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## Enhancing Legal Education Through a Short-Term Overseas Study Tour: A Case Study of UWA Law School's Singapore Study Tour

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# ENHANCING LEGAL EDUCATION THROUGH A SHORT-TERM OVERSEAS STUDY TOUR

## A CASE STUDY OF UWA LAW SCHOOL'S SINGAPORE STUDY TOUR

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*In an increasingly globalised legal profession, international exposure is essential for developing adaptable and culturally aware lawyers. This article examines the University of Western Australia's short-term law study tour to Singapore, a program designed to integrate theoretical knowledge with practical legal experiences in a cross-cultural context. Conducted over five days, the tour provided Juris Doctor students with an immersive educational opportunity, combining seminars by academic and professional experts with site visits to key legal institutions. The curriculum covered diverse topics, from Singapore's legal history to international arbitration and employment law, fostering a comprehensive understanding of the Singaporean legal system. Assessments emphasised reflective learning and active participation, enhancing critical thinking and professional skills. Student feedback highlighted the program's effectiveness in deepening legal knowledge and boosting cultural adaptability. This case study demonstrates the transformative potential of short-term international study tours, offering valuable insights for other institutions seeking to enrich legal education through global engagement.*

### I INTRODUCTION

In the context of an increasingly globalised legal field, understanding diverse legal systems and practices is crucial for new lawyers. Recognising this need, the University of Western Australia's ('UWA') Law School introduced a short-term study tour to Singapore in 2023, aiming to provide its Juris Doctor students with critical international exposure and practical experiences. Designed to integrate theoretical knowledge with practical legal experiences across cultures, the tour aimed to expand students' perspectives on global legal practices and enhance their employability skills.

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The short-term study tour to Singapore first took place across five days from 4 December to 7 December 2023, 9am to 5pm and was structured as an intensive summer law elective, offering students the opportunity to complete an optional unit (worth 6 credit points, which is the usual number of credit points for a unit at UWA) towards their law degree. The tour's timing and duration were chosen to maximise learning while minimising disruption to the regular academic schedule, making it an attractive elective for law students seeking to broaden their understanding and exposure to international legal environments.

The tour featured a series of seminars focusing on selected topics in Singaporean law. These sessions were delivered by a mix of local experts, including academics from various universities and practicing legal professionals, aiming to provide students with a comprehensive understanding from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Throughout the tour, students were accompanied by two UWA academic staff members who provided guidance and support, promoting it as a UWA law school cohort experience.

## II IMPORTANCE OF INTERNATIONAL EXPOSURE

There is a growing body of scholarship which attests to the value of study abroad experiences. The notion of global citizenship has been a significant factor in driving the popularity of such experiences,<sup>1</sup> with this being associated with increased employment opportunities.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, research shows that even brief periods spent abroad significantly enhance students' cultural adaptability compared to their peers who do not study abroad – this adaptability is increasingly valued in today's globalised work settings where understanding and navigating multicultural environments are key professional skills.<sup>3</sup> There is objective evidence that:

Graduates who have studied abroad, even for a short period of time, in a culture significantly different to one's own, are more culturally adaptable, aware and able to work more effectively in multicultural work environments than students without this experience.<sup>4</sup>

A number of scholars at tertiary institutions from various countries have evaluated their own short-term study abroad programmes. These have largely focused on the students' own reported experience of the programmes. These studies support this objective evidence in that students themselves identify their increased appreciation of cultural diversity, and connect

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<sup>1</sup> Nicole Gullekson et al, 'Examining Intercultural Growth for Business Students in Short-Term Study Abroad Programs: Too Good to Be True?' (2011) 22(2) *Journal of Teaching in International Business* 91.

<sup>2</sup> Giorgio Di Pietro, 'Do Study Abroad Programs Enhance the Employability of Graduates?' (2015) 10(2) *Education Finance and Policy* 223. See also Davina Potts, *Outcomes of Learning Abroad Programs* (2014, Universities Australia) 14 for the benefits of a study abroad stint.

<sup>3</sup> Larry Braskamp, David Braskamp and Kelly Merrill, 'Assessing Progress in Global Learning and Development of Students with Education Abroad Experiences' (2009) 18 *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* 101.

<sup>4</sup> Lisa Scharoun, 'Short-term Study Tours as a Driver for Increasing Domestic Student Mobility in Order to Generate Global Work-Ready Students and Cultural Exchange in Asia Pacific' (2015) 20(2-3) *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education* 83; *The Guardian*, 'Students Struggle to Find Jobs After Graduation' (16 October 2008) <<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2008/oct/16/students-highereducation>>.

this with the development of transferable skills, and an increased interest in social justice.<sup>5</sup> One study particularly noted the increased student group cohesion and motivation to learn which characterised the short study abroad experience.<sup>6</sup> Students have identified the benefits associated with increased confidence from 'pushing the boundaries', 'enhanced cultural understanding, improved interpersonal skills and the perception that career goals, particularly in relation to working overseas, had been clarified.'<sup>7</sup>

While semester-long study abroad exchanges are a common offering in tertiary institutions (including at UWA),<sup>8</sup> the evidence indicates that Australian students appear to favour short-term tours over semester-long exchanges, particularly in Asia.<sup>9</sup> These short-term engagements, though concise, are packed with intensive learning experiences that often match or exceed the cultural immersion and professional benefits gleaned from longer stays.<sup>10</sup> There is evidence that these general benefits also benefit the law student as a future lawyer.<sup>11</sup> Modern legal practice is intricately linked with international laws and global issues, necessitating a broad, adaptable legal education. Exposure to foreign legal systems enriches students' legal understanding and prepares them for cross-border legal challenges. Short-term study tours are particularly effective in this context, offering immersive experiences that traditional classroom settings cannot replicate.

Recognising the critical role of international educational experiences in enhancing regional relationships and competencies, the Australian government introduced the New Colombo Plan ('NCP') Mobility Grants in 2014 with up to AUD\$40 million in funding for the 2023–24 financial year.<sup>12</sup> The strategic objective of the NCP is to strengthen Australia's regional standing by building a diverse cohort of Australian alumni with deeper Indo-Pacific knowledge, capability and connections.<sup>13</sup> It aims to 'lift knowledge in Australia of the Indo-Pacific' through structured short-term study tours and internships ranging from two weeks to two semesters.<sup>14</sup> The NCP has regional and access limitations (it is currently only available to undergraduate students) but it has proven a significant incentive for the introduction of tertiary study tours and since its inception in 2014 to 2024, the program has supported more

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<sup>5</sup> Karen Bell and A W Anscombe, 'International Field Experience in Social Work: Outcomes of a Short-Term Study Abroad Programme to India' (2013) 32(8) *Social Work Education: The International Journal* 1032.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Tracey Bretag, "Pushing the Boundaries": Participant Motivation and Self-Reported Benefits of Short-Term International Study Tours' (2015) 54(3) *Innovations in Education and Teaching International* 1.

<sup>8</sup> Semester-long exchange is a relatively popular option at UWA with approximately 300-350 undergraduate and postgraduate coursework degree students undertaking this in 2024 – about 75% of pre-COVID levels (information provided by Global Engagement Office, UWA).

<sup>9</sup> 'Australian Outbound Student Mobility Snapshot' (2015) SPRE: *Strategy, Policy and Research in Higher Education* <https://www.spred.com.au/download/MobilitySnapshot1308.pdf>; Australian Universities International Directors' Forum (AUIDF) Report (2024) which indicated that in 2023 38% of Australian students participated in faculty-led study tours, compared to 19% participating in semester long exchange programmes.

<sup>10</sup> Alexis Geyer, Jenni Putz and Kaustav Misra, 'The Effect of Short-Term Study Abroad Experience on American Students' Leadership Skills and Career Aspirations', (2017) 31(7) *International Journal of Educational Management* 1042.

<sup>11</sup> Theresa Kaiser-Jarvis, 'Preparing Students for Global Practice: Developing Competencies and Providing Guidance' (2018) 67(4) *Journal of Legal Education* 949.

<sup>12</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Mobility Program – 2024 Round Guidelines* <<https://www.dfat.gov.au/people-people/mobility-program-2024-round-guidelines#amount>>.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

than 50,000 students to participate in overseas study, work placements, or research experiences in the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>15</sup>

A number of considerations informed the development of this article. One of these was the limited amount of scholarship examining Australian study tours. Our search of the literature revealed a handful of articles, and, while these were of assistance in identifying the general benefits of study tours, none of these involved law students. We are aware of a number of study tours which are run by Australian law schools (detailed below) but it appears there are no existing published written accounts of these. This is worth noting given the point made in one paper:

Studying abroad is often represented in the literature as delivering a transformative impact for all students, regardless of their specific academic programme. While this may be true, it frames the benefits of studying abroad as being generic and supplementary to any discipline-specific curriculum.<sup>16</sup>

It is therefore, we believe, a valuable addition to the literature to have a detailed description of a discipline-specific offering, particularly where that particular discipline has not featured in the narrative.

A second consideration was the fact that the law degree at UWA is studied at a postgraduate level. The law school has adopted the Northern American model – the Juris Doctor – as its' qualifying law degree. Consequently, there is a strong vocational focus for most of these students, with the majority of them seeking a career in the legal profession.<sup>17</sup> In this context, students' perceptions of how a unit adds value to their career aspirations are significant. Very recent research found that 89% of participants in an overseas stint under the NCP indicated that the experience was useful for their CV.<sup>18</sup> The need to derive value from the degree is all the more significant for UWA Juris Doctor students – both because of the fact this is a second degree, and because, as postgraduate students, the NCP is not available as a funding source.

The authors surveyed the short study tour landscape of Australian law schools in an attempt to identify the type of offerings which are available to students. These are set out in Annexure A at the end of this article.<sup>19</sup> Our research indicated that most of these are targeted at undergraduates (which presumably is incentivised by the NCP). Some of the offerings are also towards a specific field or legal topic rather than a study tour encompassing a general immersion of various aspects of the host country's laws and legal system. The remaining law schools which do appear to offer a more general study tour are set out in Table 1 below.

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<sup>15</sup> Ly Tran, Huyen Bui and Diep Nguyen, *Australian Student Mobility to the Indo-Pacific Region through the New Colombo Plan: Summary of Key Findings* (2024) <<https://ncpproject.org/publications/>>.

<sup>16</sup> Steve Nerlich, *Towards an Evaluative Framework for Studying Abroad* (PhD Thesis, Australian National University, 2020) 166.

<sup>17</sup> Evident from yearly surveys undertaken of graduating Juris Doctor students. This is not aligned with the view emerging in recent years conceptualising law degrees as the 'new arts degree' – see Financial Review, Feb 14, 2014 and comments by the then president of the Law Institute of Victoria Geoff Bowyer in 2014.

<sup>18</sup> Tran, Bui and Nguyen (n 15).

<sup>19</sup> Information has been obtained from university websites as of 9 December 2024. A course will only be included if there is indication that it is still on offer and there are details on the location of the overseas study tour.

**Table 1. Australian Law School General Study Tours**

University	Program	Topic/ Course	Destination
Curtin University	Ghent Summer Program <sup>20</sup>	The program is aimed at students keen on acquiring knowledge and credits in international and European law, and generally at participants eager to gain expertise about the increasingly international world of law and business.	Belgium
Swinburne University of Technology	Law, Governance and Culture Study Tour <sup>21</sup>	An immersive introduction into Vietnam's legal culture and its laws.	Vietnam
	Law, Governance and Culture Study Tour <sup>22</sup>	An immersive introduction into Indonesia's legal culture and its laws.	Indonesia
Murdoch University	India Immersion Program <sup>23</sup>	An introduction to India's diverse regulatory, business and social impact landscape.	India
Sydney University	Shanghai Winter School	An intensive three-week introduction to Chinese laws and legal systems, while experiencing life in Shanghai.	China
	Indian Immersion Program	Seminars, lectures, presentations and field visits with leading scholars, legal practitioners and law students in India.	India
	Southeast Asia Field School	An intensive two-week course, taught in English, students visit Malaysia and Indonesia for one week each.	Malaysia Indonesia
	Kyoto and Tokyo Seminars	The Kyoto and Tokyo seminars offer a unique opportunity to study Japanese Law on an intensive basis in global and socio-economic context.	Japan
	Sydney Law School in Europe	A selected range of elective units of study in prestigious locations in Europe.	Europe
University of New South Wales	US Legal Systems <sup>24</sup>	The course will focus principally on the study of the federal and state legal systems within the United States of America.	USA
	Chinese Legal System <sup>25</sup>	This is a two-week intensive course held in Shanghai each year. It provides an introduction into the legal system of the People's Republic of China with particular reference to modern developments in commercial law and other important legal areas.	China

<sup>20</sup> Curtin University, *Ghent Summer Program* <<https://www.curtin.edu.au/students/experience/global/study-tours/ghent-summer-program/>>.

<sup>21</sup> Swinburne University of Technology, *Vietnam Law, Governance and Culture Tour* <<https://www.swinburne.edu.au/life-at-swinburne/study-abroad-exchange/study-tours/law-governance-and-culture-tour/>>.

<sup>22</sup> Swinburne University of Technology, *Law, Governance and Culture study tour in Indonesia* <<https://www.swinburne.edu.au/life-at-swinburne/study-abroad-exchange/study-tours/indonesia-law-governance-culture/>>.

<sup>23</sup> Murdoch University, *India Immersion Program* <<https://www.murdoch.edu.au/schools/law-and-criminology/study/international-programs/india-immersion-program>>.

<sup>24</sup> University of New South Wales, *Handbook 2024, US Legal Systems (Berkeley)* <<https://www.unsw.edu.au/law-justice/student-life/international-opportunities/overseas-electives>>.

<sup>25</sup> University of New South Wales, *Handbook 2024, Chinese Legal System* <<https://handbook.unsw.edu.au/undergraduate/courses/2025/LAWS3123>>.

	China International Business and Economic Law <sup>26</sup>	This course provides an introduction to the legal system of the People's Republic of China. Emphasis is placed on modern developments in China's commercial law, international business and economic law, and other important legal areas.	China
	Pacific Islands Laws in Vanuatu <sup>27</sup>	An introduction to the merging legal systems of the Pacific Islands states, including issues of constitutional development, the recognition and application of customary law, modern and traditional legal institutions, land tenure regimes, personal law, and the legal recognition of economic activity, such as international trade, foreign investments and national resources projects.	Vanuatu
Australian National University	Bhutan Summer School <sup>28</sup>	Special exposure to unique aspects of Bhutanese society and its legal system through field trips to Thimphu, the capital city, and Punakha, the previous seat of government	Bhutan
University of Wollongong	Legal Study Tour in Thailand <sup>29</sup>	Comparative Law: The program will include lectures on a variety of topics such as Thai Business Law, Thai Public Law, and International Law and the Thai Legal System, alongside firm and court visits, engagement with local students, and sightseeing excursions.	Thailand
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology	Business and Law Beyond Borders <sup>30</sup>	Focus on business and legal global issues	Vietnam

It should be noted that it is sometimes difficult to discern whether these are true study tours in the sense of a collective student cohort experience of an intensive course, or an overseas study experience which is open to individual students from these institutions to apply to. It is the former experience which the UWA Law School study tour sought to embody. Despite the plethora of options available, there appears to be an absence of literature on how to organise such a program and the pedagogical considerations in doing so. This article therefore hopes to provide one for the benefit of future course coordinators.

<sup>26</sup> University of New South Wales, *Handbook 2024, China International Business and Economic Law* <<https://handbook.unsw.edu.au/undergraduate/courses/2025/LAWS3345>>.

<sup>27</sup> University of New South Wales, *Handbook 2024, Pacific Islands Laws* <<https://handbook.unsw.edu.au/undergraduate/courses/2025/LAWS3541>>.

<sup>28</sup> Australian National University, *Bhutan Summer School - Jigme Singye Wangchuck (JSW) School of Law* <<https://law.anu.edu.au/bhutan-summer-school-jigme-singye-wangchuck-jsw-school-law>>.

<sup>29</sup> University of Wollongong, *Legal Study Tour in Thailand* <<https://www.uow.edu.au/business-law/current-students/study-exchange-and-overseas-opportunities/faculty-led-studytours/#:~:text=Legal%20Study%20Tour%20in%20Thailand&text=The%20program%20will%20include%20lectures,local%20students%2C%20and%20sightseeing%20excursions>>.

<sup>30</sup> Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, *Study Tours* <<https://www.rmit.edu.au/about/schools-colleges/college-of-business-and-law/international/global-opportunities/study-tours>>.

### III SELECTION: LOCATION, INSTITUTION & SPEAKERS

The decision to select Singapore for this study tour was based on a number of practical reasons. Firstly, UWA Law School has a number of alumni in Singapore, and we also as academics, enjoy professional relationships with colleagues from two Singapore law schools. A recent UWA alumni also held adjunct academic positions in Singapore and was familiar with the academic legal community there. As such there was an institutional connection to this country which we felt would be of assistance in organising speakers and events. Secondly, Singapore is a key international trading and legal hub, with many global companies establishing their regional headquarters in the city. It is also a leading centre for arbitration, with a high volume of international disputes being resolved through its renowned arbitration institutions.<sup>31</sup> A unique opportunity therefore existed to expose students to this global perspective. Thirdly, with this being the first study tour to be offered to our students for many years, we were conscious that this represented a destination which made financial sense, and which would not involve the serious body clock adjustments which travelling from Western Australia often presents. Put simply, the geographical proximity and the institutional connections presented this as an obvious option. The organisers were also reassured by the reputation of Singapore as a very safe place of travel as well as the familiarity which this destination represents for many Western Australians.

We deliberately included a diverse mix of university academics and legal practitioners as speakers for the course with the aim of combining the provision of theoretical knowledge with practical skills training. In doing this we were particularly conscious of the insights that could be provided by Singaporean legal practitioners from international law firms with a presence in Australia and Australian practitioners based in their Singapore offices, crucial for understanding the real-world application of legal concepts.

The selection of Singapore Management University (SMU) as the preferred host university for the study tour was informed by its advantageous location within the city's central district. This distinguishes it from its counterparts – National University of Singapore, Nanyang Technological University, and Singapore University of Social Sciences – whose campuses are situated relatively farther from the city centre. The benefits of proximity to the teaching venue and to the commercial and professional infrastructure of Singapore was an important consideration, particularly having regard to this being the first offering of this study tour. Essentially, the organisers were aiming to maximise convenience given the inevitable unknowns which would arise.

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<sup>31</sup> Elizabeth MacArthur, 'Regulatory Competition and the Growth of International Arbitration in Singapore' (2018) 23 *Appeal* 165; Matthew Erie, 'The New Legal Hubs: The Emergent Landscape of International Commercial Dispute Resolution' (2019) 59(3) *Virginia Journal of International Law* 225, 261.

## **IV CURRICULUM DESIGN**

The curriculum for the short-term study tour is set out in Table 2 below. It was designed to provide Australian law students with a foundational understanding of the Singaporean legal system and its historical underpinnings, particularly its roots in common law.

**Table 2. Singapore Study Tour Curriculum**

Day	Topic	Duration
1	Singapore Legal History	3 hours
	The Singapore Legal System	3 hours
2	The Civil Justice System	2 hours
	Cross-Jurisdictional Issues in Banking & Finance	1.5 hours
	Cross-Jurisdictional Arbitration Work	1.5 hours
3	Arbitration in Singapore	2 hours
	Mediation in Singapore	2 hours
	Employment Law in Singapore	3 hours
4	Criminal Law & Procedure	4 hours
	Criminology: Perspectives from Singapore	3 hours
5	Tour of the State Courts	2 hours
	Group Presentations	3 hours
<b>Total Contact Hours</b>		<b>30</b>

## **V DESIGN CHALLENGES**

From the perspective of a local academic or legal practitioner in Singapore tasked with delivering a substantive, specialised lecture on complex topics typically taught over a semester to second or third-year postgraduate law students from Western Australia, condensing the curriculum into a two to three-hour session presented significant challenges. Some of these challenges are familiar to those who have been involved in the co-ordinating and teaching of intensive units. These include the depth versus breadth of material trade-off in relation to achieving a coherent narrative in a compressed timeframe. That compression also has implications for the capacity to enhance and assess students' comprehension of the material.

An overseas learning experience raises particular challenges outside of those typically experienced in standard domestically based intensive units. For example, this study tour raised the issue of lecturers needing to ensure that the material taught was accessible to students who do not have a background in the specific area of Singaporean law being taught, without oversimplifying complex legal concepts. The organisers addressed this by encouraging presenters to use clear, jargon-free language and progressively build up from basic concepts, as well as relating complex ideas to familiar concepts in the students' primary law curriculum to aid understanding.

Perhaps even more challenging was the need for cultural and jurisdictional contextualisation. Law is deeply intertwined with the local culture and specific legal framework of a country. Students from another jurisdiction may not have the contextual background that local students possess, which can be a barrier to understanding specific legal principles and practices. The organisers took steps to address this through the incorporation of an overview of Singapore's legal system, culture, and the political and social context affecting its law (Day One). We hoped that this setting would provide students with a framework to understand how and why certain legal principles operate differently in Singapore compared to the Australian context.

While teaching in intensive mode is neither new nor uncommon in Australian law schools,<sup>32</sup> a significant challenge lies in balancing a sufficient number of contact hours to ensure comprehensive coverage of material, against the risk of student fatigue inherent in such a condensed delivery model. One key consideration was to ensure sufficient time for preparation and reflection before and in-between classes.<sup>33</sup> Preparation included perusal of the reading materials for each topic. Reflection is an important part of the learning process,<sup>34</sup> and students were expected to spend time after class completing the 'Reflective Journal Entries and Group Presentation' assessment weighted at 30%. A total of 30 hours of contact time was scheduled with an expectation of an additional 2 hours of self-study before or after class, making a total of 40 hours of study across the week. This aligned with the contact hours for intensive units offered at other universities.<sup>35</sup>

## VI TOPIC SELECTION

The selection of topics for the initial days, specifically 'Singapore Legal History' and 'The Singapore Legal System' on Day 1, strategically set the stage for more complex discussions. By establishing this foundational knowledge early in the program, it was anticipated that students would be better equipped to grasp the nuances of subsequent topics, leveraging their initial learning as a contextual base for exploring specific legal practices and principles unique to Singapore. The following additional subjects chosen for exploration reflect more unique aspects of Singapore's legal landscape and also issues which we considered would be of interest to law students in Australia:

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<sup>32</sup> Patricia A Scott, 'Attributes of High Quality Intensive Course' (2003) 97 *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* 29, 29–38; Raymond Wlodkowski, 'Accelerated Learning in Colleges and Universities' (2003) 97 *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* 5; Martin Davis, 'Intensive Teaching Formats: A Review' (2006) 16(1) *Issues in Educational Research* 1.

<sup>33</sup> Sally Male et al, *Intensive Mode Teaching Guide* (University of Western Australia, 2016) 17.

<sup>34</sup> Chloe Sheppick, 'Unveiling the Benefits of Reflective Learning in Professional Legal Practice' (2024) 31(2) *International Journal of the Legal Profession* 207, 208.

<sup>35</sup> For example, the University of Melbourne's minimum class contact time for each subject (whether intensive or semester-long) falls between 24 and 36 hours – see *University of Melbourne, Subject Delivery* <<https://law.unimelb.edu.au/students/masters/studies/subject-delivery>>, whereas the University of Sydney indicates 26 hours of lectures – see University of Sydney, *Study Options* <<https://www.sydney.edu.au/law/study-law/continuing-professional-development/study-options.html>>.

## A Singapore Criminal Law & Procedure

Singapore is globally noted for its rigorous legal framework, which includes distinct practices such as the absence of jury trials, the implementation of mandatory death penalties for certain offences, and significant restrictions on immediate access to counsel. This topic aimed to highlight the critical legal and procedural approaches which distinguish Singaporean criminal law from Australian practices. Another interesting point of comparison, and one that offers a bridge between the two legal systems despite their differences, is the use of a Criminal Code in both Singapore and several states within Australia.<sup>36</sup> In this respect both legal systems represent the codification of criminal offences and penalties in a comprehensive legislative document – Singapore's Penal Code and the various Criminal Codes operative in Australian states, particularly the Codes in Queensland and Western Australia which are the dominant sources of criminal law in those jurisdictions.<sup>37</sup>

## B International Arbitration/Mediation

Singapore's status as a preeminent hub for arbitration and mediation made these topics ideal for providing students with practical insights into the mechanics and strategic advantages of resolving disputes through these alternative dispute resolution methods. Singapore has meticulously cultivated its reputation as a leading centre for international arbitration, characterised by its strategic geographical location, political stability, robust legal framework, and the presence of the Singapore International Arbitration Centre.<sup>38</sup> The seminar on arbitration envisaged offering students insights into arbitration in Singapore as well as recent investor-state arbitration disputes.

Singapore's ascension as a centre for mediation was solidified with the adoption of the Singapore Convention on Mediation, formally known as the United Nations Convention on International Settlement Agreements Resulting from Mediation. This convention, the negotiation and signing of which were significantly influenced by Singapore, marked a pivotal development in international commercial dispute resolution.<sup>39</sup> By providing a uniform and efficient framework for the enforcement of mediated settlements, the Convention enhances the viability of mediation as an alternative to litigation and arbitration. This topic had the promise of offering important insights into the international legal frameworks informing and enforcing mediation settlements.

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<sup>36</sup> Western Australia's Criminal Code (*Criminal Code Act Compilation Act 1913 (WA)*) is based on the Queensland Griffith Criminal Code (*Criminal Code Act 1899 (Qld)*)

<sup>37</sup> Criminal Code (WA) (Schedule to *Criminal Code Act Compilation Act 1913 (WA)*) and Criminal Code (Qld) (schedule 1 to *Criminal Code Act 1899 (Qld)*)

<sup>38</sup> Matthew Erie, 'The New Legal Hubs: The Emergent Landscape of International Commercial Dispute Resolution' (2019) 59(3) *Virginia Journal of International Law* 225, 261.

<sup>39</sup> Joséphine Hage Chahine et al, 'The Acceleration of the Development of International Business Mediation after the Singapore Convention' (2021) 32(4) *European Business Law Review* 769.

## C Cross-Jurisdictional Issues in Banking & Finance Law

Singapore's standing as a global commercial hub underscored the importance of including a topic on Cross-Jurisdictional Issues in Banking & Finance Law in the study tour curriculum. This focus not only reflects the city-state's pivotal role in international finance but also addresses the complex legal challenges that arise in multi-jurisdictional financial operations. The diverse finance subsets, including ship finance, trade finance, project finance, and acquisition finance, all necessitate a thorough understanding of cross-border legal matters. These include the complexities of taking security, obtaining and evaluating legal opinions, verifying corporate authorities, and the strategic engagement with local counsel.<sup>40</sup> The organisers of the tour were of the view that the opportunity for students to address these issues would prepare them for future interactions with Singapore's sophisticated financial services sector and equip them with the insights needed to navigate the legal challenges inherent in transnational financial transactions.

## D Employment Law

A focus on this area of law within the study tour was regarded as offering students insights into how employment relationships are regulated and adjudicated in Singapore as a comparator to other jurisdictions. The topic was developed to cover: (a) restraint of trade clauses, (b) the tests used to determine whether an individual is classified as an employee or independent contractor, and (c) the legal framework surrounding wrongful dismissal, with an emphasis on how Singapore's approach to these aspects of employment law diverges from Australian practices. This topic aimed to give students important insights into the reality of working life in Singapore and offered important points of comparing the law regulating employee conditions between the jurisdictions.

## E Civil Justice Systems

This session aimed to explore recent judicial decisions which resonate within the common law jurisdiction, fostering a comparative understanding of legal evolutions in response to global and technological changes. The topic sought to cover significant cases such as *I-Admin (Singapore) Pte Ltd v Hong Ying Ting* [2020] 1 SLR 1130, which revisits established doctrines of breach of confidence previously set out in *Coco v AN Clark (Engineers) Ltd* [1969] RPC 41. The exploration of *Quoine Pte Ltd v B2C2 Ltd* [2020] 2 SLR 20 was identified as important to introduce students to the impacts of technology on traditional legal concepts such as unilateral mistakes, while the discussion of *CLM v CLN* [2022] 5 SLR 273 is significant in addressing the emerging domain of cryptocurrency within the legal designation of property capable of being subjected to a freezing order. While these are decisions of the Singaporean courts, they offer an insightful approach to how Australian courts might address similar

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<sup>40</sup> Nadja Alexander and Shouyu Chong, 'Leading the Way for the Recognition and Enforcement of International Mediated Settlement Agreements: The Singapore Convention on Mediation Act 2020' (2022) 34(1) *Singapore Academy of Law Journal* 1.

issues, and ultimately demonstrate the value which an international study tour can offer for postgraduate law students who are looking to practice in a global environment.

## VII ASSESSMENT

Assessment has been described as ‘a process for employing systematically collected information to improve the learning experience of the students.’<sup>41</sup> One of the main criticisms directed at law school assessments is that they do not prepare students for legal practice.<sup>42</sup> In particular, it has been claimed that law schools do not foster the development of practical skills.<sup>43</sup> Having said this, there has been push back against the use of the term ‘skills’ as being ‘less helpful in denoting competencies in required courses.’<sup>44</sup> A preference for the term ‘tasks’ has been advocated on the basis that it is more ‘likely to be behaviourally anchored in instruction and curriculum standards.’<sup>45</sup>

Noting these general points, the organisers were particularly keen to focus on setting tasks which connected with the global aspect of legal practice, while still conforming with requirements of academic rigour. In developing assessment for this study tour unit, the organisers were of the view that assessment of participation would be an important aspect of this experience, given that this can be a key indicator of active learning and engagement, contributing to the development of critical thinking. The fact that all students would be in the same learning space and in person suggested that this would provide an optimal environment for this form of assessment. Participation was accorded a 20% weighting of the overall mark, with the aim of assessing students based on their active involvement during the classes held from December 4th to 7 December 2023.<sup>46</sup> Criteria included punctuality, readiness with assigned readings, proactive participation in discussions (both speaking and listening), and the quality of contributions during class activities.

The second aspect of the assessment was described as ‘Reflective Journal Entries and Group Presentation’, weighted at 30%. Reflective practices have been attributed to bringing benefits to learning including ‘promoting critical thinking, deepening understanding, enhancing problem solving skills and facilitating personal growth by building resilience and creativity’.<sup>47</sup> Sheppick argues that while reflective practice has historically been peripherally regarded in legal education, it does have ‘transformative potential’ in this context,

<sup>41</sup> Ibid 88 citing Ethan Bronner, ‘A Call for Drastic Changes in Educating Lawyers’, *New York Times* (New York, 10 February 2013).

<sup>42</sup> Ruth Jones, ‘Assessment and Legal Education: What is Assessment and What the # Does it Have to Do with the Challenges Facing Legal Education.’ (2013) 45 *McGeorge Law Review* 85.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid 99.

<sup>44</sup> G Camilli et al, ‘Faculty Perception of Tasks Relevant to Academic Success in the First Year of Law School: A Longitudinal Analysis’ (2022) 32(1) *Legal Education Review* 183.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid 185.

<sup>46</sup> Kathleen Czekanski and Zane Robinson Wolf, ‘Encouraging and Evaluating Class Participation’ (2013) 10 (1) *Journal of University Teaching & Practice* 1; Jay Howard and Amanda Henney, ‘Student Participation and Instructor Gender in the Mixed-Age College Classroom’ (1998) 69(4) *Journal of Higher Education* 384; John Bean and Dean Peterson, ‘Grading classroom Participation (1998) 74 *New Directions for Teaching* 33; Antonina Balas, ‘Using Participation to Assess Students’ Knowledge’ (2000) 48(4) *College Teaching* 122.

<sup>47</sup> Sheppick (n 34) 208.

particularly in connection with the fostering of critical thinking. She notes in particular how reflective thinking can contribute towards the development of resilience, a characteristic of significant worth in legal practice. Sheppick's article focuses on a vocational postgraduate law course in which she identifies, relevantly for the purposes of this article, the importance of reflection in relation to the students' future careers in legal practice. As she states, the introduction of reflection into that course was largely due to its 'alignment with the ever-evolving demands of the legal profession'.<sup>48</sup> Reflection seemed particularly important for an international study tour given the evidence that in order to 'become aware of diversity and power issues, learners require a form of discourse, reflective dialogue, that enables them to breach the "settled" paradigms of their world'.<sup>49</sup>

Students were required to submit two written journal entries that captured their reflections and learning points from the sessions attended. These entries were due on specific dates following the sessions they covered. Subsequently, these reflections contributed to a group presentation, with the aim of students collectively discussing and presenting their learning outcomes from the entire tour, assessing their ability to synthesise individual reflections into a cohesive group perspective. The potential benefits of group presentations have been identified as fostering greater class interaction and participation, sparking increased interest in learning, introducing perspectives that might not otherwise be addressed, and enhancing communication and presentation skills.<sup>50</sup> Students can acquire knowledge from their own research and that of their peers, while also learning from observing the strengths and weaknesses of other presenters to refine their own communication and presentation abilities.<sup>51</sup>

The final piece of assessment was a 'Research Essay' (weighted at 50%). A number of specific topics were released at the end of the tour, with the aim of allowing students to delve deeper into particular areas of interest highlighted during their study in Singapore. The research paper was originally designed to help students refine their research skills and practice incorporating sources into a thorough, often argument-based, paper.<sup>52</sup> This involves finding academic sources from various mediums, conducting cross-jurisdictional research, and critically comparing and assessing different perspectives and legal frameworks.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid 213.

<sup>49</sup> Judith McNamara and Rachael Field, 'Designing for Reflective Practice in Legal Education' (2007) 2(1) *Journal of Learning Design* 66, 67, citing Anne Brockbank and Ian McGill, *Facilitating Reflective Learning in Higher Education* (Open University Press, 1998).

<sup>50</sup> Tulay Girard et al, 'An Exploratory Study of Class Presentations and Peer Evaluations: Do Students Perceive the Benefits?' (2011) 15(1) *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal* 77.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Rebecca Moore Howard and Sandra Jamieson, 'Researched Writing' in Gary Tate et al (eds), *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies* (Oxford University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, 2014); Tom Cate and Linda Dynan, 'A Guide to Composition Pedagogies' (2010) 29 *Journal of Applied Economics and Policy* 47.

## **VIII STUDENT FEEDBACK**

From the outset the feedback received from students was overwhelmingly positive. For example, after the first session (historical aspects), many students expressed their interest in learning how Singapore's colonial history has informed the development of its legal system. This enthusiasm for the curriculum continued with the sessions on international commercial negotiation and arbitration being particularly popular, although all sessions were characterised by excellent participation and cohesion. Some unsolicited comments on the tour noted the quality of the speakers and the content:

The speakers were world class. Day one opened with Dr Tan's lecture on Singapore's founding's, as well as connection to David Marshall, one of the most prolific lawyers in Singapore history. The other speakers provided a diverse range of lectures from criminal and corporate law, to modern and technology related law, to social issues and related engaging discussions. I was very impressed with both the depth and breadth we covered in a one-week period without feeling overwhelmed.<sup>53</sup>

Another student found the exclusively hosted visit to the Supreme Court on the final day of the tour a highlight:

Getting to visit the Supreme Court of Singapore and subsequently getting to sit in the judge's chair was an absolute highlight for me. Not just of the trip, but my entire time in the JD.<sup>54</sup>

## **IX CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the University of Western Australia's short-term study tour to Singapore exemplifies the value of an immersive exposure to another legal system in preparing future lawyers for a globalised legal environment. By integrating theoretical learning with practical experiences, the program not only enhanced students' understanding of the Singaporean legal system but also fostered critical skills such as cultural adaptability, legal analysis, and cross-jurisdictional competence. The overwhelmingly positive student feedback underscores the tour's success in offering transformative educational experiences and professional insights. This case study highlights the potential for other institutions to replicate and adapt similar programs, contributing to the broader goal of equipping law graduates with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate complex global legal landscapes.

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<sup>53</sup> Written student comment to tour organisers.

<sup>54</sup> Written student comment to tour organisers.

**Annexure A: List of Australian Law Schools with Overseas Study Tours**

University	Program	Topic/ Course	Destination	Specialised or General <sup>55</sup>
Curtin University	Ghent Summer Program <sup>56</sup>	The program is aimed at students keen on acquiring knowledge and credits in international and European law, and generally at participants eager to gain expertise about the increasingly international world of law and business.	Belgium	General
Swinburne University of Technology	Law, Governance and Culture Study Tour <sup>57</sup>	An immersive introduction into Vietnam's legal culture and its laws.	Vietnam	General
	Law, Governance and Culture Study Tour <sup>58</sup>	An immersive introduction into Indonesia's legal culture and its laws.	Indonesia	General
Murdoch University	International Human Rights Program <sup>59</sup>	Three units – (1) Refugee Law, (2) Legal Protection of International Human Rights, (3) International Human Rights Organisations.	Switzerland	Specialised
	European Summer Law Program <sup>60</sup>	Three units – (1) International Trade Law, (2) Comparative Law, (3) European Union Law.	Italy	Specialised
	Foreign Trade & Customs Law <sup>61</sup>	Three units – (1) International Taxation and/or Export Control & Customs Law, (2) International Trade, (3) International work placement.	Germany Italy	Specialised
	India Immersion Program <sup>62</sup>	An introduction to India's diverse regulatory, business and social impact landscape.	India	General

<sup>55</sup> Denoting focus on a specialised legal field or a general law study tour.<sup>56</sup> Curtin University, *Ghent Summer Program* <<https://www.curtin.edu.au/students/experience/global/study-tours/ghent-summer-program/>>.<sup>57</sup> Swinburne University of Technology, *Vietnam Law, Governance and Culture Tour* <<https://www.swinburne.edu.au/life-at-swinburne/study-abroad-exchange/study-tours/law-governance-and-culture-tour/>>.<sup>58</sup> Swinburne University of Technology, *Law, Governance and Culture study tour in Indonesia* <<https://www.swinburne.edu.au/life-at-swinburne/study-abroad-exchange/study-tours/indonesia-law-governance-culture/>>.<sup>59</sup> Murdoch University, *International Human Rights Program* <<https://www.murdoch.edu.au/schools/law-and-criminology/study/international-programs/international-human-rights-program>>.<sup>60</sup> Murdoch University, *European Summer Law Program* <<https://www.murdoch.edu.au/schools/law-and-criminology/study/international-programs/european-summer-law-program>>.<sup>61</sup> Murdoch University, *Foreign Trade & Customs Law* <<https://www.murdoch.edu.au/schools/law-and-criminology/study/international-programs/german-foreign-trade-customs-law-program>>.<sup>62</sup> Murdoch University, *India Immersion Program* <<https://www.murdoch.edu.au/schools/law-and-criminology/study/international-programs/india-immersion-program>>.

Sydney University <sup>63</sup>	Shanghai Winter School	An intensive three-week introduction to Chinese laws and legal systems, while experiencing life in Shanghai.	China	General
	Indian Immersion Program	Seminars, lectures, presentations and field visits with leading scholars, legal practitioners and law students in India.	India	General
	Southeast Asia Field School	An intensive two-week course, taught in English, students visit Malaysia and Indonesia for one week each.	Malaysia Indonesia	General
	Himalayan Field School	Conducted over two weeks in Nepal, this unit explores the fascinating and difficult problems of development and human rights confronting a developing country.	Nepal	Specialised
	Kyoto and Tokyo Seminars	The Kyoto and Tokyo seminars offer a unique opportunity to study Japanese Law on an intensive basis in global and socio-economic context.	Japan	General
	Sydney Law School in Europe	A selected range of elective units of study in prestigious locations in Europe.	Europe	General
	Climate and Environmental Law in the Pacific	This program focusses on land, resources, climate and environmental law issues in the Pacific.	Vanuatu	Specialised
	Philosophy of Law	A Jurisprudence unit of study offered by Sydney Law School, taught at the historic Humboldt University Law School.	Germany	Specialised
	Principles of Oil and Gas Law	Examining the distinctive legal issues presented by oil and gas exploration and production and examining the legal and regulatory responses of oil producing states.	Norway	Specialised
	Media Law: Comparative Perspectives	The course features guest lectures by leading British and European academics and practitioners specialising in media law.	United Kingdom	Specialised

<sup>63</sup> Sydney University, *Offshore Study Opportunities* < <https://www.sydney.edu.au/law/study-law/international-opportunities/offshore-study-opportunities.html#:~:text=Shanghai%20Winter%20School,while%20experiencing%20life%20in%20Shanghai>>.

	Advanced Obligations and Remedies	The aim of this unit is to explore contentious issues arising in the law of civil obligations and remedies in a broad legal context. It will build on the fundamentals in the areas of torts, contracts and equity, from a comparative perspective.	United Kingdom	Specialised
University of New South Wales	US Legal Systems <sup>64</sup>	The course will focus principally on the study of the federal and state legal systems within the United States of America.	USA	General
	Chinese Legal System <sup>65</sup>	This is a two-week intensive course held in Shanghai each year. It provides an introduction into the legal system of the People's Republic of China with particular reference to modern developments in commercial law and other important legal areas.	China	General
	China International Business and Economic Law <sup>66</sup>	This course provides an introduction to the legal system of the People's Republic of China. Emphasis is placed on modern developments in China's commercial law, international business and economic law, and other important legal areas.		General
	Law and Technology: Comparative Perspectives in Zurich <sup>67</sup>	This course will explore the interaction between law and modern technology. It will introduce students to the potentially problematic relationship between legal rules and technological change, and then begin to explore real substantive problems at the interface between them.	Switzerland	Specialised
	Women and Gender Law in Pune, India <sup>68</sup>	This course considers the role of the law in creating and perpetuating gender inequalities	India	Specialised

<sup>64</sup> University of New South Wales, *Handbook 2024, US Legal Systems (Berkeley)* <<https://www.unsw.edu.au/law-justice/student-life/international-opportunities/overseas-electives>>.

<sup>65</sup> University of New South Wales, *Handbook 2024, Chinese Legal System* <<https://handbook.unsw.edu.au/undergraduate/courses/2025/LAWS3123>>.

<sup>66</sup> University of New South Wales, *Handbook 2024, China International Business and Economic Law* <<https://handbook.unsw.edu.au/undergraduate/courses/2025/LAWS3345>>.

<sup>67</sup> University of New South Wales, *Handbook, Law and Technology: Comparative Perspectives* <<https://handbook.unsw.edu.au/undergraduate/courses/2025/LAWS3346>>.

<sup>68</sup> University of New South Wales, *Handbook, Women and Gender Law* <<https://handbook.unsw.edu.au/undergraduate/courses/2025/LAWS3445>>.

	Child Rights Comparative Clinical Program in Goa, India <sup>69</sup>	The purpose of the program will be to expose students from both institutions to new legal, political and cultural paradigms through the prism of international and comparative perspectives on children's rights and family law.		Specialised
	Pacific Islands Laws in Vanuatu <sup>70</sup>	An introduction to the merging legal systems of the Pacific Islands states, including issues of constitutional development, the recognition and application of customary law, modern and traditional legal institutions, land tenure regimes, personal law, and the legal recognition of economic activity, such as international trade, foreign investments and national resources projects.	Vanuatu	General
Australian National University	Bhutan Summer School <sup>71</sup>	Special exposure to unique aspects of Bhutanese society and its legal system through field trips to Thimphu, the capital city, and Punakha, the previous seat of government	Bhutan	General
Australian Catholic University	Endeavour EU study tour <sup>72</sup>	Two units: (1) Law, Religion and Society, (2) Human Rights Advocacy	Rome	Specialised
University of Wollongong	Legal Study Tour in Thailand <sup>73</sup>	Comparative Law: The program will include lectures on a variety of topics such as Thai Business Law, Thai Public Law, and International Law and the Thai Legal System, alongside firm and court visits, engagement with local students, and sightseeing excursions.	Thailand	General

<sup>69</sup> University of New South Wales, *Child Rights Comparative Clinical Program* <<https://handbook.unsw.edu.au/undergraduate/courses/2025/LAWS3549>>.

<sup>70</sup> <https://handbook.unsw.edu.au/undergraduate/courses/2025/LAWS3541>

<sup>71</sup> Australian National University, *Bhutan Summer School - Jigme Singye Wangchuck (JSW) School of Law* <<https://law.anu.edu.au/bhutan-summer-school-jigme-singye-wangchuck-jsw-school-law>>.

<sup>72</sup> Australian Catholic University, *Study Law Overseas* <<https://www.acu.edu.au/study-at-acu/study-overseas/study-tours-and-short-programs/study-law-overseas>>.

<sup>73</sup> University of Wollongong, *Legal Study Tour in Thailand* <<https://www.uow.edu.au/business-law/current-students/study-exchange-and-overseas-opportunities/faculty-led-studytours/#:~:text=Legal%20Study%20Tour%20in%20Thailand&text=The%20program%20will%20include%20lectures,local%20students%2C%20and%20sightseeing%20excursions>>.

Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology	Centre for Innovative Justice Study Tour <sup>74</sup>	Expose students to Courts, programs and the people who run them	New Zealand	Specialised
	Business and Law Beyond Borders <sup>75</sup>	Focus on business and legal global issues	Vietnam	General
Monash University	Monash Law International Study Programs – Prato <sup>76</sup>	A range of potential units: (1) Global issues in criminal law and justice, (2) global issues in international trade and finance, (3) Global issues in human rights and public law, (4) global issues in private and commercial law, (5) International Trade Law	Italy	Specialised
	Monash Law International Study Programs - Malaysia <sup>77</sup>	Two units: (1) Public International Law, (2) Environmental issues in economics	Malaysia	Specialised
Melbourne University	Indigenous Law in Aotearoa and Australia <sup>78</sup>	The subject aims to equip students with expert knowledge on current Indigenous legal issues in Aotearoa and Australia, including contemporary treaty debates and the influence of Indigenous law in settler legal systems.	New Zealand	Specialised
	Law and Legal Practice in Asia <sup>79</sup>	The aim of this subject is to provide students with an enhanced understanding of law and legal practice in an Asian jurisdiction through intensive seminars, supervision of a research project on an Asian jurisdiction, and legal experience in an approved role in an Asia-based workplace setting.	Indonesia	Not specified

<sup>74</sup> Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, *Centre for Innovative Justice Study Tour* <<https://cij.org.au/students/study-tour/>>.

<sup>75</sup> Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, *Study Tours* <<https://www.rmit.edu.au/about/schools-colleges/college-of-business-and-law/international/global-opportunities/study-tours>>.

<sup>76</sup> Monash University, *Monash Global Campus Intensive in Italy* <<https://www.monash.edu/study-abroad/outbound/monash-led-programs/monash-global-campus-intensives/mgcis-in-italy>>.

<sup>77</sup> Monash University, *Monash Global Campus Intensive in Malaysia* <<https://www.monash.edu/study-abroad/outbound/monash-led-programs/monash-global-campus-intensives/mgcis-in-malaysia>>.

<sup>78</sup> Melbourne University, *Global and Interstate Subjects* <<https://law.unimelb.edu.au/students/jd/enrichment/global-learning-opportunities/global-subjects#LAWS90214>>.

<sup>79</sup> Melbourne University, *Global and Interstate Subjects* <Melbourne University, Global and Interstate Subjects <<https://law.unimelb.edu.au/students/jd/enrichment/global-learning-opportunities/global-subjects#LAWS90214>>.