

Area of Study

Local and Global Citizenship

Overview

This transition unit introduces students to the study of law and the legal system in Ireland. In virtually all areas of life some understanding of law and legal principles is either useful or imperative. The unit exposes students to a challenging and new educational experience. It is for students who have an interest or a career ambition in law. Activities in this unit include discussion and critical evaluation of real legal cases. A court visit is undertaken and a mock trial is staged as part of the unit.

Related learning

Legal Studies complements aspects of CSPE at Junior Certificate and Business at Leaving Certificate. It will be of particular interest to students who intend pursuing a career in Law, Accountancy, Business or Journalism.

Outline of the unit

- Introduction to the key concepts and language related to law.
- The philosophy of law. What is law? Why do we need/have law? Explore concepts of justice fairness, equality. Discuss 'Is justice always fair?'
- Sources of Irish law - Where does the law come from? The history of Irish law - common law, equity, colonial legislation, constitutions
- Who makes the laws and who works in the legal system - legal professionals, court structure and jurisdiction of different courts (District, Circuit, High, Supreme, Criminal and Civil Courts)
- Organise and take part in a court visit
- What are the key principles of our laws? European law, the Constitution, legislation, precedent, international, the Law of Torts, the Law of Contracts, criminal law
- Organise a mock trial with a defendant, victim, witnesses, barristers, judge and jury.

Breakdown of the unit (how timetabled)

Class Contact Time: 39 hours; Court visit: 6 hours

Aims

This transition unit aims to:

- introduce students to the key concepts and information relating to the law
- familiarise students with the legal system in Ireland
- facilitate student investigation into law as a career
- develop students' critical thinking and personal reflection skills
- develop students' communication skills through debate, discussion and role play.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of this unit students should be able to:

- explain key legal concepts
- explain how the legal system works in Ireland
- read, summarise and evaluate reports on court cases from newspapers
- give an opinion on simple legal problems
- prepare and take part in a mock trial
- demonstrate improved presentational and communication skills.

Key skills

How evidenced

information processing	independently sourcing, reading and presenting newspaper articles in scrapbook project; summarising news material
critical and creative thinking	analysing and presenting alternative solutions to hypothetical and real legal problems based on core legal principles
communicating	participating in class discussions and debating court cases and associated social, economic, political and legal issues; participating in a mock trial
working with others	planning the court visit and the mock trial
being personally effective	independently completing a scrapbook project and court visit report; preparing for visit to court and for mock trial

Learning approaches

Exposition, debate, teacher and student-led discussion, role play, project work, internet research (ICT), court visit.

Assessment approaches

- Student self-assessment of contributions to/participation in class debate and discussion.
- Report/presentation on the court visit.
- Scrap book project: students collect newspaper reports of current court cases and give their opinions on these cases.
- In addition, students will take part in a variety of tests and quizzes on aspects of legal knowledge.

Evaluation methods

Evaluation questionnaire for students on their views about course content and usefulness, on what and how they have learned best, on teaching methodologies used and assignments given by teacher. Questionnaire is used to stimulate class discussion and to inform future teaching of the transition unit.

Resources

Teacher support material:

A variety of publications are available from booksellers on

Principles of Irish Law

Irish Business Law

Irish Criminal Law

The Irish Legal System

Newspaper cuttings, legislation, video (Judge Judy!), courts (visit).

Websites:

www.lawsociety.ie

www.kingsinn.ie

www.justice.ie

www.garda.ie

www.geography.ie/legalstudies/legal.html