape room, Legally Bound? (for example, was it an unmet teaching need?)

New to teaching, I was encouraged by colleagues to attend the ALT conference in Keele in 2018. The theme being diversity and innovation. I was inspired by the attendees' passion for teaching. I thought about how I could engage the students in their learning experience in an innovate manner. During my first six months at UCLAN I had witnessed how students were more engaged when they enjoyed the activities they undertook in class. I was also aware that in the first few weeks at University it could be difficult for students to make friends and actually communicate with each other. I took this innovation, engagement and communication as my goal and applied it to one of the Legal Systems workshops. The module leader also impressed upon me the need to get the students to engage with the core textbooks for the module. I started to devise a series of clues and activities which would not only consolidate the students' learning but get them to communicate and use team work to progress through the workshop. I wanted to immerse them in the learning process, get them to work as a team and have fun at the same time. I needed funding to purchase the equipment to run the escape room and shamelessly approached the Dean of the Law School with a 'Dragon's Den' style pitch. I felt very lucky to secure the funding, I had only been at the University 10 months when I pitched the idea to the Dean. I also received great support from the Legal System module leader and our school's IT technician. It was only following the creation of the escape room did I realise there was a pedagogic term for what I was doing - gamification!

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