

ESSEX LAW SCHOOL MAGAZINE

July 2024

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University of Essex

A welcome message from the Dean



It is my pleasure to introduce to you the magazine for Essex Law School.

In its pages, you will find out more about our community: our dynamic research environment, successful student stories, degrees we are currently launching, partnerships and cooperation – among many other issues. Some of our academic colleagues who have recently joined us will talk about their research and teaching interests, and the Directors of our leading Essex Law School Clinic and Essex Human Rights Clinic will share with you some of the impactful work undertaken therein.

If you are interested in joining our community or partnering with us, or if you have already visited us, you will have noticed that you will join a Law School that is at the forefront of innovative approaches to teaching and research, while also providing a solid doctrinal understanding of the law for a successful career in the legal profession and beyond. In the pages of this magazine, you will find several features explaining the work of our School and various initiatives and projects undertaken, in particular, over the current academic year. At Essex, you will also have access to our renowned inter-disciplinary Human Rights Centre, which is a recognised international leader.

Our School has a global reputation: to provide a couple of examples, it was ranked 49th in the world for Law (9th in the UK) in THE World University Rankings 2024, and it was ranked 3rd in the UK for Research Power in accordance with Times Higher Education Research Power measure for REF 2021 (the research excellence assessment taking place across the UK every 7 or so years). If you have engaged with our staff or students you will have also noticed that we are an inclusive, welcoming and international community – and we hope that you will be part of this community, too.

If you have already studied with us, I hope it will be exciting for you to read about recent work carried out within the School – we are very keen to keep in touch with our alumni network and you are always welcome to visit us at Essex or drop us a line about the projects you are currently pursuing.

We hope you will enjoy reading our magazine!

Professor Onyeka Osuji
Dean, Essex Law School
July 2024

Events Highlights



↑ Judge Wennerström, Dr Wong and Dr Coco.

The 2024 International Law Lecture at Essex Law School

We were thrilled to host the prestigious 2024 International Law Lecture at Essex Law School, delivered by Judge Erik Wennerström from the European Court of Human Rights, entitled 'The Inter-State Cases with the Strasbourg Court: Follow-up to the Copenhagen Commitments' on Monday 10 June 2024.

The lecture was chaired and moderated by Dr Meagan Wong with an introduction by Dr Antonio Coco and was followed with a reception for students to meet Judge Wennerström.

Judge Erik Wennerström, a distinguished legal scholar and practitioner, discussed the European Court of Human Rights' evolving approach to inter-State cases.



↑ Kenyan environmental activist Ms Phyllis Omido.

Inspirational land and environment defender visits Essex Law School

Ms Phyllis Omido, renowned for her environmental activism in Kenya, visited Essex to inspire law students and activists. During her visit, she toured our Colchester Campus and delivered a guest lecture. Students at Essex Law Clinic gained valuable insights into her journey and campaigns through a Q&A session. Dr Stephen Turner of Essex Law

School, who organised the visit, described it as an honour. Ms Omido successfully campaigned for the closure of a harmful smelting factory in Owino Uhuru, despite facing mistreatment and arrest. Her efforts led to compensation for affected residents and a government-led clean-up operation. Dr Turner praised Ms Omido for her courage and commitment in tackling environmental challenges, calling her an inspiration.



↑ Professor Sandoval at the 2024 ETJN annual lecture.

The 2024 Essex Transitional Justice Network Annual Lecture: Reparation in Conflict Settings

Professor Clara Sandoval, a founding member of the Essex Transitional Justice Network (ETJN) and Director of Programmes at the Global Survivors Fund, delivered the ETJN Annual Lecture (organised by Professor Sabine Michalowski and Dr Ebba Lekvall) entitled 'Mind the gap: reparation from theory to practice'.

Drawing on her extensive experience in transitional justice, Professor Sandoval explored bridging the gap between reparation theory and implementation in conflict settings to effectively transform the lives of survivors and communities.

Clara Sandoval, also a Professor at Essex Law School, is renowned for her expertise in human rights law and international litigation.

Other events continued



↑ Pictured L–R is Françoise Hampson, Louise Goodenough from SNELS, Zuzanna Wojciak and Tony Fisher (SNELS member/legal professional).

Annual Essex Law Lecture: Doing human rights in a time of turbulence

On Tuesday 25 June 2024, we held the Annual Essex Law Lecture by guest speaker, Emeritus Professor Françoise Hampson OBE, with Louise Goodenough, President of Suffolk & North Essex Law Society (SNELS) and chaired by the Dean of Essex Law School.

For over 20 years, the protection of human rights has encountered an increasingly hostile environment. That is not limited just to human rights but to the underlying principles on which any respect of human rights rests: the rule of law; good governance; accountability and equality. Any

action to tackle the challenges to human rights must also address those elements too. This needs to be undertaken by a wide range of actors and not just lawyers.

During the lecture, Emeritus Professor Françoise Hampson discussed the importance of human rights law in today's turbulent landscape, highlighting the need for continued advocacy and protection of human rights. She also emphasised the role of legal professionals in upholding justice and promoting equality.

The discussion that followed was both thoughtful and stimulating. It was our privilege to host this event and we look forward to continuing our partnership with SNELS.

Student prizes were also presented at the event. Zuzanna Wojciak won the prize of the Post Graduate Student who achieved the best overall results on the LLM course in International Human Rights Law for 2023. Anastasia Draddy received the award of the best overall performance in 2022-23 by a Second Year Undergraduate Student.

The event was hosted by Essex Law School with the support of the local profession through SNELS. Previous speakers have included senior judges, the Director of Public Prosecutions, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, directors of NGOs, prominent legal practitioners and Members of Parliament.

PGR colloquium

On 24-25 June 2024, Essex Law School participated in the 2nd annual Eastern Arc Postgraduate Research Colloquium co-organised by the Essex, East Anglia and Sussex Law Schools and held at Earlham Hall, Norwich.



↑ Postgraduate research participants at the 2nd annual Eastern Arc Colloquium.

The 2nd Annual Colloquium follows the successful first colloquium hosted by Essex Law School in 2023. PhD candidates from all three law schools have spent two days together presenting their research, hearing from senior academics on research methods in law, networking with colleagues and building a supportive PhD community across the institutions. Essex Law School was represented by 12 PhD students who presented on topics ranging from consumer protection to the laws of armed conflict.

On the first panel of day 1, Boudicca Hawke presented her research on the status of fighters in non-international armed conflict and Furkan Cirkin presented on the concept of transnational bourgeoisie and its influence on international human rights law. On the second panel, the audience heard from Tezzeta Mbuya on

the Africanization of international investment law, from Emma Baldi on reparation for business related human rights abuses and from Anthony Obi on the impact of legal education and ethics on access to justice for victims of multinational corporations in Nigeria. The final panel of day 1 featured presentations from Sebastian Schnorrenberg on the non-intervention principle and the information environment, from Tatjana Grotje on conceptualising civilian personal data within international humanitarian law and from Benjamin Khastan on AI at the International Criminal Court. Day 2 opened with a session on research methods led by Professor Joel Colon-Rios (Essex), Professor Kirsten McConnachie (UEA), and Dr Sebastian Peyer (UEA). Later in the day, participants heard from Dilanur Demir on blockchains and legal challenges on data erasure in the EU, from Tahircan Yedek on

the role of social media platforms in privatising democracy, from Enitan Lawson on just energy transition in Nigeria and from Tugrul Erdogan on consumer protection risks of open banking.

The annual PGR colloquium presented a great opportunity for our PGR students to showcase their research, gain confidence in presenting their research to a diverse audience and receive feedback on their work. The enthusiasm and the competence they displayed in the colloquium is a testament to the wonderful support provided by their supervisors and to our strong research environment in the School. We thank all colleagues who supported the event directly and indirectly. Special thanks to Dr Fikayo Taiwo, Professor Audrey Guinchard and Professor Joel Colon-Rios for making the trip to Norwich to support our PGR students.

Interview

Ita Farrelly graduated from Essex Law School in 2006 with an LLB in Law. Ita is now the country's youngest full-time female judge.

Tell us about your time at Essex Law School

My time at Essex was brilliant. I lived in the University Quays accommodation and studied LLB Law, actively participating in pro bono projects, the legal newspaper, and various law-related activities. I formed lasting friendships and memories like the Law Ball.

Essex taught me hard work, independence, and responsibility. After a challenging first year, I understood the necessity of increased effort and focus. It was a steep learning curve and required me to up my skills and attitude. The lecturers provided practical career advice and insights into legal job prospects, fostering my adaptability and resilience.

How did you find moving from the world of academia to practice?

The world of law was incredibly challenging to break into, but my

degree prepared me for the hard work required for all aspects of my career. Essex was the foundation of my career and in many ways my game changer. Following graduation, I secured admission to the Bar Vocational Course. I then started working at a firm of solicitors in Middle Temple Inn after I was admitted to the Bar.

Then where did your career take you?

I qualified as a solicitor, progressed quickly to Partner by age 29, and held roles in youth justice and youth services. I contributed to improving children's access to justice and representation with the Bar Standards Board, Law Society, and SRA. At 32, I became the youngest full-time female judge, specialising in social security cases, special education needs, and criminal injuries compensation.

What does a typical day look like for you?

I have no typical day as a judge. I can hear any benefits-related appeal cases and see the most vulnerable people in society on a daily basis. I sit on the UK Association of Women Judges and undertake diversity and inclusion work to inform people why they should consider becoming judges in the future.



Have you been back to Essex Law School since graduating?

I have returned to career fairs to guide students in planning their futures. In 2007-2008, I supported the Street Law Project and gave talks on the Bar Vocational Course. Originally from Clacton, I am so proud of my time at Essex and incredibly grateful for all that it gave me.

From Essex Law School to Championing Human Rights

Zuzanna Wojciak, a University of Essex alumna, has excelled in human rights. In this interview, she discusses how her time at Essex Law School shaped her career and offers valuable advice to prospective students.

Zuzanna completed her LLB Law with Human Rights and pursued her LLM immediately afterwards. She started at the Digital Verification Unit (DVU) as an undergraduate and served as a DVU student coordinator during her Master's studies. Currently, she works as a Research Assistant at the AI and Human Rights Project at Queen Mary University of London. Her Master's Thesis, which explored the human rights framework's ability to challenge the legal sex/gender binary,

earned her the Nigel Rodley Prize for Best LLM International Human Rights Law Dissertation.

What skills and experiences did you gain during your time in the Essex Law School?

As an undergraduate student, I was a Student Advisor and student leader of the LGBTQ+ project at the Essex Law Clinic (alongside being a part of the DVU). During these four years, I learnt a lot from transferable skills, such as time management, critical thinking, and public speaking to legal and research skills, such as interviewing clients, conducting legal research, open source information skills etc.

How did your experience at Essex Law School prepare you for your career?

I wanted to learn about human rights, and Essex was one of a few universities offering a bachelor's law degree focused on human rights. Once I joined Essex, I became friends with students

doing the LLM in International Human Rights Law. I found their degree and experience at the HRC so interesting that I decided to stay after my bachelor's.

What advice would you give to prospective students on how to make the most of their time in the Essex Law School?

My main advice is to actively engage in diverse activities to maximise learning opportunities, balancing this with avoiding burnout. Essex provides numerous chances to acquire new skills and explore various career paths. Aspiring barristers can participate in mooting, potential solicitors can volunteer at the Law Clinic as student advisors, and those interested in advocacy can engage in project work at the Clinic (for undergraduates) or join projects at the HRC (for postgraduates). There are frequent lectures, workshops, and events featuring prominent human rights experts.

Enhancing Career Readiness

Experiential Learning at the Essex Law Clinic

Professor Donald Nicolson OBE, Director of the Essex Law Clinic, highlights the profound impact of experiential learning on law students' career readiness versus traditional classroom education.

How does experiential learning at the Essex Law Clinic prepare students for future careers, compared to traditional classroom education?

Since its launch in 2008, the Essex Law Clinic has grown from a handful of students and one staff member to 220 students who are supervised by four staff members and a number of pro bono lawyers. Together, they provide free legal advice and assistance in a wider variety of legal areas, most commonly employment, family law, housing and homelessness, immigration, and social welfare benefits, but also consumer law, personal injury and wills and probate.

Unlike the traditional approach where most law students engage with law primarily through abstract concepts and hypothetical scenarios, our curriculum systematically integrates experiential learning, research and analytical skills. Clinic students are first trained and then work with actual clients on real cases. They also contribute

to public legal education, local and national law reform efforts, and support a charity investigating miscarriages of justice.

Through this hands-on approach, students develop essential legal skills including drafting, research, advocacy, interviewing, negotiation, and ethical awareness, while also honing soft skills such as communication, problem-solving, teamwork, and time-management.

How does the Essex Law Clinic integrate experiential learning into the curriculum, and what skills do students gain from this hands-on approach?

The skills outlined above are acquired through initial training for handling cases and projects, followed by actual case and project experience. However, students can choose a clinical module in the second year for a deeper, personalised training, as well as opportunities for individual reflection and group discussion on case work in 'case surgeries'.

Established in 2008, the Clinic has become a centre of legal activity, overseeing 220 students and numerous pro bono lawyers. By engaging directly with real clients, the Clinic fosters practical, ethical, and interpersonal skills essential for their future as legal professionals.

In this interview, Professor Nicolson elaborates on these valuable experiences and explores how the Clinic aids students in navigating challenges like client trauma and academic demands, ensuring a supportive learning environment.

Clinic students can also opt for the Ethics and Justice module in their final year, using their clinical experience to explore legal ethics and access to justice. This includes 'giving voice to values' training in how to articulate and defend one's ethical position, particularly in workplace conflicts. This cultivates a 'reflective practitioner' ethos, promoting ethical professionalism beyond mere knowledge.

Can you share a particularly impactful case or project from the Essex Law Clinic that contributed to students' professional development?

A prominent example of the work done by Law Clinic students is the Housing and Homelessness Project which works closely with Beacon House, a Colchester charity aiding homeless and precariously housed locals. The Clinic students conduct weekly drop-ins, working in pairs to assist clients with complex physical and mental health issues, identifying legal concerns, signposting or referring cases to other service providers carrying out interviews and follow-ups, as well as providing advice.

The Clinic's partnership with Beacon House also includes a project to enhance local authority

emergency housing provision in Colchester. This involved reviewing previous applications to the City Council and resulted in process improvements and a legal briefing that influenced the Council's handling of emergency housing requests from Beacon House.

Subsequently, the Clinic achieved positive outcomes for its clients including:

- preventing the eviction of a vulnerable client harassed by his landlord and ensuring property repairs;
- gaining emergency housing from Colchester City Council for a seriously mentally ill young man with suicidal ideation;
- advocating for emergency accommodation for a partially-sighted man who had been street homeless for over two years after being attacked in his tent;
- helping overturn the local authority's refusal of emergency accommodation to an elderly woman with type-1 Diabetes living in her car.

Experiences like these give students practical legal knowledge beyond their usual coursework,

teaching them to apply the law to assist clients, present information effectively, teamwork, and creative problem-solving.

What challenges do students typically face when participating in clinical legal work, and how does the Clinic support them in overcoming these?

Given that the Clinic focuses on vulnerable community members, some of whom have experienced trauma, students may struggle to support such clients and may themselves be emotionally affected.

To prepare the students, the Clinic provides extensive training on dealing with vulnerable clients and vicarious trauma. Support is also available through staff contacts.

The Clinic also guides students in balancing academic, clinic, employment and sports commitments. To minimise clashes with other obligations, activities are primarily scheduled on Wednesday afternoons when there are no academic classes. Scheduled clinical modules ensure all students benefit from clinical experience, accommodating those with childcare or part-time work responsibilities.

Promoting Social Justice in the Local Community

By Liz Fisher-Frank, Director, Essex Law Clinic

The strong social justice ethos of Essex Law Clinic drives its aim to provide a targeted legal service to those in need in the local community whilst simultaneously furnishing its student volunteers with opportunities to develop practical professional skills, knowledge and values at an early stage of their legal education.

Over the last few years and for two consecutive years, Essex Law Clinic students won the prestigious LawWorks 'Best Contribution to Pro-Bono by an Individual Student' national award. Prior to that, three former students were runners up for this award. Last year, the Clinic's family law community work was highly commended in the national Lexis Nexis Family Law Awards.

The focus of the Law Clinic is to provide much-needed advice and assistance to those in the community who would otherwise struggle to access legal assistance, due mainly to financial reasons. The cuts in legal aid in 2012 coupled with the lack of legal providers has meant the services it provides have never been more needed. As well as learning professional skills through the provision of advice, students learn about the importance of professionals acting pro-bono for those most in need with the aim that this continues throughout their legal lives.

There is a rigorous application process for students to join the Clinic. Once accepted, students undertake a compulsory training programme on client interviewing, professional communication, research, ethics and how to deal with vulnerable clients. This takes place over the Autumn Term and Spring Term. Students undertake practice interviews and practice letter writing and once successfully completed, they can apply to be able to undertake client case work.

Client case work is generally in the areas of family, housing and immigration law, but may also be in areas like employment, social welfare benefits, consumer law, personal injury and wills and probate. All client interviews are supervised by a member of staff. Students gain skills and confidence through the client interviews which generally involve fact finding only. Following the interview, students then prepare a letter of advice which again is



↑ Our experienced academics lead the clinic, providing high-quality training for our team of academics and students.

supervised and signed off by a member of staff. Students are trained to provide a letter targeted to the clients' individual needs with practical information and links to empower the client to help themselves, often where they are representing themselves as litigants in person in proceedings.

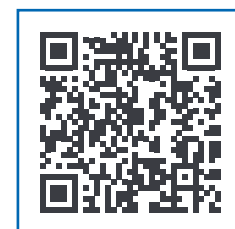
As well as providing a casework service to clients, which is often online at the request of clients, Clinic students undertake outreach work in the community. Examples of this include students attending a local homelessness charity in Colchester at which advice and other services are provided. Homelessness and family law advice is also provided via two domestic abuse charities. In addition, students can attend a Colchester drop-in charity shadowing and assisting staff who engage with the public. Immigration outreach work takes place in conjunction with the NHS. Likewise, students can opt to see family law clients at primary schools in the local area.

Students can also opt to undertake projects. These include, the always popular, Miscarriages of Justice project where students work, under supervision, on real cases. Projects often include students engaging in public legal education, that is, the writing and provision of presentations about particular areas of law. For example, students in the past provided a presentation to a local domestic abuse charity about procedures and the law around domestic abuse orders. Likewise, students have worked together to provide information leaflets in housing law. Students also can opt, for example, to work on the law reform project one focusing on LGBTQ plus issues, and in the area of welfare rights. The projects are ever evolving and allow the Clinic to be responsive to topical and local issues.

As well as focusing on the local external community, staff work hard to engender a sense of a clinical community amongst student volunteers. Students are

encouraged to use the clinic space, consisting of a reception area, study areas and meeting rooms, to meet and work. The student community is led by student office holders who are appointed to various posts in an open application process. Student Directors promote the student voice and have an active role in management and the strategic direction of the clinic. Students also edit and contribute to the Clinic magazine 'Clinic Connect'. Other opportunities are available to students such as networking with clinical alumna and pro-bono lawyers from the local legal community who support the Clinic.

Find out more about how the Clinic is impacting lives.



New LLM programmes

2024 saw the launch of two new LLM programmes at Essex Law School in Law and Technology and in International Criminal Law, reflecting our expanding research and teaching expertise across these dynamic fields of study, and which follows on from last year's successful launch of the LLM Law, Environment and Sustainability.

Digital technologies can touch all aspects of our personal, social, and professional lives. These technological developments have created unprecedented social, economic and regulatory challenges. The LLM Law and Technology at Essex Law School offers students the opportunity to explore this rapidly evolving legal landscape and to interrogate how governments and businesses apply emerging digital technologies.

The field of International Criminal Law while long established, has also undergone more recent periods of transformation and with international criminal law proceedings now representing a crucial avenue for accessing justice for victims. The LLM International Criminal Law involves students in the study of all facets of issues pertaining to achieving international justice and preventing impunity, with modules covering substantive and procedural aspects of international criminal law, and transnational criminal law.

Law plays an integral role in the resolution of the complex legal and policy questions that arise within the context of the considerable challenges faced by the international community in achieving sustainability relating to all aspects of the environment and development. The LLM Law, Environment and Sustainability gives students the opportunity to study across a wide range of modules relevant to environmental law and development, including international law, corporate responsibility, human rights, and trade and investment law.

Essex Law School has a thriving community of PGT staff, students and alumni and these new LLM programmes will enhance our existing reputation in human rights, private and business law, and international law.

If you would like to learn more about PGT study at Essex Law School, please email our PGT admissions team at lawpgtadmissions@essex.ac.uk

ADRU Visit to the UN

Students from Essex's Arbitrary Detention Redress Unit (ADRU), led by Dr Matthew Gillett and Dr Sabina Garahan, visited the United Nations in Geneva with support from the Essex Human Rights Centre.



↑ Members of the Essex ADRU meet with UN Special Mandate Holders in Geneva.

The visit aligned with the 99th session of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and the 55th session of the Human Rights Council. It aimed to deepen students' understanding of the UN human rights initiatives.

On the first day, students met with a member of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples team, an Essex Law School human rights alumnus. They were briefed on the mandate's work and the role of Special Procedures in the UN human rights system, discussed the arbitrary detention of environmental human rights defenders, and shared their research on its impact on indigenous communities.

In the afternoon, students met with three members of the Working Group: Dr Ganna Yudkivska, Ms. Priya Gopalan, and Dr Mumba Malila, along with Dr Gillett.

During the meeting the students presented key findings of their research. The presentations were followed by an exchange with the Working Group's members who shared insightful reflections.

They also shared advice with the students on how to continue with their professional path into the UN System.

On the second day, students attended a meeting with the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM),

which delivered a presentation on their operations, tools, and the complex challenges they face.

To conclude their visit, students met with six members of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees team and shared their progress on a project addressing arbitrary detention, migration, and fact-finding.

The ADRU is a project of the Human Rights Centre Clinic at the University of Essex which engages undergraduate and postgraduate students, and continues offering new students valuable developmental opportunities beyond the classroom.

Defending human rights while studying at Essex

Every year, 25-30 postgraduate students take part in our Human Rights Centre Clinic.

“The Human Rights Centre Clinic aims to place the intellectual and research resources of the University in the service of international advocacy for the protection of human rights. Human rights clinics can make a definitive contribution to the development of international law through monitoring and the promotion of ideas and legal standards, merging advocacy and academic rigour to hold states and other actors to account.”

Dr Koldo Casla, Director of the Human Rights Centre Clinic

↓ Some of the students of the Human Rights Centre Clinic in March 2024.



Our reports shape government policy and NGO advocacy on human rights around the world. Recommendations have been adopted by policy makers and have influenced organisations in the development of their strategies and activities. For example, the findings and recommendations of a report written by students at the Human Rights Centre Clinic are being used by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Modern Conflict (APPGMC) to initiate a debate on oversight and accountability of UK Special Forces in the House of Lords.



↑ Visit to the UN headquarters in Geneva of the Arbitrary Detention Redress Unit team in April 2024.

Our reports also inform the practice and general understanding of international organisations. As part of the Arbitrary Detention Redress Unit, one of the projects of the Human Rights Centre Clinic, students have contributed research that formed the basis of thematic reports of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, for example, on detention pursuant to disinformation laws, in the context of COVID-19, and of environmental human rights defenders. Over the course of two academic years, the team assisted the UN Working Group on at least 16 individual

cases concerning human rights defenders and other persons arbitrarily detained around the world.

In 2023-24, students worked on environmental crimes, refugee rights, right to adequate housing, freedom of association, arbitrary detention, rights-based economy, and justice in the energy transition. Among others, we worked in partnership with Colombia's Special Jurisdiction for Peace, Citizens Essex, The Shift, the Center for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

For 2024-25, we are putting together six exciting new projects with more international partners on business and human rights, environmental rights in Kenya, indigenous rights in Canada, workers' rights in the Caribbean, reparations for victims of human rights abuses, and arbitrary detention again. We will work with Amnesty International, the Center for Justice Governance and Environmental Action, Global Survivors Fund, the Innu Nation, Survival International, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, and more.

“Human rights clinical education is an essential and unique bridge between scholarship and implementation. Through practice on real-world projects, student gain insights only made possible through the effort to apply theory into the principles at the core of the field. Clinical human rights practice is connecting, motivating, challenging, and supremely formative. It also positions students well for the future, as practical experience is a key trait sought after by recruiters in human rights civil society organisations. ESCR-Net's own experience collaborating with the Essex Human Rights Clinic on a project in 2022-23 contributed greatly to our mandate and was an excellent opportunity to engage with the work from a reflective academic perspective.”

Fernando Ribeiro-Delgado, Strategic Litigation Coordinator, ESCR-Net

Welcoming our new faculty members

Dr SoYeon Kim

What are your research interests?

My research interests are in public international law in general, but more specifically in the international law of the sea, international environmental law, Third World Approaches to International Law (TWAIL), human rights law and international relations.

What are you teaching in Essex Law School?

At the undergraduate level, I am teaching Public International Law, Legal Research Skills and Final-Year Research Project (or Capstone). At the postgraduate level, I am teaching Public International Law and International Law of the Sea.

What are you working on at the moment?

I have been working on the advisory opinions from the International Courts and Tribunals on State obligations regarding climate change.

This work will examine the role of small island developing States in shaping and developing climate change law.



Dr Giulia Gentile

What are your research interests?

Having a background in constitutional law and human rights, I've always been interested in questions of power, governance and the interactions between public and private values. I brought these perspectives within the realm of AI research, and thus created a bridge between EU constitutional law and digital regulation, which was traditionally studied by legal scholars under private lenses because of the dominance of private actors and tools in the digitised environment.

Dr Justin Jos Poonjatt

What are your research interests?

I am interested in researching questions of law pertaining to business and human rights, non-judicial forms of access to remedies and corporate accountability.

What are you teaching in Essex Law School?

I am currently teaching contract law, business and human rights and supervising final year research projects for undergraduate students. In the coming academic session, I will also be supervising postgraduate dissertations.

What are you working on at the moment?

I am currently working on two different scholarly outputs. First, I am contributing a book chapter which investigates the use of legal waivers in settlement agreements drawing on case studies from PNG and Tanzania. Second,

I am writing a journal article which empirically assesses the impact of the Modern Slavery Act 2018 in Australia through an analysis of statements submitted to the Modern Slavery Register by Australian multinationals.



What are you teaching in Essex Law School?

I teach EU law and, from next year, two modules on Law and Tech: Digital Technologies, Law and Society and Data Protection. In these modules, the students will gain an understanding of the main legal issues around digital power while also exploring specific case studies and learning tech skills. These courses will equip students with the knowledge and the skills to successfully navigate the legal profession of the future.

What are you working on at the moment?

I am currently working on two areas that concern current issues at the intersection between law and digitisation. First, I am one of the Principal Investigators of a collaborative project funded by the EU and UKRI on the reconceptualisation of the EU social contract in the age of AI. Second, I am researching how digitisation is impacting the separation of powers in democratic states.

Spotlight on...

Public Law & CAJI

Essex Law School is a leader in the field of public law. Our work in the School has been influential in shaping both academic discourse and policy development, evidenced by our colleagues' written evidence to parliamentary committees, prolific output of publications and blogs on current issues and the organisation of numerous workshops and public outreach activities in collaboration with the Public Law Project and the Law Society.

Our work has reached beyond academia, having more recently been acknowledged in the Independent Review of Administrative Law (2020-2021) presented to Parliament by the Lord Chancellor; and by the House of Lords International Agreements Committee on the UK-Rwanda Treaty on the provision of an asylum partnership between the two countries (2023-2024).

Initiatives within the School such as the Essex Constitutional and Administrative Justice Initiative (Essex CAJI) and the public law cluster integrate everyday and local matters about accountability of public authorities, access to justice and access to a remedy with Essex Law School's expansive scholarship in constitutional justice, judicial review, comparative public law, constitutional theory, social justice and human rights.

Our teaching and research ethos is grounded in the principles of social justice, which places the individual at the focal point of society's fundamental functions,

encompassing human dignity, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. Our commitment to these principles is further exemplified through the School's education offerings from the undergraduate level. Optional modules such as Human Rights Protection in the UK and, as of next year, Canadian Constitutional Law reflect Essex Law School's dedication to human rights and social justice but also its intent to maintain a global perspective.

Furthermore, our PGR students at Essex are involved in critical debates that push the disciplinary boundaries about the meaning and scope of constitutional and administrative justice in the UK and beyond. This engagement allows us to offer a progressive legal education that is relevant and responsive to the needs of a changing society.

Business and Private Law

The Private and Business Law Research Cluster makes cutting-edge contributions in scholarly research and societal impact, on key contemporary issues e.g., in advertising, family law, law and technology and online safety. Here are examples of recent work:

Dr Alexandros Antoniou is researching the responsiveness of regulators to the growing professionalisation of social media influencers, urging regulators to adapt to the nuanced and evolving nature of influencer marketing to ensure a more robust oversight in this emerging profession. This involves qualitative research that spotlights 'promo-masquerade', 'risk-fluence', 'mone-trapment' and 'stereo-scripting' as new, distinct areas of regulatory concern.

Based on this research Alexandros is publishing articles e.g. 'When likes go rogue: advertising standards and the malpractice of unruly social media influencers' (Journal of Media Law).

Dr Samantha Davey (with Stella Bolaki, University of Kent) is working on an 'artist's book' project funded partly by the Essex Centre for Public Policy Engagement. The project explores the grief and shame of mothers who have lost children to adoption without consent or under coercion. The project involves workshops, teaching mothers how to make an artist's book, which enables mothers to work through their feelings without the need to speak about those feelings. Dr Davey and Dr Bolaki are also working on further support via an instruction booklet, filmed material, and a website; supported by professionals such as social workers and art therapists. The work has already begun to have external impact e.g. on the Northern Ireland Inquiry on historical adoptions.

Professor Chris Willett has been working on post-Brexit consumer law; and on opportunities and challenges for consumer law posed by rapid technological development. Relevant published work includes his recent Modern Law Review article, 'A Legal Framework for Using Smart Contracts in Consumer Contracts: Machines as Servants, Not Masters' (with Mateja Durovic, KCL), and a book he is editing with E. Bergamini on Consumer Law and Digital Disruption containing his chapter with S. Lee on 'Brexit Ideologies and UK Digital Consumer Law'.

Professor Lorna Woods OBE is editing a commentary published by Elgar on the Digital Services Act (with Professor Christian Twigg-Flesner, Warwick), and has recently published a chapter on 'Regulating to Minimise Harm to Children and Young People' in a book by Emily Setty et al on Children, Young People and Online Harms (Springer). She continues in her leading role with the Online Safety Act Network; and is supporting Australia's review of their internet regulation.

Human Rights Centre

Our Human Rights Centre is world-renowned for excellence in interdisciplinary human rights education, research and practice.

At the heart of our work is the interface between the theory and practice of human rights, including in conflict and acute crises, digital governance, transitional justice, detention, the private sector, social and economic institutions, and the environment. We influence and set human rights agendas. We make concrete differences around the globe, and we are a dominant voice for change.

On our university campus, our community of over 120 postgraduate and undergraduate students and 130 academic members regularly come together around our Speaker Series, involving around 10 talks and panels each year from leading human rights academics and practitioners on contemporary human rights debates, our annual lecture (delivered in December 2023 by Professor

Kate Gilmore, former UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights (2015-2019) and entitled '75 Years in the Rights to be Human?'), regular human rights film screenings, book launch events celebrating publications of our HRC members, our annual student-run Human Rights in Asia Conference, and our Human Rights Week events, including the famous 'chalking of the steps,' where we mark international human rights day by inscribing articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on a staircase at the heart of our campus.

Complementing our human rights teaching, we provide many other opportunities for student engagement, learning and training on human rights. Every year around 25 students take part in our Digital Verification Unit, receiving training at the Annual Digital Verification Corps Summit and working with organisations worldwide on investigating human rights violations through the application of open-source methods – this year focusing on speech crimes during the Gaza-Israel conflict, and on attacks against journalists in Spain, Tunisia, Kenya, Sudan. We also

provide employability support, and students often take part in our Centre's specialised projects, such as the Transitional Justice Network and the Business and Human Rights Project.

Our Members hail from 11 departments, and engage in human rights practice. This past year, Dr Matthew Gillett was appointed Rapporteur-Chair of the UN's Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; Professor Paul Hunt finished a five-year term as New Zealand's Chief Human Rights Commissioner; Dr Erin Pobjie was appointed Co-Rapporteur of the International Law Association's Committee on Military Assistance on Request; Professor Ahmed Shaheed is serving on the OSCE Expert Panel on Freedom of Religion or Belief; Dr Aoife Duffy served in the International Expert Panel on Impunity & the Northern Ireland Conflict; and Dr Giulia Gentile was appointed to the UNESCO Committee on Guidelines for AI in justice systems.

Interview



↑ Julie Hannah (bottom centre) with project partners in Pereira, Colombia.

Julie Hannah

Can you tell us a bit about yourself and how you came to work at Essex?

I arrived at Essex in mid-career, working at an international humanitarian organisation. In my work, the language of human rights and international humanitarian law was increasingly used but I was unclear how these frameworks should guide my approach in practice. Likewise, I was ready for a career shift but unclear in what direction. A senior colleague (and Essex alum) suggested I explore an LLM in human rights at Essex. It was important to be closely engaged with practice for my postgraduate study – Essex was the obvious choice. I have been part of the Essex community ever since!

Your groundbreaking work on human rights and drug policy was selected as

one of the impact case studies in the last research excellence framework.

What did this project entail?

I lead the world's only academic centre focused on international human rights law and drug policy. Our project emerged in 2016 when many countries called for more attention to human rights in drug policy. Alongside colleagues, we built a strategy to develop international standards on human rights and drug policy. The United Nations Development Programme became an active partner followed by UNAIDS, the World Health Organisation, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. In 2019, we launched the International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy. They are now an essential tool used by Constitutional Courts, UN treaty bodies, recognised by the UN Human Rights Council, and served

as the basis for national dialogues in Ghana and the Philippines.

You have been on research leave for the last year focusing on the implementation of the Guidelines. How has the year gone?

I spent my leave alongside an incredible Colombian organisation, Dejusticia, operationalising the Guidelines in the implementation of Colombia's bold new national drug policy, which embeds the Guidelines as its framework for operationalisation. We spent months mapping implementation pathways with partners and now have a series of interventions underway.

What are the next steps?

We will continue to expand our implementation work with national colleagues in Latin America and beyond. It is an exciting time!

Funding secured

An interdisciplinary team of academics from the University of Essex have been awarded £750,000 of funding to explore the creation of European citizens' assemblies. Researchers from [Essex Law School](#) and [Essex Business School](#) will be working with partners around the world on the project **Creating an Inclusive European Citizens' Assembly (EU-CIEMBLY)**.

Funded by Horizon Europe, through Innovate UK, the project addresses the need for new forms of citizens' participation and deliberation across – and beyond – the European Union and reflects the Law School's commitment to building collaborative and impactful international research partnerships.

The Essex team has extensive experience in conducting research on concepts of citizenship, as well as the role of citizens in contributing to legal, political and social change.

It will include Dr Anastasia Karatzia and Dr Niall O'Connor from Essex Law School, and Professor Ileana Steccolini and Dr Rebecca Warren from Essex Business School.

Dr O'Connor said: 'The particular focus of the project is on assessing existing participatory mechanisms notably citizens' assemblies, from an intersectional equality lens and with the eventual aim of proposing and piloting a prototype EU citizens' assembly that exhibits the characteristics of inclusiveness, deliberation and equality, as assessed from an intersectional perspective'.

The University of Essex's project team will primarily be involved in the evaluation of existing citizens' assembly models at both national and EU level, as well as the design of a prototype EU citizens' assembly model that fully takes account of intersectional equality issues in its design, delivery and implementation.

Professor Steccolini added: 'This ground-breaking project goes beyond traditional perspectives, championing inclusive, intersectional approaches to citizens' participation in public deliberations'.

'By placing citizens' experience at the core, and mobilising an impressive interdisciplinary team, this project will contribute to enhancing citizen empowerment and fostering societal cohesion'.

The project consortium, which features institutes from across Europe as well as New Zealand and South Africa, held its first meeting in February at the Colégio da Trindade, University of Coimbra and the project will run for four years until January 2028.

If you would like to learn more about the University of Essex's involvement in the EU-CIEMBLY project, please get in touch with Dr O'Connor at n.oconnor@essex.ac.uk.

Discover World-Leading Research on the Essex Law Research Blog



Our Essex Law Research (ELR) Blog, which was set up to highlight the world-leading research of the Law School's academics, is recognised as one of the 15 Best Rule of Law Blogs and Websites by FeedSpot.

The ELR Blog has been buzzing with activity, featuring a range of thought-provoking content and impactful research. Here's a preview of some of its popular recent content awaiting your exploration:

The Anatomy of Impact: A Conversation with Professor Lorna Woods OBE

Curious about how academic research shapes real-world outcomes? Our Director of Impact, Professor Carla Ferstman, looks at the journey of Professor Lorna Woods whose work influenced the new Online Safety Act.

100 Years of the Infanticide Act: A Legacy of Controversy and Compassion

Join us on an enlightening journey into '100 Years of the Infanticide Act' with Dr Karen Brennan, co-editor extraordinaire. The ELR blog explores the inspiration behind this ground-breaking collection, project highlights and key takeaways.

From Judgment to Justice: Discussing the Implementation of International Judgments on Socio-Economic Rights in Johannesburg

A journey from judgment to justice! Dr Koldo Casla, Director of the Human Rights Centre Clinic, reflects

on advancing socio-economic rights globally, sharing insights from a Johannesburg workshop. Our ELR Blog has the story on the transformative power of strategic litigation, celebrated victories and the role of civil society.

The Rwanda Plan is Unlawful, the Supreme Court Rules

The ELR Blog hosted analysis into the legal aftermath of the UK's rejected Rwanda deportation plan and expert opinion by Professor Theodore Konstadinides, co-director of the Constitutional and Administrative Justice Initiative (Essex CAJI), shedding light on the Supreme Court's ruling and potential shifts in asylum policies.

Church of Sweden Apologises to Sami for Involvement in Colonial Oppression & Past Abuses

Dr Ebba Lekvall, Co-Director of the Essex Transitional Justice Network, explores the apology by the Church of Sweden to Sami people for centuries of colonial oppression and past abuses.

Join the conversation



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→ View from the Essex Law School
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We extend our gratitude to all contributors whose invaluable insights and dedication have enriched this edition of the Essex Law School Magazine.