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Teaching Professionalism through Assessment: A Case for Take-Home Exams in Law Studies

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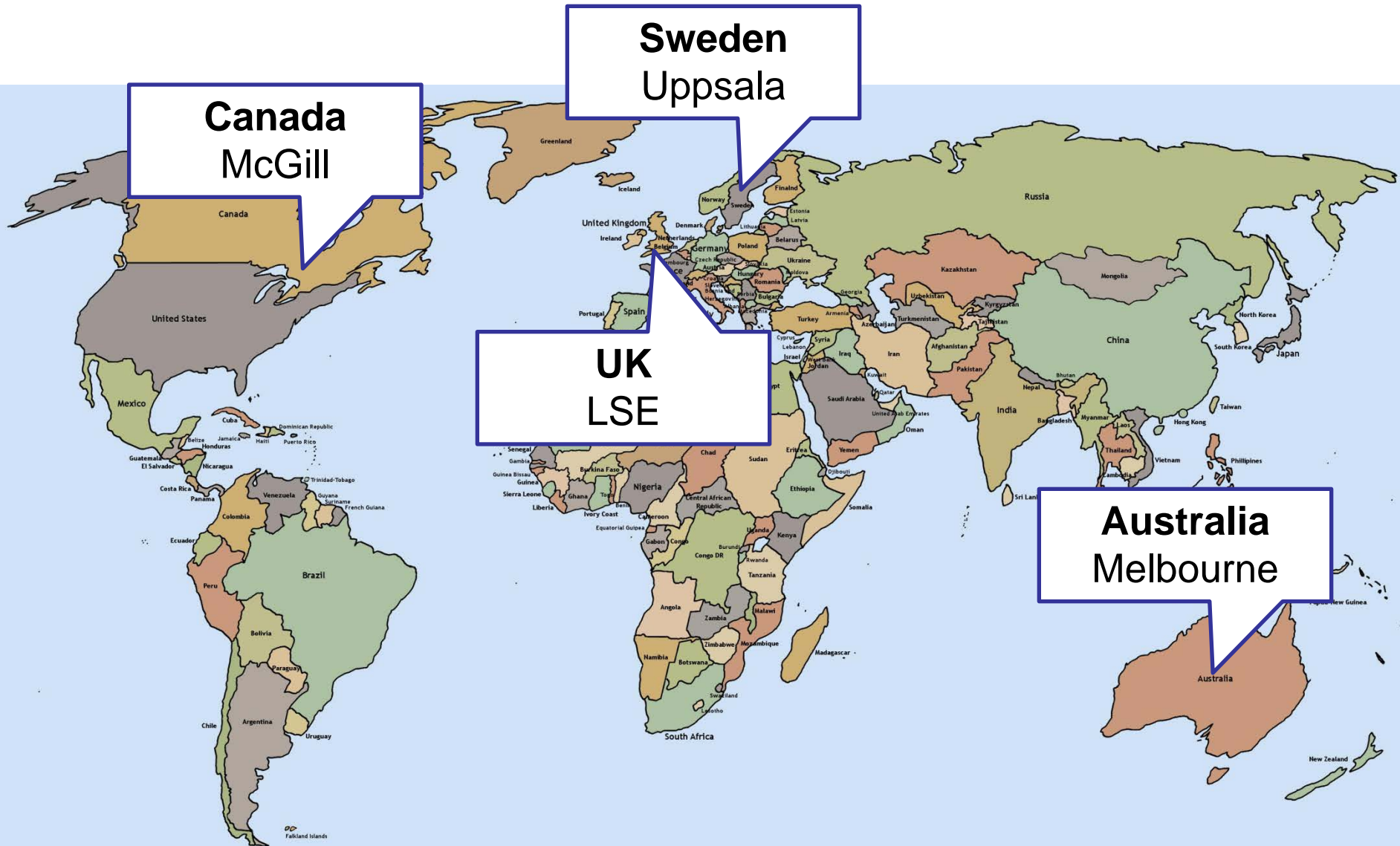
- Law as a **practical** discipline
- Emphasis on **professionalism** at Bucks New University:
 - personal and professional integrity and ethics
 - time management
 - work/life balance
 - research skills
 - the ability to express ideas in a logical manner and to find solutions to problems
 - The ability to predict and to deal with technological challenges
- Limited **academic literature** (see last slide)

Do they develop professional skills?

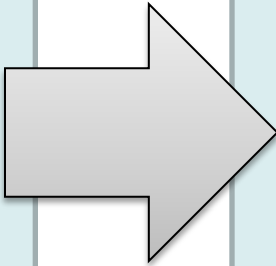
*“The **traditional exam** is not the best way of assessing these skills because it is **limited both by time and by the resources** students are able to consult [and] ... in a traditional exam it is difficult to assess **if professional skills have been acquired in depth.**”*

D López et al, 'A Take-home Exam to Assess Professional Skills', paper presented at 41st ASEE/IEEE Frontiers in Education Conference (12-15 October 2011, Rapid City, SD, the USA).

Where are take-home exams currently used?

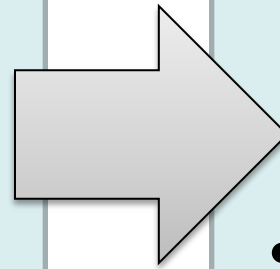


Cheating/ Plagiarism/ Collusion



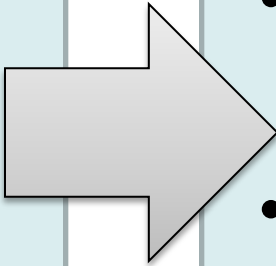
- Electronic submission of completed work.
- 24/48 hour time limits to complete the work.
- Drop-in tasks as the time goes.
- Set scenario, rather than essay, questions.
- Work completed in student's 'own words'
- Follow-up viva.

**Time-
consuming
and
exhausting**



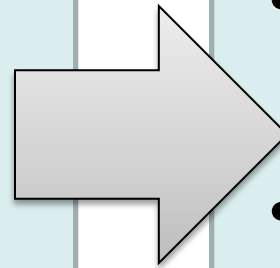
- Working with students before the exam to develop time-management and organisational skills.
- Clear instructions and objectives.
- Coordination among assessed subjects

No difference in
student
performance



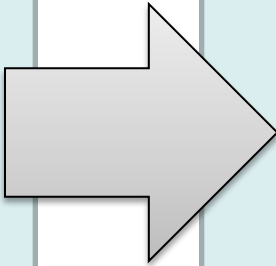
- Explain the benefits of being assessed in this way.
- Longer monitoring period required to collect data
- Ensure they understand why we assess.
- Does it matter?

**Not taken
seriously by
students and
employers**



- Find out what employers think
- Communicate that to students

Disabilities and family duties



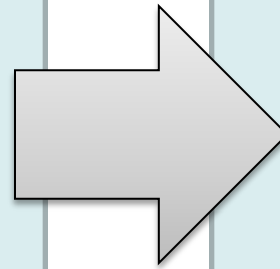
- Alternative/designated locations.
- Provide adequate forewarning of the assessment method and date
- Splitting the assessment period (e.g. 4 x 6 hours).

Assessment
environment
(home/
university/
other)



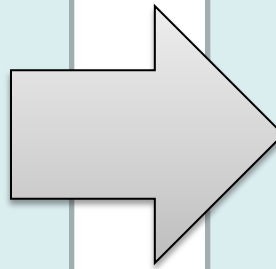
- Alternative/designated locations.
- Provide adequate forewarning of the assessment method and date

Students
may
'outsmart'
the tutors



- Why is that a disadvantage?

International students – what skills training?



- More skills-based training before the assessment.
- Ensure they have understood why we assess in this way and how it works.

- Good idea: professionalism
- Challenges can be overcome, but – staff/time costs?



Relevant literature

- **D López et al, 'A Take-home Exam to Assess Professional Skills'**, paper presented at 41st ASEE/IEEE Frontiers in Education Conference (12-15 October 2011, Rapid City, SD, the USA).
- **AS Freedman 'The take-home examination'** (1968) 45:6 *Peabody Journal of Education*;
- SK Happel, MM Jennings, 'An Economic Analysis of Academic Dishonesty and Its Deterrence in Higher Education' (2008) 25:2 *Journal of Legal Studies Education*;
- A Hemming, 'Online Tests and exams- Lower Standards or Improved Learning' (2010) 44:3 *The Law Teacher*;
- MM Jennings, 'In Defense of the Sage on the Stage: Escaping from the "Sorcery" of Learning Styles and Helping Students Learn How to Learn' (2012) 29:2 *Journal of Legal Studies Education*;
- E Marchetti, 'Influence of Assessment in a Law Program on the Adoption of a Deep Approach to Learning' 15:2 *Journal of Professional Legal Education*;
- E Roe, E Vasta, 'Assessment in Higher Education The Current Australian Scene' (1980) 5:3 *Assessment in Higher Education*;
- RL Weaver, 'Teaching (and Testing) Administrative Law' (1999-2000) 38 *Brandeis Law Journal*.