



UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

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LAW SCHOOL



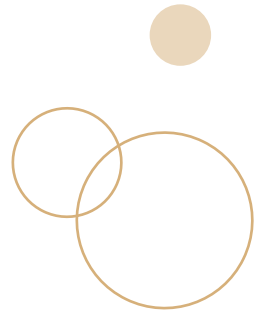
**ceplier**

Centre for Employability, Professional  
Legal Education and Research

Annual Report  
**2021/22**



**CONTENTS**  
ANNUAL REPORT  
2021/22



4. Introduction
6. 2021-22 Highlights
8. Global Legal Hackathon comes to Birmingham
10. CEPLER Awards
12. Pro-Bono Highlights from 2021-22
14. Advocacy
17. International Mooting Success for CEPLER
18. Careers and Employability
20. Work Experience Placement
22. Schedule of Careers Events 2021–22
24. Research and Scholarship
26. The Clinical Legal Education Handbook
28. CEPLER in Numbers
30. The COVID Years - Some Highlights
34. Careers Support for Students: The Pandemic Years

# Introduction



# Welcome to the 2021–22 CEPLER Annual Report. We are delighted to return with our annual update on the Centre's activities.

Now in its tenth year, CEPLER continues to flourish, providing employability opportunities for our students and furthering the University's civic mission, whilst supporting external engagement in research and scholarship on a wide range of topics.

The observant reader may notice that it has been a couple of years since the last CEPLER Annual Report was published. Although production of our Annual Reports was put on hold during the pandemic, our student-facing offering proved resilient and, as the world went into lockdown, we adapted in order to be able to continue to provide a wealth of support and opportunities for our students throughout 2019–20 and 2020–21. We have set out some of the highlights from those years later in this Report.

Returning to the current day, 2021-22 has been another busy year for the Centre and once again, CEPLER has introduced innovative new components to its programme of activity for the benefit of our students, staff and the community in which we live, work and study. As the world has slowly begun to reopen following the pandemic, we have been particularly delighted to be able to extend our global reach. Highlights from the last year include: co-hosting the first ever Birmingham heat of the Global Legal Hackathon; the introduction of international work experience opportunities for our students; and achieving success in our inaugural international Mooting competition.

There have been a couple of other significant developments within the Centre since our last report was published. Professor Robert Lee, stood down as Head

of CEPLER in January 2021 after seven years with the Centre. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Robert for his dedicated and forward-thinking leadership. During his time at the helm, he oversaw significant expansion of the Centre's activities, securing our position as a leader within the sector for student employability and support.

You may also have noticed that CEPLER has changed its name. We are now The Centre for Employability, Professional Legal Education and Research – an addition which more accurately captures the breadth and focus of our work. This rebrand coincides with the introduction of an ambitious new five-year plan for the Centre, which will see us develop our work on employability even further, extend our global reach and continue to pursue an agenda of sector leading civic engagement, facilitation of engaged and impactful research and delivery of a diverse and inclusive student-facing programme of activity. We look forward to reporting on those developments in future Annual Reports.

As always, our work continues to be delivered in collaboration with our supporters, professional partners and alumni and we remain grateful for their unwavering support and assistance.

## **Linden Thomas**

Head of CEPLER | Reader in Clinical Legal Education | Solicitor  
*September 2022*



# 2021–22 Highlights

## Birmingham Law students in discussion with Baroness Hale of Richmond

In November 2021, the University of Birmingham hosted a visit from former President of the Supreme Court of England & Wales, Baroness Hale of Richmond. Whilst she was on campus, Baroness Hale took the time to meet with current law students and answer their questions in a roundtable discussion. Students quizzed Baroness Hale on topics ranging from her experiences of imposter syndrome as the first female President of the Supreme Court, to the Supreme Court's decision on the unlawful prorogation of Parliament in 2019, to her views on the future role of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

*“The event was well structured and organised. It was a small group... There was a variety of questions and Lady Hale was kind and approachable. I felt like I really got the most out of the event”*

**Marlena Wierzchowska**  
First Year Law student



## CEPLER's distinguished Leaders in Law lecture series returned in 2021–22.

In February, Miriam Wachira, Kenyan Country Director of international NGO, Justice Defenders, made the case for the need for justice, arguing that the demand for justice is louder and the need for justice is greater than ever before. Justice Defenders is an organisation training incarcerated people and prison officers in the law to provide legal services for themselves and others.

Miriam was joined by Pascal Kakuru, who spoke about his experience. After being sentenced to death in Uganda in 2007, Pascal heard about Justice Defenders' work. He studied the law, not only successfully appealing his sentence, but graduating with a law degree while in prison. Pascal was released in 2019 and is now employed by Justice Defenders as an Education Support and Administration Officer.

In November 2021, former President of the Law Society of England & Wales, Stephanie Boyce, spoke on 'Making and Implementing your Aspirations' and her route to the Presidency.

Stephanie, who was admitted as a solicitor in 2002 and has a wealth of experience in corporate governance, regulatory frameworks and professional regulation is a Council member of the Law Society of England and Wales representing the Women Lawyers Division and Board member of the of the Law Society, a solicitor member of the Joint Tribunal Service and holds a number of statutory appointments with her local authority.

In 2020 Stephanie was voted on to the Governance Hot 100 - Board Influencer and made the Power List 100 Most Influential Black People in the UK in 2021.

# *Global Legal Hackathon comes to Birmingham*

## **The Global Legal Hackathon, the world's biggest legal tech event returned for its fourth year in 2022.**

Taking place simultaneously in cities around the world and bringing together over 10,000 participants from over 100 host cities, the event combined legal, technology and business expertise to mix innovative ideas and emerging technologies,

CEPLER was delighted to partner with the Law, Emerging Technology & Science Lab (LETS Lab) to host the Birmingham chapter of the event on campus.

The legal industry is in the midst of profound transformation, and the Global Legal Hackathon was an opportunity for everybody in the industry, no matter how seasoned or junior, tech-savvy or novice, to roll up their sleeves and join with co-workers, clients, law firms, technology companies, and academics to fully immerse themselves in the cutting edge of legal technology innovation for a weekend.

As well as spending the weekend coming up with legal tech solutions to some of the trickiest problems facing the industry and the world, participants had the chance to listen to seed talks on legal tech, legal design, smart contracts, and predictive analytics, all of which provided ample stimuli for them flexing their brains and getting their creative juices flowing. Dory Reiling, Senior Judge (retired) at the Amsterdam District Court and a key figure in the digital reform of Dutch criminal justice system delivered a keynote speech. The keynote did a superb job at putting everything into perspective and setting the tone nicely. In Dory's own words to the participants "Don't predict the future, just go ahead and create it!". And so, participants did.

The winning entry was selected by judges Tony Randle of Shoosmiths LLP and Stephanie Perraton, former President of Birmingham Law Society. The winning team were selected for their design of 'Abo-Art', an online platform focusing on educating aboriginal artists and helping them navigate through the up-and-coming NFT market. The platform aims to promote true representation of indigenous communities in the digital marketplace.



OVER  
**10,000**  
PARTICIPANTS



OVER  
**100**  
HOST CITIES

*Congratulations to the winners of the Birmingham heat:  
Ajmain Arif, Eliana Baey Jia Min, Fang Lu, Fiorella Flores  
Almeyda, Vanessa Wong, Zhiqiang Yu*

# CEPLER Awards

In July 2022, we were delighted to present a number of our graduating students with CEPLER awards, in recognition of their outstanding contributions to CEPLER initiatives during their time at university. Congratulations to all the award winners!

## Outstanding Contribution to Advocacy

*Sponsored by No5 Chambers*

For dedication to competitive mooting.  
The award was shared by four students.

**Annabel Hale**  
**Eoin Campbell**  
**Oluwabusola Fadipe**  
**Conrad Alroe**

## Outstanding Contribution to Pro Bono

*Sponsored by Mills & Reeve LLP*

For their commitment and dedication to the  
Law School Pro Bono programme.

**Poppy Brown**

## Highest achievement in CEPLER Professional Development

Our CPD scheme recognises and rewards our students' commitment to activities outside the curriculum.

**Annabel Hale**

## Highest Achievement in Careers

For unparalleled enthusiasm and  
commitment to careers activity

**Alexandra Moraru**

## Highest Achieving Student in the CEPLER 'Advocacy' module

*Sponsored by Cornwall Street Chambers*

The highest achievement award went to  
**Annabel Hale**

## The CEPLER Award for Outstanding Achievement in Extra-Curricular Endeavour

This is CEPLER's principal award and our winners this year were stellar example of dedication, support, encouragement and creativity across the whole range of CEPLER activity. We were delighted to honour

**Oluwabusola Fadipe**  
**Michelle Farinaccia**

## Highest Achieving Student in the CEPLER 'Employment Law in Practice' module

This prize is a shared prize and was awarded to

**Jasmine Mahtani**  
**Aman Sunner**



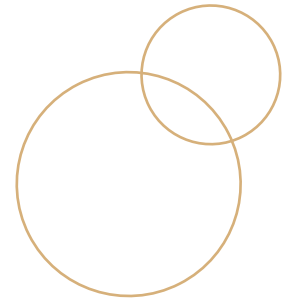
*“CEPLER played a key role in my professional development. I thoroughly enjoyed the wealth of opportunities it offered, ranging from first-year mooting to third-year workshops with leading sets of barristers’ chambers. By helping me to see the practical aspect of my studies, CEPLER strongly supported my step into the working world”*

**Aman Sunner Law LLB**



*We are grateful, as always, to our many supporters in the legal profession for their generous sponsorship of these awards.*

# Pro-Bono Highlights from 2021–22



**The Pro bono Group ran 15 separate projects last year. Here are just some of the highlights of their work:**

## Supporting our local community

- Students volunteering with the Birmingham Free Legal Advice Group provided written advice to clients on a range of issues including family law, property disputes, employment and private client. Working under the supervision of volunteer lawyers from our partner organisations, Mills & Reeve LLP, No5 Chambers and Shakespeare Martineau LLP, students conducted interviews with clients to learn more about their queries and then researched and drafted letters of advice in which they explained the law to the clients and helped them to understand their next steps. 2021–22 saw the clinic operate for the first time in a hybrid way, allowing client interviews to take place either online or in-person. Another first for the clinic this year was its location at the University's newly refurbished Exchange building, located in central Birmingham, making it easier to access for clients and our professional partners.
- Two of our students undertook a work placement with a long-standing partner of the Pro Bono Group – Birmingham Peoples Centre. The students supported BPC case workers and gained real life employment law experience and valuable office work experience.
- A new partnership was initiated this year with the charity Anawim, who are a centre for women based in Birmingham. Students presented workshops to women on pertinent topics such as legal aid, divorce law and occupational orders in cases of domestic violence. The sessions were engaging and full of useful information and appreciated by the charity. We are looking forward to this being the start of an ongoing partnership with Anawim.

*“The advice was very detailed, very personal to my business and really clear to understand. I think it was absolutely fantastic and what a great service. Thank you very much to the volunteers.”*

**Pro bono client**

## National reach

- Students volunteering with the Freedom Law Clinic were able to work on appeals on behalf of individuals who believe that they have been wrongfully convicted of a crime. The students worked in groups on an individual application involving serious crime and a complex set of legal questions on issues such as causation, joint enterprise and disclosure.
- A new Streetlaw project was launched this year, in collaboration with Tenet Law, relating to Fraud law. Bitesize videos were produced by students on Investment Fraud Scams and Money Mules (what it means to be a money mule and how to avoid becoming one). The Money Mules video was further developed into a workshop, which was delivered to a group of Year 12 school students on the Routes to Law programme.
- Students volunteering for our Common Ground – Disability and Human Rights project worked closely with the charity Changing Our Lives in enhancing their Quality of Life Standards by underpinning all the rights available to people with learning difficulties and disabilities with statutory and case law references. This was a technical and detailed piece of work, which contrasted nicely with the second limb of the project in which students produced a video presenting these rights in an accessible way. Although based in the West Midlands, Changing Our Lives work with individuals and families all over the country and the Quality of Life Standards and video will have a far-reaching impact.

## Intro to Pro Bono Course

As a way of making pro bono accessible to a larger number of students, including first year law students and non-law students, in a year with an unusually large first year intake, we created the Introduction to Pro Bono Course. The course has been designed to introduce to students the concept of pro bono, why it exists, what it does and how it can be used in practice, both at a University level and within legal practice. With interactive and reflective exercises and a variety of materials for students to engage with, we hope the course will give students a solid understanding of pro bono either before they embark on pro bono work, or alongside pro bono project work they are already doing.

## International Streetlaw visitors

We were pleased to host academics from Hasselt University, Belgium for two days in March. Our three guests met with Linden and Amy to discuss the different approaches to pro bono activities at Birmingham and Hasselt Universities, as well as having the opportunity to observe Streetlaw sessions being delivered. We hope to stay in touch with Hasselt and continue to share our pro bono and Streetlaw experiences.

*“The communication with clients and being able to gain experiences which will apply to practicing law in the future. I have gained experiences that I didn’t have before and learnt a lot about law in practice.”*

**Pro bono student**

## Post-graduate student participation in pro bono

For the first time this year, we recruited PGT students into the Pro Bono Group and designed exclusive PGT projects for these students and created opportunities for the PGT students to takeover existing projects for the summer period, where ordinarily the projects would have drawn to a natural conclusion after Easter. PGT students participated in the Fraud and the Employment Tribunal Streetlaw projects and helped produce an information video for the charity Migrant Help. It was a successful pilot and will be continued and developed in future years.



## Pro bono overview 2021–22

Pro bono is the name given to legal services provided by lawyers free of charge for the benefit of those who would not otherwise be able to access legal advice or assistance. Over 230 Birmingham Law School students participate in pro bono activity each year.

### Our Pro Bono Group’s twin objectives are to:

1. Enhance the educational experiences of Birmingham Law School students; and
2. Provide free legal services for people in the community, especially vulnerable people who cannot afford the services of a lawyer.

We run a number of pro bono projects each year which are designed to address unmet legal need. Some of our projects support members of our local community, others have national reach.

# Advocacy

**CEPLER has continued to provide a range of opportunities for students to develop their rhetorical skills, through our faculty-led, extra-curricular advocacy programme.**

The programme consists of skills training, delivered by experienced advocates, followed by opportunities to compete in mooting, negotiation, debating and client interviewing.

During 2021–22, several of our students also went on to represent Birmingham Law School in national advocacy competitions, including the Gateley’s UK Sports Law Negotiation Competition held at the Etihad Stadium and the National Client Interviewing Competition.

*“The best thing was the thrill of being able to participate in a competition. I also enjoyed the fact that to was done in a formal environment and was taken seriously in order for us to make the most of the experience.”*

**Advocacy student**



*The Inter-American Court*

## New Amicus Brief

Dr Damian Gonzalez-Salzberg, Associate Professor in Law, selected four law students to collaborate in the drafting of an amicus curiae brief for submission to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

An amicus curiae brief is a written submission to a court in which a person or organisation that is not party to the proceedings can set out legal arguments and recommendations in a given case.

Charlotte Young Andrade (LLM), Yenesi Velez Mendez (LLM), Pia Benecke (LLB), and Oluwabulosa Fadipe (LLB) worked with Damian throughout June to write a legal brief that was submitted in early July to the Inter-American Court as a third-party intervention in a pending case before the Court.

## Congratulations to the winners of our internal advocacy competitions 2021–22

### Alumni Cup Moot 2022

Amber Shaf  
Nathan Newnham

### PG Cup Moot 2022 – Best Oral Advocate

Karolina Sierpien

### Alumni Cup Moot 2022 – Best Skeleton Argument

Nathan Newnham

### Client Interviewing Competition 2022

Shaan Gill  
Noor Farid

### Alumni Cup Moot 2022 – Best Oral Advocate

Nathan Newnham

### Debating Competition 2022

Krishna Sedani  
Nathan Newnham

### Camm Cup Moot 2022

Hannah Bentwood  
Millie Hainge

### Debating Competition 2022 – Best Oralist

Krishna Sedani

### PG Cup Moot 2022

Karolina Sierpien  
Anthony Smothers Jnr

### Negotiating Competition 2022

Georgia Hanna  
Waleed Hassan

### PG Cup Moot 2022 – Best Skeleton Argument

Ali Kassam

### Negotiating Competition 2022 – Best Negotiator

Michelle Farinaccia

*“Debating was a fantastic way to get to know other students in the law school, not only in my own year, but other years as well. It was great to work in teams for this activity, and both my colleagues were great partners to work with. In addition, using creativity in our argument meant we had to think laterally and advance critical research skills, something I found challenging yet equally enjoyable for the purposes of this activity.”*

**Advocacy student**

## Esteemed Alumnus Returns for a Day of Advocacy Skills Training

CEPLER was delighted to welcome back to Birmingham Law School alumnus, Nick Braslavsky KC, in March 2022 to deliver a full day of practical advocacy training for Birmingham Law students. Nick was both an undergraduate and a postgraduate here and has practised full-time as a barrister since then. He was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1999 and sits as a deputy High Court Judge. He was appointed honorary Professor of Law in 2016.

The full day workshop was designed to introduce students to the professional skills expected of lawyers involved in the litigation process. The day was split into two parts, with both parts focussing on the same case arising from a road traffic collision. Participants were provided with documents to consider prior to the session, including pleadings and the joint, agreed accident reconstruction expert report.

During the first part of the day, students were instructed to attend a settlement meeting designed to try and achieve a resolution of the dispute by negotiation between the parties. They had the opportunity to argue the case with their opponents in an attempt to achieve a settlement as advantageous as possible for their client.

In the second part of the day, the case study proceeded as though negotiations had not been successful and the matter continued to trial in front of a Judge who listened to students' submissions on behalf of their clients as to who was responsible for the accident and the extent to which the claimant's eventual damages should be reduced on the basis that he contributed to his own injuries.



*Eliana Baey and Waleed Hassan, one of the student teams representing Birmingham Law School at the Etihad Stadium*

## 2022 Gateley Sports Law Negotiation Competition

**2nd year student Eliana Baey describes the experience of participating in the 2022 Gateley Sports Law Negotiation Competition, hosted at the Etihad Stadium, Manchester**

It was a privilege representing Birmingham Law School (BLS) at the 2022 Gateley Sports Law Negotiation Competition in Manchester. We were up against strong contenders from a range of legal education backgrounds. In addition to the competition rounds, we were given a negotiation masterclass - which was a delightful addition to the schedule. The competition also included a compulsory self-analysis presentation after the oral rounds, which was an interesting inclusion.

After the self-analysis, we engaged in dialogue with the judges to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of our negotiation strategies and overall performance.

Although we did not win the competition, we have gained insight into our abilities as negotiators, as well as pointers on areas for future improvement. Participating in 'Negotiation' as an extra-curricular activity this year has been an enriching experience and something that we would recommend to students looking to make their time at BLS all the more worthwhile.

We would like to extend our gratitude to Dr Mariela de Amstalden, Negotiation Lead, who has been instrumental in assisting us wholeheartedly throughout the internal and external negotiation competitions, and the rest of the BLS-CEPLER Advocacy and administrative team that supported us throughout the process.

It was a great experience!



*Advocacy Skills Day with Nick Braslavsky KC*



# International Mooting Success for CEPLER

**In 2021–22, students represented Birmingham Law School in international advocacy competitions for the first time, with great success.**

## Success in Strasbourg

In May, Birmingham Law School participated in the international rounds of the Helga Pedersen Mooting Competition 2022; one of the largest and most prestigious mooting competitions in Europe, which simulates a fictional dispute before the European Court of Human Rights. The team, composed of final-year students Annabel Hale, Conrad Alroe, Eoin Campbell and Oluwabusola Fadipe, and coached by Dr Damian Gonzalez-Salzberg, qualified for the international rounds back in March, ranked second among teams from over 60 universities across Europe. In Strasbourg, the team had, once again, a fantastic performance, winning two preliminary rounds, as well as the quarter-finals, to reach the semi-finals of the competition and placing third overall in the competition.



*The Strasbourg team, from left: Eoin, Annabel, Oluwabusola, Conrad*

Congratulations to the team!

## Oxford Intellectual Property Moot Court Competition

Third year law student, Tina Ansari, reflects on participation in the Oxford Intellectual Property Moot Court Competition, hosted by the University of Oxford, Faculty of Law.

In March this year, I had the wonderful opportunity, together with my fellow student Katie Cartwright, to go to Oxford to participate in the Oxford International Intellectual Property Moot Court competition. Dr Mariela de Amstalden, our IP law lecturer, was our coach and accompanied us for the trip.

The first day of the competition was very jarring, the first team we were up against (from the University of Toronto, Canada, and one of the previous winners of the competition) was incredibly well equipped and prepared, and we were scared that we would not be able to match their performance. And indeed, we did not – we lost that first round. However, as the competition progressed and we became more familiar with the process, our confidence grew, and we were able to win two of the four rounds we participated in, placing us in the Top 15.

Participating in an international moot court competition is an incredibly formative experience. It forces you to work under pressure and be able to answer, formulate and articulate relevant answers to purposely hard-hitting questions that the judges ask you. Such an experience sometimes rewards you with wins, while other times teaches you the value of patience and perseverance with losses. Another aspect of the competition I particularly enjoyed was the way that students from different universities around the world interacted with each other. We all had enormous respect for each other and made sure to voice that by complimenting their skills and their performances.

In conclusion, I will forever be grateful for the opportunity that was given to me to participate in the 2022 Oxford International Intellectual Property Law Moot Competition, and I will cherish this experience for the rest of my life.



# Careers and Employability

## Careers

CEPLER continues to provide an unparalleled programme of events and activities for our students which aim to equip them to make informed choices about their career progression, whether within the legal profession or beyond. In 2021-22 our events programme was structured in a series of themed weeks, each of which was designed to support students with a different aspect of their career planning and preparation and featured talks and skills sessions delivered by graduate employers, offering insights into the world of work and how to stand out in a competitive employment market.

### Themes included:

- Career Researching and Planning
- International Careers
- Careers in Birmingham
- LawTech
- Diversity in Law
- Making Applications
- Assessment Centres and Interviews

Birmingham Law School students also benefitted from additional one to one support from our academic staff with the introduction of weekly careers drop-in sessions as part of the School's Skills Academy. Students sought individual guidance on topics such as careers as a solicitor, life at the Bar, international career opportunities, careers in academia and careers in the third sector.

# Careers Highlights

## 2021-22

### Inaugural Post-Graduate Careers Conference

In Spring 2022 we ran our first ever Post-Graduate Careers Conference, with the goal of supporting our LLM students with transitioning to a wide range of careers after their studies at Birmingham Law School. Sessions were led by LLM alumni and included talks focusing on careers in the legal profession, business and academia, both in the UK and internationally. Students also enjoyed the opportunity to network with speakers and gain invaluable careers advice over lunch.

### Canadian Careers Conference

100 students attended this event, which ran over two days in March 2022. The Conference was hosted by Global Lawyers of Canada (an organisation which supports students who have studied outside of Canada with developing Canadian legal careers), working with Paul McConnell, Samantha Schnobel and a committee of current students. This committee was led by Michelle Farinaccia, working with Bikram Khattra, Robert Palmeri, Ayman Rifai and Nikita Vashista, and the students did a fantastic job of co-ordinating the event.

The sessions at the Conference provided very varied perspectives on Canadian legal careers, and also included a session on Canadian students qualifying in the UK, an application skills workshop and a motivational speaker!

### Birmingham Law School/Gowling WLG Black Talent in Law Programme

This programme got off to a successful start, with three black Birmingham Law School students being selected to take part during the second year of their studies. The students benefited from a generous bursary to support their studies from Gowling WLG, as well as a dedicated mentor at the firm, and work experience opportunities. All three students have benefited greatly from the programme, with one student already securing a Training Contract with Gowling WLG.

### International Work Experience – St Lucia

In Summer 2022, 25 Birmingham Law School students had the opportunity to undertake month long legal internships in St Lucia. The programme was co-ordinated by 2020 BLS Graduate Reccy Midigo and was supported by funding from the Turing Scheme.

Students gained experience at a range of organisations, including local law firms, Raise Your Voice (a local charity providing support to victims of domestic violence), Legal Aid St Lucia and the Attorney General. They also had the opportunity to undertake visits to Parliament and a local Correctional Facility. In addition, they attended a Senate debate where the Youth Economy Act and Firearms (Amendment) Bills were being debated, having previously conducted legal research and legislative reviews in relation to these Bills with a local Senator.

Paul McConnell commented "Birmingham Law School is really grateful to Reccy and her team for providing such a fantastic experience to our students in St Lucia. We are particularly proud to be working with one of our alumni on this initiative."

# Work Experience Placements

**When it comes to making crucial career decisions and demonstrating your skills to prospective employers, there is no substitute for credible and relevant work experience. CEPLER offers students diverse opportunities to gain real-world legal internships and insight days in a range of settings, providing exposure to a variety of specialisms.**

**It has been an exciting year for CEPLER work experience as students have once again participated in placements which were either suspended during the pandemic or went online. Competition for these opportunities is fierce as they receive huge numbers of applications and the benefits of them to the successful applicants are evident. We are hugely grateful for the support of the following organisations who have offered opportunities to our students:**

## **CPS West Midlands:**

40 students from all year groups participated in a digital programme run over MS Teams. A Senior Leader opened the programme and each of the five daily sessions was presented by CPS Prosecutors. The sessions were interactive and included a case study, where students made the decisions a Prosecutor makes each day within the CPS.

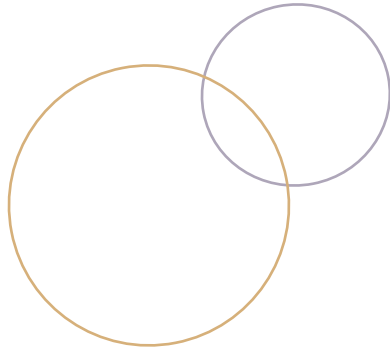
"I applied for this placement as I have an interest in becoming a criminal barrister following the completion of my studies, and this was an excellent opportunity to gain insight into the workings of the CPS. The opportunity to communicate directly with people working as prosecutors for the CPS was one that is invaluable. Furthermore, the work experience also provides a much more practical overview of the CPS system and its procedural operations.

This is something that is rarely mentioned during the study of law, and so the opportunity to gain experience on how the CPS works and prosecutes will be an excellent opportunity."

"It is one thing learning the law and producing academic pieces of work examining its laws and where it falls short, and it is another thing entirely to apply that law to situations. The work experience gave me numerous opportunities to do so, and I will certainly be pursuing more opportunities akin to this in the future"

## **Gowling WLG:**

Ten final year students with a passion for IP Law were given the exciting opportunity to work as Brand Protection Volunteers at the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games. The roles involved students being present outside Commonwealth Games venues across the Midlands to identify and report brand infringement issues. The role involved liaising with the Organising Committee's Brand Protection Team and the IP team at Gowling WLG, the Official Legal Advisers to the Games. This was a fantastic opportunity to play a part in a major international sporting event, as well as gaining practical experience linked to IP Law.



“This placement provided me with an avenue for my first legal experience. I had gotten a good grasp of the legal theories that were taught. However, I was also hungry for a practical exposure which is a key part of a comprehensive legal education. Hence, when I saw this opportunity, I could not let it slip away. This placement gave me the best ever introduction to a law module. Now, I can’t wait to engage with the literature.”

### No5 Chambers:

Four of our top students were accepted onto mini-pupillages at No5 Chambers in Birmingham. Throughout its 100-year history, No5 has developed a reputation for breaking new ground and continues to be regarded as a forward-thinking set. During their time at Chambers, they had the opportunity to attend Court, Tribunal hearings and conferences and undertook research so as to assist in the preparation of pleadings and advices. The mini-pupillage scheme offers a shop window into which students can gaze and compare the different atmospheres, camaraderie and general machinery of Chambers. The care and time invested in mini-pupils left a positive and informed impression.

### Pinsent Masons:

Opportunities for first years are few and far between and we were delighted that Legal Business's Law Firm of the Year 2021 hosted our first years for a week's work experience. Six students were selected by the firm for the work placement. Students got a full overview of what it is like to work in a leading commercial law firm, gained valuable insight into the commercial world and developed their skill set.



“The team gave me a wide range of tasks to do so that I could get involved with real work that they were conducting at the time such as bundling, research, and attending meetings. I was able to converse with different solicitors at different levels in their careers from trainees to newly qualified solicitors. I was also able to talk to different people from different departments, which was valuable”

### St Philips Chambers:

Eight students demonstrating a high degree of dedication to a career at the Bar were selected for a three day mini-pupillage at this award winning multi-disciplinary set of barristers. Students had the opportunity to spend most of their time within their preferred specialist practice area of law and spent time with more than one barrister; shadowing their daily schedules and spending time with them in court, in order to really get a feel for the profession. Mini-pupils gained a good understanding of roles and responsibilities and life at the Bar as well as having an enjoyable experience.

# Schedule of Careers Events 2021–22

## Careers events that took place in 2021–22 – Semester 1

### Week 1: Introduction

- Introduction to Careers for Law Students
- Introduction to Careers Network and Engaging with Employers at University

### Week 2: Career Researching and Planning Week

- Non-legal Careers for Law Students
- A Career as a Solicitor
- Researching Legal Careers
- Your Guide to the Solicitors Qualifying Exam (SQE)

### Week 3: International Careers Week

- From Birmingham Law School to a Canadian Legal Career
- Introduction to Global Lawyers of Canada
- Securing a UK Training Contract as an International Student – Panel Event
- Qualifying in New York as a Birmingham Law Graduate
- NCA Tutor: Completing your NCA exams in Canada

### Week 4: Birmingham: Law in the City and Lawtech

- Gowling WLG - Tech-knowledge-y
- Eversheds Sutherland – Adapting to Legal Technology in an Increasingly Digital World
- Anthony Collins Solicitors – An Ethical Approach to Law
- Pinsent Masons – Trainees & Technology

### Week 5: Birmingham: Diversity in Law Week

- A Career in Human Rights Law
- A Career as a Criminal Lawyer
- Diversity at Gowling WLG
- Slaughter & May - A Career as a City Lawyer

### Week 6: Preparing for the Law Fair

- Preparing for and Attending the Law Fair

### Week 7: The Law Fair

- The Law Fair
- Training Opportunities at Gowling WLG

### Week 8: Applications Week

- Slaughter & May – Trainee Solicitor Experiences
- Applying for Vacation Schemes: Top Tips & Hints with Vantage
- Shoosmiths - Careers in Medical Negligence Law and applications for Training Contracts.
- A Career in Human Rights Law

### Week 10: Careers at the Bar

- Thinking about a Career at the Bar? Preliminary Hints and Tips

## Careers Events that took place in 2021–22 – Semester 2

### Week 1: Assessment Centres and Interviews Week

- Tips for Success at Assessment Centres and Interviews
- How to Become a Magistrate
- Future Trainee Solicitor Interviews and Assessment Centres Panel

### Week 2: Preparing for Assessment Centres

- Student Workshop – Preparing for Assessment Centres
- How to enter the legal profession from a non-traditional background

### Week 3: Bar Careers

- Accessing a Career at the Bar: Reflections from a Senior Barrister

### Week 4: Final Year Careers Week

- MSc Responsible Data Science – Programme and Scholarships Information Session
- A Career at the Criminal Bar
- Options for Non-legal Careers
- Next Steps for Aspiring Solicitors
- Everything you need to know about the SQE – BARBRI
- Seeking a Paralegal Role – Michael Page
- Paralegal Experiences - Alumni Panel
- Freeths – Legal Assistant Vacancies

### Week 5: Diversity Week

- Networking with Birmingham Black Lawyers

### Week 6: Canadian Legal Careers

- Developing a Canadian Legal Career

# Research and Scholarship

As a result of its activities, CEPLER has a rich network of connections with the legal profession, policy makers, regulators, business and enterprise, the third sector and others.

We recognise that these connections present opportunities to enrich the research and scholarship activity within the School and to disseminate colleagues' impactful research to those it might benefit most in the wider world. CEPLER therefore has dedicated resource to facilitate further connections between academic staff and CEPLER's external contacts for these purposes.

In this section of our report, we highlight some of the collaborations and initiatives facilitated through CEPLER which augment our research and scholarship offering.

## Lost to Law: Researching why women leave the legal profession

CEPLER has partnered with Birmingham Law Society on a research project which explores why there are significantly fewer women than men at the most senior levels of the legal profession. Women in leadership positions in the law remain in the minority, despite more women than ever before entering the profession. In 2017-18, 63.9% of those admitted as solicitors in the West Midlands identified as female, yet only 30.4% of partners (or equivalent) in our region were women. Similarly, although 51.7% of pupil barristers last year were female, only 15.8% of King's Council are women.

One of the reasons for fewer women at partnership level or equivalent is that many leave legal practice somewhere around the mid-point of their careers. These women are 'lost to the law'.

CEPLER's 'lost to law' research project therefore explores the factors that cause women to leave the profession. The project considers what these women go on to do and what, if anything, might have led to them choosing to stay in the profession.

The final report is available as a Working Paper on CEPLER's webpages.

## Race to the Commonwealth & Beyond

Birmingham Law School welcomed lawyers from across the Commonwealth for two-day legal conference on equality and diversity in sport ahead of the Commonwealth Games 2022. The conference was hosted in partnership with Birmingham Law Society and the Commonwealth Lawyers Association.

Taking place on 21st and 22nd July, the event saw over 100 delegates come together to engage in critical conversations covering a range of topics, including exploitation, ethics, privacy, race, and gender equality.





Stephanie Perraton, former President of Birmingham Law Society, commented: “There are a number of extremely important topics that require joined up thinking across territories. In bringing legal professionals together, we hope to spark actionable outcomes for equality and diversity inside and outside of sport, for the future.”

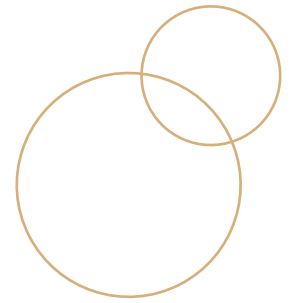
As well as several members of faculty speaking at the event, a number of Birmingham Law School students also participated in the conference. Reflecting on the experience, final year student Nawal Badar said:

“The CLA conference was my first in-person conference and not only was it an experience of a lifetime, it was also an honour sitting amongst top players in the legal market. I was in the presence of leading lawyers from around the Commonwealth countries, notably one from my own home country: Pakistan. The speeches and presentations were gripping and thought provoking, shedding light on important issues such as Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation in sports. Just graduating from this University, it was the best way to end my journey here, until I come back, hopefully as a qualified solicitor.”

The event also included a celebratory dinner, hosted in the Great Hall on campus. Guests were treated to music from across the Commonwealth, a three course dinner and an after dinner speech from former swimmer and Strictly Come Dancing Star, Mark Foster.



# Research and Scholarship (Continued)



## Clinical Legal Education Handbook

The Handbook, co-edited by CEPLER's Linden Thomas, was published in May 2020. It is a free, open access online resource by The University of London Press. It is primarily aimed at clinics in England and Wales, but contains content that is of interest to those engaged in clinic in other jurisdictions.

The idea for the Handbook was devised at a Clinical Legal Education Organisation (CLEO) conference in the UK in 2016 and its contents were shaped by contributions and feedback from a number of CLEO members. It contains contributions from more than 25 clinicians, practising lawyers and third sector experts and is intended to act as a good practice guide and practical resource for those engaged in the design and delivery of clinical legal education programmes at university law schools.

It offers direction on how to establish and run student law clinics and sets out guidance on both the pedagogical and regulatory considerations involved in the delivery of clinical programmes. It also provides an introduction to the existing body of research and scholarship on Clinical Legal Education (CLE).

The Handbook has been downloaded more than 3,000 times and is being translated into other languages to assist those running University law clinics around the world.

## Legal Solutions

In January 2022, Birmingham Law School rolled out an innovative new second year, core module across its degree programmes, called Legal Solutions. In the module, students are challenged to work in groups to devise solutions to complex or 'wicked' problems posed by graduate employers. Each problem combines legal, commercial, social and political challenges. In its inaugural year students were asked (amongst other things) what role lawyers can play in reducing reoffending rates for acquisitive crimes?; how a full-service law firm can help a global clothing retailer client to stay ahead of risk in the development of an Environmental, Social and Governance strategy?; and how an international, publicly listed company can manage its workforce in a post-pandemic world?

Throughout the module, students were introduced to different approaches to complex problem solving, including Design Thinking and Soft Systems Methodology. They were also given insights into problem solving tools in the form of LegalTech, public legal education and process re-engineering and heard experienced professionals share their insights into solving complex problems in their working lives. The end results were some inspired, innovative and well-research approaches to these multifaceted and complex challenges.

This module could not have run without the generous contributions of CEPLER's partners and connections, who set the tricky problems for our students to unpick and shared their own experiences of problem-solving in practice.

## Reskill

CEPLER's research assistance scheme pairs LLM students with Law School academics undertaking research in a variety of topics. The students support their supervisor with a range of tasks and earn money, whilst enhancing their skills and experience. This year we supported 15 different projects. Below are examples of the benefit gained by the student and the impact on their academic supervisor:

James Browning LLM Student and Reskill Participant commented:

"CEPLER Reskill gave me the incredible opportunity to work alongside an academic on something outside of my course. I not only gained excellent transferable skills in research and time management, but also strongly believe that Reskill was instrumental in my later success applying for employment. I also know that all the students who were on the Reskill programme were hugely grateful for the opportunity and found it challenging and interesting work"

Dr Joseph Roberts, Research Fellow and Reskill Supervisor: "The research assistance I received through the Reskill programme was extremely helpful. My student was professional and an efficient legal researcher. During the three weeks she worked on my project she produced an extremely helpful literature review of the UK benefits system and helped me identify and find relevant literature for further research"

Dr Chukwuma Okoli, Lecturer and Reskill Supervisor: I was provided research assistance by a student and I found his help very useful. I consider the Reskill programme to be helpful and important for busy academics that are research active. The programme should be sustained. I would add that it should be utilised throughout the academic session.

Professor Mohammad Shahabuddin: 'CEPLER Reskill scheme offers students a superb opportunity to work closely with academics and hone generic research skills. This is one of the best examples of research training that a PGT student can get. At the same time, the scheme allows academics benefit from excellent research assistance that students offer. I found the scheme tremendously helpful for my research.'

## Advanced study in Dubai

Law students at our Dubai campus continue to benefit from CEPLER employability events and activities, which are arranged under the stewardship of Dr Shamini Ragavan. Events for students studying on the Dubai-based LLM in 2021-22 included:

- 'Starting a business in the UAE: A Legal Perspective' by Kamal K. Jabbar, author of UAE Business Essentials, Practical Legal Protections for Individuals, Entrepreneurs and SMEs, Partner at Keystone Law Middle East LLP, in collaboration with Fiona Oster from our Business School;
- 'Understanding Dubai's economic model and policies', by Dr Harun Kapetanovic, former Economic Adviser of Dubai Department of Economic Development;
- 'Well-being of Law Students and Lawyers: How to Stay Happy in Law' by Dr Richard Wu, University of Hong Kong;
- 'Practicing Law in Dubai' by Ahmad Al Khalil of law firm, Hamdan Al Shamsi.

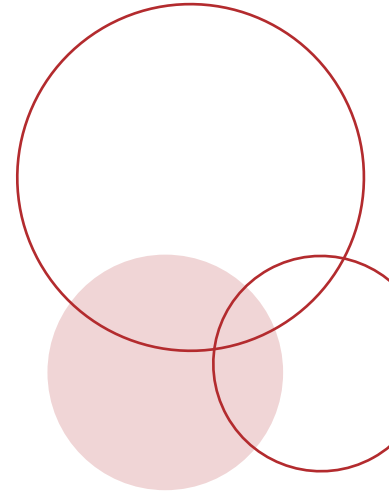
*CEPLER*  
*in Numbers*

**4189**  
**HOURS**  
OF STUDENT  
VOLUNTEER  
TIME SPENT ON  
DELIVERING  
PRO BONO  
SERVICES TO  
THE COMMUNITY  
**IN 2021**

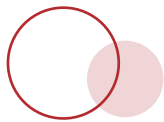
**1500**  
**HOURS**  
OF RESEARCH  
ASSISTANCE  
**FOR LAW**  
SCHOOL STAFF  
FUNDED BY  
**CEPLER**  
SINCE ITS  
INCEPTION

**98** STUDENTS COMPLETED  
**CEPLER WORK  
PLACEMENTS IN 2021-22.**

**30 OF THOSE PLACEMENTS WERE  
INTERNATIONAL BASED.**



16 UNDERGRADUATE  
**PRO BONO**  
PROJECTS RUNNING  
**IN 2021-22**



**63** HOURS OF  
VOLUNTARY  
SUPPORT FROM  
PROFESSIONALS AND  
ALUMNI IN THE DELIVERY  
OF OUR CAREERS AND  
EMPLOYABILITY PROGRAMME  
THIS ACADEMIC YEAR

**4 STUDENTS**  
COMPETING IN THE  
INTERNATIONAL  
HELGA PEDERSON  
EUROPEAN HUMAN  
RIGHTS MOOT COURT  
**COMPETITION**

**7 POSTGRADUATE  
PRO BONO PROJECTS  
RUNNING IN 2021-22**

**250 BIRMINGHAM LAW SCHOOL  
STUDENTS VOLUNTEERING  
ACROSS OUR PRO BONO PROGRAMMES**



# *The COVID Years - Some Highlights*

Although CEPLER did not produce an Annual Report for the academic years 2019-20 and 2020-21, which were heavily affected by COVID, our staff and students continued to engage in a wide range of exciting and innovative initiatives. In this section we highlight some of the activities undertaken during those years:

## **Linden Thomas concludes year as President of Birmingham Law Society**

In July 2020 Linden Thomas concluded her 15 month term as President of Birmingham Law Society, the largest local law society in the country. During her year as President, Linden led on a number of initiatives focussed on access to justice, mental health and wellbeing, and equality within and access to the legal profession.

Highlights of her year included launching a mentoring scheme for women in law, introducing a regular mindfulness programme for local lawyers and raising in excess of £13,000 for her chosen charities, Citizens Advice Birmingham and the Central England Law Centre

To mark Linden's tenure, the University of Birmingham hosted the Society's prestigious Annual Dinner in

Great Hall on campus, welcoming back Birmingham Law School Alumnus, Dr Susan Atkins CB as the guest of honour. After graduating with an LLB in 1973, Susan trained a solicitor before moving into academia, where she co-wrote the book 'Women and the Law' with Lady Hale. Later Susan joined the Civil Service and went on to hold a number of senior roles, including setting up and running the Independent Police Complaints Commission as its first Chief Executive.





## CEPLER Stands up for Justice

In October 2019 CEPLER supported Birmingham Law Society's 'Stand up for Justice' comedy night, which featured a host of local comedians (and a special guest appearance (via video) from none other than Sir Lenny Henry) who came together to put on an entertaining evening that raised money for Citizens Advice Birmingham and Central England Law Centre, but had a powerful message at its heart. Birmingham Law students worked with the charities to produce two powerful videos about the impact of cuts to legal aid on access to justice and the import of the work the charities undertake. Students also helped to ensure the event ran smoothly on the night, ushering guests and selling raffle tickets.

Student volunteers from the Pro Bono Group also helped to raise much needed funds for the charities throughout the remainder of the academic year, taking part in a sponsored abseil off of the roof of Birmingham's Custard Factory, selling branded sweatshirts and holding a festive quiz. In total the Group raised over £1,500!



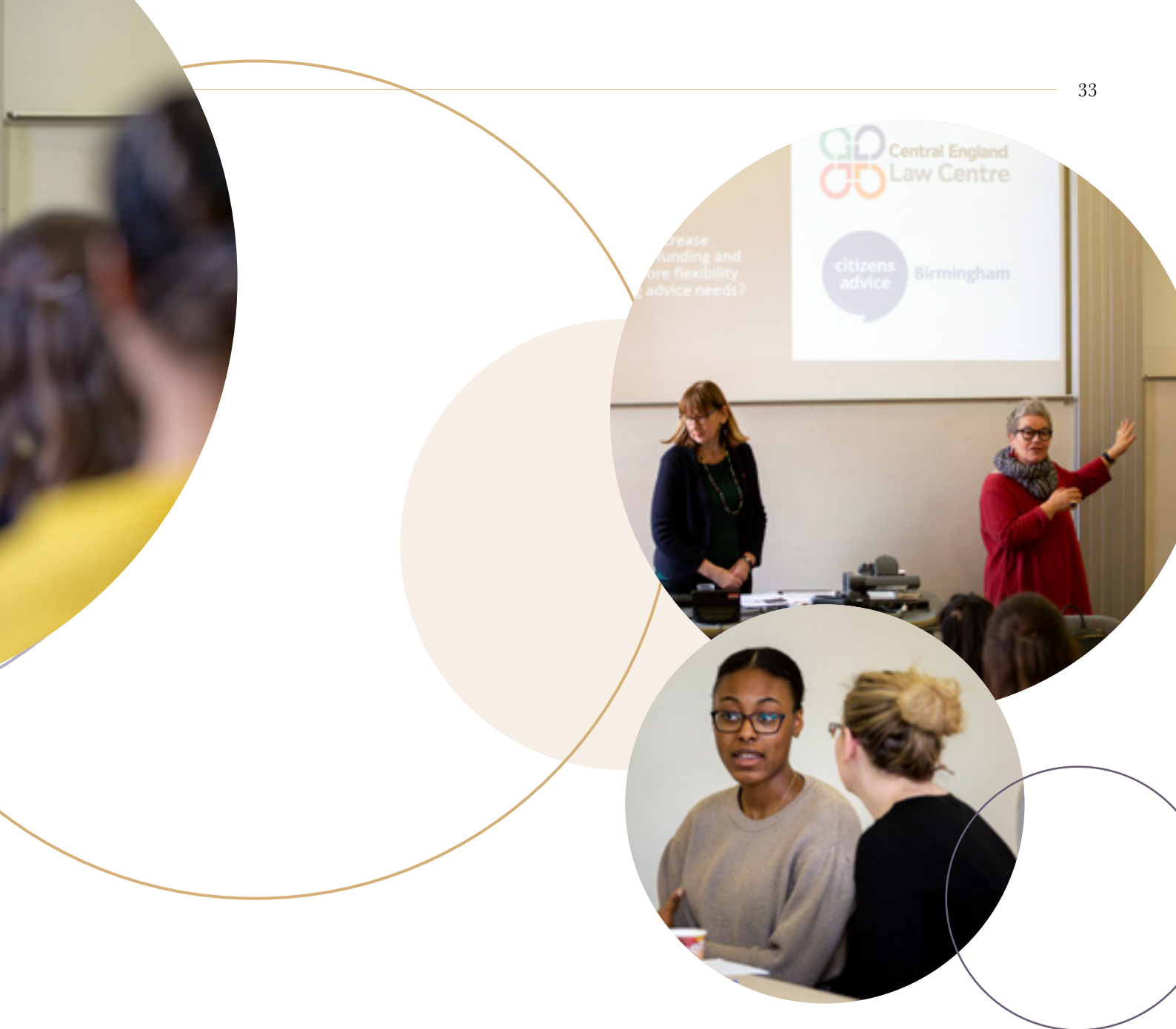
# *Building Bridges:*

## *Working in Partnership with The University of Illinois*

In October, a group of Birmingham Law School staff visited The University of Illinois (UoI) in a trip supported by the 'Birmingham-Illinois Partnership for Discovery, Engagement and Education' (BRIDGE) agreement.

One of the principal reasons for the visit was to explore opportunities for shared learning on ways of incorporating climate change into the LLB curriculum with UoI's Professor Warren Lavey. The visit also helped to embed CEPLER's partnership with UoI on the Environmental Law Matters pro bono project.





## CEPLER's distinguished Leaders in Law lecture series returned in 2021–22.

In March 2020, CEPLER hosted Birmingham Law Society's inaugural 'hackathon'. The event saw lawyers from a range of disciplines come together with law students to come up with solutions to a problem posed by local advice charities, Central England Law Centre and Citizens' Advice Birmingham. The idea behind the Hackathon was that by bringing people with different perspectives and experiences together, new ideas would be formed and new ways of addressing old problems would be generated.

The day began with the Chief Executives of the charities setting out the current funding climate in which they find themselves and posing the question 'How do we increase unrestricted funding and allow for more flexibility in meeting advice needs?'

The 'hackers' then spent several hours brainstorming solutions and testing their ideas on the charity representatives before pitching their solutions to the CEOs. Citizens' Advice Birmingham Chief Executive Janice Nichols said:

"I left the Hackathon feeling enthused and inspired. It was extremely valuable to have the benefit of fresh perspectives on issues we have been wrangling with for a long time. I went home with a number of ideas that I will be taking back to my colleagues and our trustee board to explore further. Thank you to Birmingham Law Society and Birmingham Law School for hosting such a unique event."

# Careers Support for Students: The Pandemic Years

In 2020-21, the CEPLER employability programme moved fully online, due to the difficulties with running large group activities in person. More than 50 different events took place during the year, and the programme was very well-received, with student attendance levels being higher at online events than they had been at in person events in previous years. In addition, we were able to engage with a range of speakers around the UK and internationally, some of whom may not have been able to travel to Birmingham for an in-person event, as all of us gained a lot more familiarity with Zoom.

Students participated very well in events, with many more questions being submitted via chat on Zoom than we

sometimes see at in-person events. As a result of this success, in 2021-22 CEPLER Employability events were run in both in person and online formats, depending on the location of the speaker and other practicalities.

The usual Careers Network Law Fair also took place in virtual format. Paul McConnell, CEPLER's former Head of Careers & Employability, ran a training session to support students with engaging effectively at an online event in advance of the Law Fair. This was attended by over 150 students and received much positive feedback from both students and employers as a strategy for ensuring that students made the most of the Law Fair and created a positive impression of themselves and the University.



Former student, Anant Rangan, describes a pro bono project he participated in, in direct response to the challenges of the pandemic:

This project was run by the Freedom Law Clinic and the Manifesto Club. The Birmingham team analysed the Coronavirus Act, monitored its development, and tracked its implementation and enforcement by the police and

CPS. Our independent research particularly benefitted from expert seminars on topics from police accountability, to data privacy issues surrounding contact-tracing.

We interviewed duty solicitors and produced detailed notes recording their professional experiences in this new environment. We drafted a report identifying key powers in the new legislation and highlighting risks for potential overreach. This fed into a forthcoming report covering the pandemic's impact on UK civil liberties.

The project honed skills I developed through other CEPLER programmes, like interviewing stakeholders and critically analysing new legislation. It was a fantastic opportunity to engage with emergent law in real-time.

A copy of the final report can be downloaded from: <https://freedomlawclinic.org/civil-liberties-in-the-lockdown/>

# *Students continued to offer pro bono support online:*

Working in partnership with Birmingham People's Centre, students worked in groups remotely to produce public information videos on various employment law topics such as Early Conciliation and how to produce an Impact Statement – you can watch those videos on their YouTube channel here - Birmingham Peoples Centre - YouTube.

A sudden re-closure of schools in Jan 2021, meant that students had to adapt the work they had been producing for our Streetlaw programme – Entrepreneurship and the Law – in which they were due to deliver sessions to school students at The University of Birmingham School, on commercial law topics, helpful for anyone considering starting their own business. Materials for lesson plans, interactive exercises and visual aids were packaged up in an easy to use format so the school could run the sessions themselves at their convenience, ensuring the helpful work of the students had not gone to waste.

Another successful online initiative led by students was the BLS Pro Bono Group Blog which covered wide ranging topics from navigating the UK asylum system through to holding companies accountable: piercing the corporate veil. The Pro Bono Group Blog allowed students to write about topics of interest to them whilst giving them the opportunity to hone their legal research and writing skills.



As soon as we were able to access campus and work in a socially distance and safe way, Amy Tabari, together with four pro bono group students, delivered a short talk on the work of the Pro Bono Group. The talk was entitled “The Secret Lives of Law Students” and highlighted how many law students, and lawyers, are involved in valuable pro bono work, but their work and the impact it has on others often slips under the radar. The talk showcased projects that the students themselves were involved in and the reasons they participate in pro bono.



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