



LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY
LEEDS LAW SCHOOL

ModernLawReview

INCLUSIVE LEGAL EDUCATION

11TH SEPT 2025 | 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
HARVARD STYLE LECTURE THEATRE, BROADCASTING PLACE,
LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY

This Conference aims to pave the way for breakthrough research on
how to advance 'inclusive legal education'



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WELCOME FROM LEEDS LAW SCHOOL



**DR CAMELIA
DIJKSTRA**

**DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH AND
KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE
SERVICES**

Welcome to Leeds Law School. Located in one of the UK's largest legal hubs and with guest speakers, professional mentoring, networking events and a Law Clinic, we offer a range of opportunities and are perfectly placed to deliver an excellent student experience.

Our academic staff research a variety of relevant and impactful topics through the newly established Centre for Justice, Law and Policy (JuLaP). The Conference on 'Inclusive Legal Education' falls especially within the remit of its dynamic Law, Education and Practice Research Group (LEAP) and the Equality, Rights and Justice Group (ERJ).



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ABOUT THE EVENT

This one-day conference explores how legal education can become more inclusive, particularly for disabled students. It brings together leading scholars, practitioners, and advocates to discuss the understanding of disability, the impact of competency standards, and the transition to professional practice.

This event is funded by the Modern Law Review (MLR) Seminar Funding

The day includes thought-provoking keynote sessions, responses from experts, Q&A segments, and a reception to foster networking and further discussion.





This conference aims to pave the way to breakthrough research on how to advance 'inclusive legal education' by examining what should be envisaged towards increasing the inclusion of disabled students into law schools.

INCLUSIVE LEGAL EDUCATION



CONFERENCE AGENDA

9:15 AM – 9:45 AM | **REGISTRATION**

Beverages on arrival and pastries

9:45 AM – 10:00 AM | **OPENING REMARKS**

Dr Camelia Dijkstra

10:00 AM – 11:15 AM | **SESSION 1**

(Chaired by Dr Camelia Dijkstra)

"The approach to disability in the various branches of law"

- Professor Anna Lawson

Response by Professor Gauthier de Beco

Questions & answers

11:15 AM – 11:30 AM | **COFFEE BREAK**

11:30 AM – 12:45 PM | **SESSION 2**

(Chaired by Ms Svetlana Kotova)

"Competency standards and the impact on disabled students"

- Dr Stephen Bunbury

Response by Dr Elisabeth Griffiths

Questions & answers

12:45 PM – 2:00 PM | **LUNCH**

2:00 PM – 3:15 PM | **SESSION 3**

(Chaired by Elisabeth Griffiths)

"Transition to the legal profession for disabled students"

- Professor Debbie Foster

Response by Ms Lizzie Hardy

Questions & answers

3:15 PM – 3:30 PM | **CLOSING REMARKS**

(Chaired by Professor Gauthier de Beco)

"The student perspective"

- Ms Jessica Benton

"The lawyer perspective"

- Ms Svetlana Kotova

3:30 PM – 4:30 PM | **RECEPTION**

Drinks



THE APPROACH TO DISABILITY IN THE VARIOUS BRANCHES OF LAW

The first theme relates to how the issue of disability is presented across the various modules. It considers the approach to disability taken by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and its benefit for other modules when questions relating to disability surface.



SPEAKER



Professor Anna Lawson

Professor of Law at the University of Leeds, Anna Lawson is a globally recognised disability rights expert, active in research, policy, and advocacy across local and international platforms.

RESPONDENT



Professor Gauthier de Beco

Professor at Leeds Beckett University, Gauthier de Beco is a specialist in human rights and disability law, with a focus on inclusive education and international legal consultancy.



COMPETENCY STANDARDS AND THE IMPACT ON DISABLED STUDENTS

The second theme explores the kind of institutional practices that are susceptible to create hurdles for disabled students. It considers the constraints imposed that might not necessarily be an integral part of the competency standards paying particular attention to the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE).



SPEAKER



Dr Stephen Bunbury

Reader in Law at the University of Westminster, Dr Stephen Bunbury is a leading scholar on disability and legal education, focusing on inclusive practices and barriers in professional qualification pathways.

RESPONDENT



Dr Elisabeth Griffiths

Associate Professor at Northumbria Law School, Elisabeth Griffiths is a leading researcher on disability, equality, and inclusive legal education, and plays a key role in national EDI and mentoring programmes.



TRANSITION TO THE LEGAL PROFESSION FOR DISABLED STUDENTS

The third theme concerns ways to streamline the transition of disabled students to employment. It looks at action to be taken so that these students do not feel to 'fall off the cliff' when they enter the legal profession.



SPEAKER



Professor Debbie Foster

Professor at Cardiff Business School, Debbie Foster researches employment, disability, and inclusion, co-leading the 'Legally Disabled?' project and advising governments and legal bodies on structural change.

RESPONDENT



Ms Lizzie Hardy

Employment law Associate at Eversheds Sutherland, Lizzie Hardy leads diversity-focused initiatives and Project Rise, championing inclusive training pathways while advising on complex employment and workplace issues.



CLOSING REMARKS

SPEAKER



Ms Jessica Benton

'The Student Perspective'

Jessica Benton is in her first year of her Ph.D. Law, researching how the field and institutions of International Criminal Justice should better respond to systemic human rights abuses against disabled people.

Being autistic herself, Jessica has been involved in disability rights activism and working to support disabled children and young people in paid roles from a young age. During undergraduate studies, she took part in a national campaign led by autistic young people with Fixers UK. Jessica went on to work in Disability commissioning, Special Education and Covid-19 response at Gloucestershire County Council, along with a voluntary role as a committee member for the council's disabled employees' network.

Between 2023 and 2024, Jessica studied an LLM in International Human Rights Law at Birmingham City University as part of a career change and aspiration to campaign against human rights abuses. Her Ph.D. is an extension of this ambition using all she has learned from activism, local government and human rights law and history.

SPEAKER



Ms Svetlana Kotova

'The lawyer perspective'

For the last 20 years Svetlana has campaigned for disability justice as a disabled activist and a legal and policy professional. She was involved in developing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and led campaigns to educate the disability community about human rights and the development of innovative models to enable disabled people to use the law. She has a varied experience from providing individual legal advice and representation to influencing national policy and using legal action to advance positive change. As a Director of Campaigns and Justice at Inclusion London - a leading Deaf and Disabled people's organisations - she coordinates campaigns on independent living, accessible housing, tackling disability poverty and advancing disabled people's rights at London, national and international level.

Svetlana holds LLM in Human Rights from the London School of Economics and Political Science. She also sits on the Mayor of London Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Board."



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THANK YOU

Thank you for attending the Inclusive Legal Education Conference. We hope the insights, experiences, and discussions from today will inspire meaningful change across legal education and practice.

Special thanks to all speakers, respondents, and participants for contributing to this vital conversation and to the Modern Law Review (MLR) for supporting this initiative through seminar funding.



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HEALTH AND SAFETY

Your safety is our priority. Please take note of the following guidance during today's event:

Emergency Procedures

In case of an emergency, please follow the instructions of the staffs and security personnel. They are fully briefed and on-site to assist you.

Evacuation

If an evacuation is required, follow the designated exit signs and move calmly to the assembly point as directed by staff.

For attendees who may need assistance: a member of our staff will escort you to a designated safe area, where you can remain safely. From there, please use the call point to contact security, who will coordinate your evacuation.

First Aid

Should you require medical assistance at any point, please notify a member of staff or security immediately. Trained first aiders are on-site to help.

General Assistance

If you have any concerns during the event, whether related to accessibility, comfort, or safety, please approach our staff. We are here to help ensure your experience is smooth and enjoyable.