

# BEST PRACTICES CASE 1



## **STUDENTS FROM POLITICAL SCIENCE AND LAW DISCIPLINES PARTICIPATED IN A WORKING GROUP ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

MELISSA CURLEY AND ANDREAS SCHLOENHARDT

A teaching collaboration initiative from the University of Queensland has suggested the benefits of Course-based Undergraduate Research Experience (CURE) in the study of human trafficking. This case study featured a partnership between the university's School of Law and its School of Political Science and International Studies. The two disciplines have different theoretical perspectives. While the political science discipline sees human rights as way of how modern states developed a political relationship with the citizen, the law discipline views human rights in its international and domestic legal systems.

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There are several things that make human rights knowledge distinct from all different types of knowledge, and these key elements are knowledge, skills, and attitude. A student must be aware of human rights issues. They must also possess the critical thinking and oral skill to perform advocacy. Finally, they must have that ability that changes the hearts and minds about a particular issue. These constitute key components in the final student assessment of performance.

A key aspect that qualifies this as a CURE project is how participants feel like they are producers of knowledge as they go through the course. Not only does it include interdisciplinary conversation, but it also features peer-to-peer interaction that engenders a feeling of knowledge building on more knowledge. Throughout the project, they are encouraged to look into Australian government policy, legislation, victim compensation, victim reintegration and repatriation services, compliance of Australian legislation with relevant international legal instruments, child trafficking and international law, and NGOs working to combat child sex tourism and trafficking in persons.

The School of Law of the University of Queensland established a human trafficking and migrant smuggling working group in 2008 ([https://www.cur.org/assets/1/23/spring2014\\_v34.3\\_international\\_desk\\_Curley.pdf](https://www.cur.org/assets/1/23/spring2014_v34.3_international_desk_Curley.pdf)). The working group provides research-led seminar-style learning environment starting from 2012. The working group accepts 12-16 senior undergraduate law students and six senior year students from the School of Political Science and International Studies to participate in the working group as junior researchers. It was weighted as an elective course in the undergraduate curriculum. Students pick a research topic of their choice with regard to human trafficking in Australia. Students replace normal face-to-face lecture time with student-led discussions and feedback. Instead of just receiving knowledge, students are taking charge and co-creating knowledge on their own. Furthermore, faculty members would like to add that the skills gained from such a process surpass the classroom and would prove useful in other professional fields outside of school. Their review of sources means that they must become competent in reviewing UN documentation and in using their reference system. Seminars are three hours long and typically begins with a briefing and then a presentation of research by students. In terms of research methods, students consult primary sources from international law, relevant case law, judicial commentary, NGO documents, and media reports.

Because advocacy is such a big part of human rights, 40 percent of a student's grade is based on the oral presentation of their research while the remaining 60 percent resides in their graded paper of 9,000 words. Students who perform well in this assessment are given an opportunity to get published on the working group's website or to submit their works to relevant journals as coauthors or single authors. As aforementioned, the main goal is to increase a sense of ownership among the students, and this is accomplished by presenting them with reward in the form of publication. As they write, students are building upon the work of past writers who have contributed on the working group's website. This, in turn, adds onto the rewarding feeling of being a researcher that helps knowledge accumulate.

When it is time for feedback, facilitators are not the only ones providing the necessary critique. Peers also provide feedback whether indirectly through a form or directly through class discussions. This happens on a regular basis. Students at the end of the assignment reported that they not only received new information about their subject about also new ways to look up information from the very beginning of a research process. In addition, students were more able to distinguish between primary and secondary sources and access new databases and information. They also were more able to interpret and gauge the value of their sources of information.

The classic classroom environment originally sees information coming from facilitators, but learning through CURE may mean students engage in knowledge creation through their own peers. In one particular instance, members debated whether a woman should actively engage in sex work while going against the view that the prostitution industry is exploitative.

Another unexpected outcome of this CURE process was how familiar students became with their sources. They were much more easily able to look up the sources they have used in their work and reflect on some of the things they have applied throughout the process.

Exit surveys conducted near the end of course suggests that students felt more able to conduct their own research after experiencing this teaching and pedagogy.

Rewritten from

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[https://www.cur.org/assets/1/23/spring2014\\_v34.3\\_international\\_desk\\_Curley.pdf](https://www.cur.org/assets/1/23/spring2014_v34.3_international_desk_Curley.pdf)

Source of image on page 1: <https://thepioneerwjhs.com/1362/feature/human-trafficking-the-horrors-of-modern-day-slavery/>

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Project team: Professor Kara Chan (leader) of Department of Communication Studies, Professor Noel Siu of Department of Marketing, and Professor Gina Lai of Department of Sociology. Mr. Chak Hee Lo served as the project assistant.