

Shifting paradigms within lawyering

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Project description:

In the UK, the role of the legal profession has evolved considerably within recent years. The enactment of the Legal Services Act 2007, the resultant growth in competition within the legal services market, a rise in client consumerism, new applications of technology, and wider economic challenges have all contributed to these developments. Even the term “legal profession” itself can be queried in light of the increasingly fragmented and diffuse nature of legal practice.

As part of this evolution, a number of new lawyering paradigms have developed, or are beginning to emerge. This includes a significant focus on legal practice as a form of profit-driven, commercial business model and the creation and/or growth in importance of a variety of legal roles (such as para-legal). However, it also includes the development of a form of legal counter-culture, embodied within movements such as the comprehensive law movement and integrative law movement, both of which offer new paradigms for legal practice.

This doctorate will allow the successful candidate to develop their own, original research focus within this overall topic area (sited within the field of socio-legal studies). Potential areas of research could include (but are not limited to):

- The historical evolution of the legal profession (for example, the admission to and changing roles within the profession of women and ethnic minority lawyers).
- Changing notions of “professionalism” in legal practice.
- The influence of commercialisation upon the legal profession.
- The emergence and influence of new paradigms, including therapeutic jurisprudence, comprehensive law and integrative law.

The successful candidate may choose to use either a desk-based or empirical approach, or a combination of both. It is also envisaged that the student would become part of the Faculty of Business and Law’s Centre for Knowledge in Organisations and Professions.