

Technology and the Rule of Law Conference Pack

Location: [Main Campus Building](#), Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) [Midlands](#), Dublin Road, Athlone, County Westmeath, Ireland. Hybrid (in-person/online attendance, but workshops are in-person).

Register [here](#) on Eventbrite.

Social media: #LawTechAthlone24
#TUSLawTech24, follow @TUS_Athlone

Participate in Live voting on Menti.com, enter code: 1228 3015

Enter Student Hackathon (1.30pm – 5pm, B54):

<https://lawtechschool.wordpress.com/2024/02/07/student-legal-tech-hackathon-12th-feb-2024-1-30pm-b54/>



This 'Lawtech' or legal technology conference brings together expert speakers from industry, the judiciary and academia to discuss the implications of digital technologies like Blockchain and AI for the rule of law, the integrity of the justice system and effectiveness of laws and regulation. The main session of the conference will try to capture the main ethical concerns about the use of technologies like AI, Blockchain, Algorithms, Machine Learning and Data Analytics in the area of legal practice, ideas explored further in the parallel session. Afternoon workshops will explore issues around the teaching of Legal Technology in Higher Ed and the challenges of AI in education. This event is aimed at legal academics and PhD students, providing a platform for them to discuss the challenges and benefits of legal technology with a particular focus on access to justice and legal regulation. This conference will also be of interest to law students, anyone thinking about a legal career or interested in how law practice is changing.

Summary Program:

8.30am	Registration, Tea & Coffee, Douglas Hyde Theatre , Main Campus Building.
9am – 11am	Plenary Session (Douglas Hyde Theatre) – Ethical Challenges of Legal Technologies
11am – 11.15am	Tea Break
11.15am – 12.45am	Parallel Sessions: Session 1, Room B54 , Legal Practice; Session 2, Douglas Hyde, Technology & Justice; and Session 3, Room B55 , Regulation and Technology.
12.45am – 1.30pm	Lunch Break
1.30pm – 3pm	Workshop 1 (Room B55): Legal Curricular Responses to Legal Technology Student Hackathon (Room B54)
3pm – 3.30pm	Tea Break
3.30pm – 5pm	Workshop 2 (Room B55): AI and Legal Education
5pm – 6pm	Student Presentations and Prizes/Conference Close

Conference Program & Speakers (*subject to change*):

8.30am Registration, tea and coffee.

Location: Douglas Hyde Lecture Theatre (off main canteen)

9am – 9.15am **Welcome:** Dr. Michael Tobin Dean of Faculty, Dr. Alison Sheridan Head of Department of Business and Management. Alison Hough BL, Senior Lecturer, TUS Athlone, Conference Convenor.

9.15am – 9.30am **Keynote Speaker:** Ms Justice Leonie Reynolds.

9.30am – 11am **Plenary Panel of Guest Speakers & Audience Discussion:**

“Ethics and Robot Lawyers: What ethical challenges are posed by legal technologies?”

Chair: Ms Justice Leonie Reynolds

Kickstart address: Prof Andy Unger & Prof. Lucia Otoyó LSBU

Panellists: Dr. Brian Barry, TCD; Prof. Rónán Kennedy, UG; Prof. Andy Unger, LSBU; Prof. Lucia Otoyó, LSBU; Prof. David Cowan, MU; Mark Tottenham BL, Decisis Law Reports; Gavin Sheridan, VizLegal; Nap Keeling, McCann Fitzgerald Solicitors; AnneMarie Whelan BL, CEO RegSol Ireland, Alison Hough BL, TUS.

This session will pose three key questions to which each of the panellists will be asked to give short 2-minute responses, and the audience will be asked to respond to each question as well.

11am – 11.15am Tea and Coffee

11.15am – 12.45pm Parallel Sessions (10-minute presentations):

- a) **Parallel Session 1 (Room B54):** Developments in Legal Practice: Practical perspectives on ethical and professional challenges and benefits.

Chair Karen Costello, Lecturer, Faculty of Business and Hospitality, TUS Athlone.

Location:

- i. Mark Tottenham BL, Barrister, Decisis Law Reports, Fifth Court Podcast, “The impact of technology on the barristers' profession”.
- ii. Nap Keeling, Solicitor, McCann Fitzgerald.
- iii. Cormac McCarthy, McCarthy Solicitors, “Technology in the Solicitors Practice -SME Perspective”
5 min Break
- iv. Laurencia Maguire, LEAP, “Case Management Software”.
- v. Martina Winters, Dye & Durham, (formerly Keyhouse), “Legal Tech and the Solicitors Practice”.

Panel/Audience Discussion 30 mins

- b) **Parallel Session 2, Douglas Hyde:** Technology and Justice: How digital technologies are affecting access to justice.

Chair Prof. Rónán Kennedy, University of Galway.

- i. Dr. Brian Barry, TCD, “AI for judicial decision-making: implications for the future of open justice”.
- ii. Trent A. Kubasiak US Army JAG, “Bridging the Digital Divide in Elder Law: Challenges and Innovations” – **Remote presentation.**
- iii. Tara Kerins, LLM Candidate, TCD, 'The Future of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Court Rooms: The Risks and the Benefits.'
5 min Break
- iv. Sarah Byrt, EPA, “Technology in Realising the Aarhus Convention – Access to Information”
- v. Alison Hough BL, TUS Athlone, “The Intersection of Environmental Justice and Legal Technology”
- vi. Obele Akinniranye, PhD Candidate, MU/Associate Lecturer TUS Athlone “Transformative Access to Justice through Automation”.

Panel/Audience Discussion 20 mins

- c) **Parallel Session 3, Room B55:** Regulation and Technology: How technology can improve legal governance and the rule of law.

Chair Gavin Sheridan, VizLegal.

- i. Prof David Cowan, MU, “A Technological Leviathan: Regulation or Strangulation?”.
- ii. Anastasia Platonava, PhD Candidate TUS Athlone, “Legal Barriers to Blockchain Adoption in the HES of Ireland”.
- iii. Prof. Ben Turner, Assistant Professor & Lecturer in Law, Cardiff University, “Redefining “Possession” in Law: Digital Objects and Hegelian Personhood Theory”.
5 min Break
- iv. Pok Yin (Boris) Luk, LLM, LLB, DPhil Candidate, “Regulation and Technology: How Technology can improve Legal Governance and the Rule of Law.” **Remote presentation.**
- v. Cormac Kilkenny, PhD Candidate DCU, “Beyond Code: Examining Smart Contracts in ‘Real World’ and On-Chain Transactions”.

Panel/Audience Discussion 30 mins

12.45pm – 1.30pm Lunch

1.30pm – 5pm Student Hackathon Competition, Room B54

Details: <https://lawtechschool.wordpress.com/2024/02/07/student-legal-tech-hackathon-12th-feb-2024-1-30pm-b54/>

1.30pm – 3pm Workshop 1, Room B55

“Legal Curricular responses to Legal Technology”

Joint Chairs: Prof Andy Unger, Head of Legal Division, and Prof. Lucia Otoyoy, LSBU (London South Bank University).

Presenting: Prof. Andy Unger & Prof. Lucia Otoyoy of LSBU. Legal Curricular Responses to Legal Technology

Discussion Panel: Dr. Brian Barry, TCD; Prof. Rónán Kennedy, UG; Obele Akinniranye, PhD Candidate, MU; Prof. Ben Turner, Cardiff University.

3pm Coffee

3.30pm- 5pm Workshop 2, Room B55

“Legal Educators on Responses to AI and Plagiarism.”

Chair Dr. Nuala Harding, Head of CPID (Centre for Pedagogical Innovation and Development), at TUS Athlone.

Presenting: Mr. Alan Carr, Dept of Built Environment, Faculty of Engineering & Built Environment, TUS Midwest, “Academic assessment risks & legislative analogies”, Prof. Lucia Otoyoy, LSBU.

Discussion panel: Dr. Brian Barry, TCD; Prof Andy Unger; Prof. Rónán Kennedy, UG; TCD, Obele Akinniranye, Tara Kerins.

5pm – 6pm - Student Presentations and Prize Giving B55

6pm Conference close.

Queries to alison.hough@tus.ie

Technology and the Rule of Law Conference Program		
8.30am -11am Douglas Hyde Theatre, Plenary Session on Ethical Issues and Legal Tech		
11am Tea & Coffee		
11.15am – 12.45 Parallel Sessions:		
Parallel Session 1 Room B54 Legal Practice Impacts	Parallel Session 2 Douglas Hyde Access to Justice and Tech	Parallel Session 3 Room B55 Regulation and Tech
12.45pm – 1.30pm Lunch		
1.30pm – 5pm Workshops and Student Hackathon		
1.30pm – 3pm Workshop 1 Room B55 Legal Curricular responses to LawTech	1.30pm – 5pm Student Hackathon Room B54 https://lawtechschool.wordpress.com/2024/02/07/student-legal-tech-hackathon-12th-feb-2024-1-30pm-b54/	
3pm Tea & Coffee		
3.30pm – 5pm Workshop 2 Room B55 AI & Legal Education		
5pm – 5.30pm Student Hackathon Judging and Prize, B55.		

SPEAKERS & CHAIRS LIST

- Obele Akinniranye, Associate Law Lecturer, TUS Athlone.
- Dr. Brian Barry, Trinity College Dublin.
- Sarah Byrt, Environmental Protection Agency.
- Mr. Alan Carr, Dept of Built Environment, Faculty of Engineering & Built Environment, TUS Midwest.
- Dr. Emer Connolly, Lecturer, TUS Athlone.
- Karen Costello, Solicitor & Law Lecturer, TUS Athlone.
- Prof. David Cowan, Maynooth University.
- Dr. Nuala Harding, Head of Centre for Pedagogical Innovation and Development, TUS Athlone.
- Alison Hough, Senior Law Lecturer, TUS Athlone Institute of Technology.
- Nap Keeling, McCann Fitzgerald Solicitors.
- Anastasia Platonava, PhD Candidate TUS Athlone.
- Prof. Rónán Kennedy, University of Galway:
- Tara Kerins, LLM Candidate Trinity College Dublin.
- Cormac Kilkenny, PhD Candidate, DCU.
- Trent A. Kubasiak, US Army JAG.
- Pok Yin (Boris) Luk, LLM, LLB, DPhil Candidate.
- Laurencia Maguire, LEAP Legal Software Ireland.
- Cormac McCarthy, Principal, McCarthy Solicitors.
- Prof. Lucia Otoyó, London South Bank University.
- Ms Justice Leonie Reynolds, High Court of Ireland.
- Dr. Alison Sheridan, Head of Department of Business and Management, TUS Athlone.
- Dr. Michael Tobin, Dean of Faculty.
- Mark Tottenham BL, Decisis Law Reports.
- Prof. Ben Turner Cardiff University.
- Prof Andy Unger, London South Bank University.
- Gavin Sheridan, VizLegal.
- Elaine Walsh, Solicitor & Lecturer, TUS Athlone.
- AnneMarie Whelan BL, CEO RegSol.
- Martina Winters, Dye & Durham (formerly Keyhouse).

BIOGRAPHIES:

- **Obele Akinniranye, Associate Law Lecturer, TUS Athlone.**



Obele Akinniranye is a PhD researcher in Robotics Law, and former Corporate and Commercial Lawyer and Notary Public. She teaches Legal Technology in TUS Midlands Athlone. Her research delves deeply into the world of Artificial Intelligence, at the intersection of AI Ethics, Regulatory compliance, sustainable development goals and understanding and reviewing the societal and legal implications of AI. Her research examines legal aspects of Society and AI seeking to incorporate the people process technology balances in the AI implementation process, reviews Data protection. implications under the GDPR and the regulatory Framework for the Irish state and the EU level. This includes examination of the ethical dimension of AI with particular emphasis on bias, Morality, responsibility and strong governance capabilities.

- **Dr. Brian Barry, Trinity College Dublin.**



Dr Brian Barry is an Associate Professor at the School of Law, Trinity College Dublin where he teaches Regulating Artificial Intelligence and Intellectual Property Law. Dr Barry's research is primarily concerned with understanding and improving decision-making in justice systems by analysing the impact of technology and socio-political factors on courts and other adjudication systems. He is the author of *How Judges Judge: Empirical Insights into Judicial-Making* and regularly delivers training to judges and adjudicators at various judicial and quasi-judicial bodies.

- **Dr. Emer Connolly, Lecturer, TUS Athlone.**



Dr Emer Connolly Lectures in the Faculty of Business and Hospitality at TUS (Midlands), Ireland. She holds a BA in Irish and Sociological and Political Science, a Higher Diploma in Applied Communications and an MA in Journalism, all from University of Galway, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Learning, Teaching and Assessment from TUS (Midlands). She completed her PhD at the Department of Sociology, University of Limerick, in 2022. Prior to joining TUS (Midlands), Emer was a lecturer in Journalism and New Media at University of Limerick (2010 – 2015) and NUI Galway (2015 – 2018). At UL, she was the Course Director of the MA in Journalism and the BA in Journalism and New Media. She has worked as a Journalist for several years in the print, online and broadcast media, on a national and regional level and has regularly appeared on national television and radio. She is the author of two true crime books, 'Lying Eyes and the Hitman for Hire' (Gill Books, 2008) and 'Out On Bail: The crimes of Ireland's Bail Breakers' (Gill Books, 2011). She received three Justice Media Awards from the Law Society of Ireland for her reporting on crime and legal affairs.

- **Prof. David Cowan, Maynooth University.**



Dr David Cowan is Assistant Professor in the School of Law and Criminology at the National University of Ireland Maynooth (NUIM), and Associate Lecturer in the Faculté de Droit - Catholic University of Lyon (UCLy). He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (FRSA). Dr Cowan launched Law and Technology modules in the Bachelor of Laws (LLB) programme at Maynooth, the first programme of its kind in legal education. He is also creator of The Dialogue Box, an innovative communication tool which features in his latest book Effective Communication for

Lawyers: A Practical Guide (Edward Elgar, 2022).

- **Dr. Nuala Harding, Head of the Centre for Pedagogical Innovation and Development, TUS Athlone.**



Nuala Harding is the Head of Centre for Pedagogical Innovation and Development (CPID). Comprising a multi-disciplinary, highly skilled team, the centre works collaboratively in the support and enhancement of learning, teaching and assessment. Her current educational research, teaching and publishing interests include the development of academic practice, student engagement and the use of digital technologies to enhance learning, teaching and assessment. Nuala holds a B.Ed. (Hons) and an MA in Third Level Learning and

Teaching. She completed her PhD studies in the Department of Educational Research at Lancaster University. Her studies focused on enhancement, change management and researching pedagogic practices in higher education. In addition, Nuala is a National Associate on the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning and has recently led highly-successful, funded, strategic learning enhancement initiatives in the university. Nuala is also an institute representative on the European Regional University Network (RUN) focusing on the future of advanced skills and pedagogic development.

- **Alison Hough BL, Senior Law Lecturer, TUS Athlone.**



Alison Hough is a Senior law lecturer in the Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) Athlone, and principal researcher specialising in environmental governance and justice in the European Union and internationally. Alison heads up the Access to Justice Observatory of the Environmental Justice Network Ireland. She was called to the Irish Bar in 2008 and practiced for 8 years in Dublin and on the Midland Circuit. She has published on the Aarhus Convention, environmental law and governance, public participation law, Brexit and environment, and legal technology and its potential to enhance environmental rights.

- **Nap Keeling, McCann Fitzgerald Solicitors.**



Before joining forces with Ken Kennedy Solicitors, Nap led the legal team at St. James' Hospital and was, during their most recent spell in Government, legal advisor to the Labour Party. Prior to that, he spent 14 years practicing as a barrister specialising in Commercial Disputes, Planning, Environmental & Local Government Law, Administrative Law and Medical Negligence. Nap also spent 4 years with PwC.

- **Anastasia Platonava, PhD Candidate TUS Athlone.**



Anastasia Platonava is a PhD researcher at the Technological University of the Shannon in Athlone, Ireland, researching blockchain technology in education sector. Her focus is on creating a blockchain roadmap to support digital offerings, like the “digital learning passport (DLP)”, and enable educational stakeholders to understand its potential. Originally from the Republic of Belarus, Anastasia earned a Bachelor’s degree in Finance and Accounting from the University of Economics in Prague and worked for the United Nations in Belarus. She is a Government of Ireland Scholar and completed a Master’s in Business programme at Athlone Institute of Technology,

Ireland. Anastasia is passionate about innovative EdTech trends and the ways high-quality education may become accessible for all.

- **Prof. Rónán Kennedy, University of Galway:**

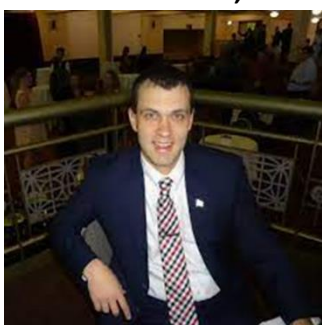


Dr Rónán Kennedy is an Associate Professor in the School of Law, University of Galway. He has written on environmental law, information technology law, and other topics, and co-authored two textbooks. He spent much of the 1990s working in the IT industry. He was Executive Legal Officer to the Chief Justice of Ireland, Mr Justice Ronan Keane, from 2000 to 2004. In 2020, he was a Science Foundation Ireland Public Service Fellow in the Oireachtas Library and Research Service, writing a report on ‘Algorithms, Big Data and Artificial Intelligence in the Irish Legal Services Market’.

- **Tara Kerins, LLM Candidate Trinity College Dublin.**

Tara Kerins Aylmer is a Masters of Intellectual Property & Information Technology Law student in Trinity College Dublin. While completing a Bachelor of Arts in Law and Accounting in the Technological University of the Shannon Midlands (with first class honours in all subjects) she discovered a passion for the law surrounding emerging technologies. Now she focuses her research efforts in the areas of data protection, targeted political advertising and the ongoing battle to regulate AI. She aims to work towards a future with transparent, beneficial technology that contributes to the common good.

- **Trent A. Kubasiak, US Army JAG.**



Trent Kubasiak is a military attorney and active duty officer in the United States Army. He has an LLM in Criminal Law from the Judge Advocate General's Legal Center and School, a JD from the Marquette University School of Law, and an MBA in Corporate Finance from Capella University. He writes extensively on artificial intelligence and technology for the Ethical AI Law Institute and his work can be found in Army Magazine, the National Institute of Military Justice, the Cavalry and Armor Magazine, and the Lieber Institute for Law and Warfare.

- **Laurencia Maguire, LEAP Legal Software Ireland.**



Laurencia has been with LEAP for over 3 years and knows our legal practice productivity solution inside out. In her role, Laurencia works with law firms across the Republic of Ireland to assist them in adopting the latest technology. Getting to know each client's specific needs, Laurencia is able to ensure the best solution is made available to their practice in helping them make the switch to the cloud. In addition to this, Laurencia has extensive experience in partnering with Universities to introduce the next generation to the modern ways of working in the legal profession.

- **Prof. Lucia Otoyó, London South Bank University.**



I am an Associate Professor and a Deputy Head of the Computer Science and Informatics Division in the School of Engineering. I joined LSBU in 2013 while working in the industry as a co-director of a Software Development company QuizSlides Ltd. I teach Computer Science and Informatics subjects, with a specialism in Project Management. My experience from working in the industry for the past ten years as a company co-director, project manager and software tester has strongly influenced and informed my teaching. It has enabled me to design teaching with the latest industry practices, tools and techniques in mind. I am also a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, and one of my research interests is in the area of Law & Technology. My law colleague Andy Unger and I set up a joint Law & Technology module in 2018. Since then we have co-authored two book chapters and delivered presentations at numerous conferences sharing the practices and experience in the area of Law and Technology and our shared LawTech module.

- **Ms Justice Leonie Reynolds, High Court of Ireland.**



Leonie Reynolds is an Irish judge who has served as a Judge of the High Court since October 2016. She previously served as a Judge of the Circuit Court from 2010 to 2016. She was called to the Irish Bar in 1993. She was appointed as a judge of the Circuit Court in January 2010 and the High Court in 2016. She was a member of the Special Criminal Court between 2015 and 2016 and was formerly the judge in charge of the Chancery List of the High Court, which encompasses cases involving equity and company law.

- **Dr. Alison Sheridan, Head of Department of Business and Management, TUS Athlone.**



Dr Alison Sheridan is Head of the Department of Business and Management at TUS Midlands Midwest (Athlone Campus). She holds a BComm from NUIG, an MSc in Strategic HRM from Sheffield Hallam University and a PhD from DCU which focused on the nature of HRM in service sectors SMEs. Having gained significant experience in both private and public sector HR management roles, Alison joined the Department of Business and Management in 2008. As a lecturer, she has delivered modules across a range of areas such as Human Resource Management, Resourcing Talent and Reward Management in addition to supervising MBS students in both business and HR areas. Her current research interests include the influence of social media on HR practice in SMEs.

- **Dr. Michael Tobin, Dean of Faculty of Business and Hospitality.**



Dr. Michael Tobin is Dean of Faculty at the Technological University of the Shannon Midlands, responsible for designing and delivering innovative skilled based programmes (bespoke and generic) from level 6 to level 9, to meet the needs of learning stakeholders regionally, nationally and globally. Liaising with industry partners, Michael excels at delivering programmes using work-based methodologies - combining 'earning and learning'. He is academic background is in the area of Applied Economics (micro and Macro), Managerial and Behavioural Economics, Economics of Strategy, Consultancy Management, Research Methods and Supervision to Masters level (L9). Also, Michael is a regular facilitator in strategic planning, personal development and managerial competencies. He is a consultancy services manager with considerable international experience prior to joining the team in Athlone.

- **Mark Tottenham BL, Decisis Law Reports/Fifth Court Podcast:**



Mark Tottenham is a barrister, in practice for over 20 years. He is a Qualified Mediator, accredited by the Irish Professional Mediator's Association, and a Trust and Estate Practitioner. He is the author of the award-winning textbook *A Guide to Expert Witness Evidence* (Bloomsbury, 2019) and *The Reliable Expert Witness* (Clarus Press, 2021), a handbook for expert and professional witnesses. He is the founding editor of *Decisis Law Reports*, an online law reporting service. He is also winner of the Law Society's Legal Podcast of the Year award in 2022, and presenter of *The Fifth Court*, a weekly legal affairs podcast.

- **Prof. Ben Turner Cardiff University.**

Dr Ben Turner: Ben is a lecturer (assistant professor) in law at Cardiff University School of Law. He is an expert on the imposition of technology into legal frameworks and the jurisprudence of law and technology. Ben has particular expertise in theories of property law and technology (examining this from economic, Hegelian and utilitarian perspectives), as well as digital legal education. He has contributed this expertise to a range of stakeholders including the Law Commission of England and Wales, and the Association of Law Teachers Model Law and Technology Curriculum."

- **Prof. Andy Unger, London South Bank University.**



My main academic and professional interests relate to legal education, law & technology, access to justice and international human rights strategy. I am a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and have a lifelong interest in legal education, particularly in Clinical and experiential legal education. I have led the development of our LLB and LLM courses, including the establishment of our Legal Advice Clinic and our responses to the new Solicitors Qualifying Examination. I have recently developed an interest in the impact of technology on access to justice, legal services and careers in law and have begun teaching a collaborative and practical Law & Technology course in collaboration with the Computer Sciences Division at LSBU. As well as teaching, we are currently exploring the likely impact of generative AI on teaching, learning and assessment in higher education.

- **Gavin Sheridan, VizLegal.**



Gavin Sheridan is the CEO and co-founder of Vizlegal, a platform for searching and tracking judgments, decisions, cases and rules, in Ireland and the UK. He was previously Innovation Director at Storyful, a social media intelligence agency. He is also co-founder of Right To Know CLG, a litigation-focused NGO in the area of access to information and environmental rights.

- **Elaine Walsh, Solicitor & Law Lecturer, TUS Athlone.**



Elaine lectures a range of law modules within the Department of Business at TUS including Land Law, Tort Law, Business Law, Company Law, Revenue Law and Legal Skills. She has a continuing interest in legal education, the transition to studying law and the learning journey. Elaine is a Doctorate of Law candidate at the University of Northumbria.

- **AnneMarie Whelan BL, CEO, RegSol Ireland.**



AnneMarie Whelan BL is CEO at RegSol Ireland, which provides Consultancy and Training services in Regulatory Compliance mostly for the financial services sector. As a qualified Barrister, AnneMarie spent 9 years at the Bar of Ireland before switching to financial services regulation in 2014. Since then, she has developed expertise in Anti-Money Laundering, Consumer Protection and Data Protection (qualifying as a DPO in 2017). AnneMarie regularly presents at different industry events on these topics. She currently holds a PCF12 Head of Compliance designation for an insurance intermediary and is a named MLRO for a Credit Union.

- **Martina Winters, Dye & Durham (formerly Keyhouse).**



Martina is the Sales & Marketing Manager of Keyhouse, now part of Dye & Durham, a Canadian legal tech company, has 20 years of experience in the field. She deeply understands the challenges faced by law firms and has delivered many projects in business process improvement. With Lean Sigma Six certification, Martina brings this approach to the legal market focussing on improving efficiency across the IT pillars: People, Process and Technology. Her work with law firms throughout Ireland demonstrates how refining business processes alongside technology adoption can help firms grow and transform operations, benefitting both clients and solicitors alike.

- **Karen Costello, Solicitor & Law Lecturer, TUS Athlone**



Karen Costello qualified as a Solicitor in 2009 and is a member of the Law Society of Ireland. Karen is a full-time lecture in the Department of Business and Management in TUS Midlands teaching Equity Law, European Union Law, Administrative law, Jurisprudence and Social Media and ICT law. Karen's current area of research is legal education.

- **Sarah Byrt, Environmental Protection Agency.**

Sarah works with the Environmental Protection Agency as a secondee from Fieldfisher Ireland LLP, in the Office of Environmental Sustainability. She graduated in Law and Irish (BCL) from UCC, with a keen interest in environmental regulation and the use of innovation to enhance public participation.

Abstracts

Abstracts Parallel Session 1, Room B54:

Developments in Legal Practice: Practical perspectives on ethical and professional challenges and benefits.

- i. Nap Keeling, McCann Fitzgerald Solicitors;
- ii. Laurencia Maguire, LEAP, Case Management Software.
- iii. Cormac McCarthy, Principal, McCarthy Solicitors.
- iv. Mark Tottenham BL, Decisis Law Reports.
- v. Martina Winters, Dye & Durham (formerly Keyhouse).

Abstracts Parallel Session 2, Room B54:

- i. **Dr. Brian Barry, TCD, “AI for judicial decision-making: implications for the future of open justice”.**
Abstract: A core principle of the rule of law is ‘open justice’: that the work of courts should be public, transparent, and accountable. AI tools for judicial decision-making are increasingly relied upon in many court systems around the globe. This paper reflects on the implications of AI tools for judicial decision-making for traditional conceptions of open justice (for instance, public access to court proceedings, orality, the duty to give reasons). The paper will argue that certain uses of AI for judicial decision-making are inherently incompatible with the existing paradigm of open justice which is built around physical courtrooms and entirely human interaction. It will then draw from broader literature around procedural justice and explainable AI (XAI) to propose new ways to protect and realise open justice as courts transition towards incorporating AI into their operations.

- ii. **Trent A. Kubasiak US Army JAG, “Bridging the Digital Divide in Elder Law: Challenges and Innovations”** – Remote presentation.
Abstract: Digital technology is reshaping every aspect of our lives, and some members of the U.S. population are being left behind. Older adults¹ often struggle to keep up with technological advances, and there are unintended consequences when businesses and services rush to migrate onto digital platforms.² One consequence is an access to justice disconnect generally between those needing legal assistance, and the practitioners who want to help them.³ Elder law, a specialized field focusing on the legal issues affecting older adults, is increasingly intersecting with the digital world. For example, on the client side, older adults are interacting with the digital world, and it does not always go well, sometimes manifesting in myriad forms of abuse and exploitation in need of remedy.⁴ On the practice side, the elder law attorneys who can help older adults are increasingly relying on legal technology to conduct their practice.⁵ The increase in digital technology use reveals in stark relief the digital divide – the gap between those who have access to modern information and communication technology and those who do not – a divide that can be more pronounced among the aging population.⁶ As more legal services and resources migrate online, older adults, often less familiar with these digital tools, risk

¹ The term “older adults” or “elderly people” is used throughout this paper to refer to individuals 65 years and older, adopting the criteria from: Cahn, N. (2022, February 19). *Family Law for the One-Hundred-Year Life*, 132 Yale L.J. 1691, 1695.

² Tsetoura, A. (2022). Technological Inequality and Social Exclusion of Older People during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *International Journal of Social Quality*, 12(2), 72–93. <https://doi.org/10.3167/ijsq.2022.120205>

³ Simshaw, Drew. (2022) *Access to A.I. Justice: Avoiding an Inequitable Two-Tiered System of Legal Services*, Yale J. L. & Tech, 150.

⁴ In the U.S. Department of Justice’s “Annual Report to Congress on Department of Justice Activities to Combat Elder Fraud and Abuse” (October 18, 2023), statistics of Elder Fraud and Elder Abuse are shared, among specific examples of enforcement against offenders. Retrieved from: <https://www.justice.gov/elderjustice/media/1319976/dl?inline=>

⁵ McCarthy, Shaun. (2019). *Technology-Enabled Legal Service Delivery for Older Adults: What Can Law Learn from TeleHealth? Findings from an International Review of Literature*. To review the topic more generally, See Piekarsky, S. B. (2021-2022) *The Increased Use and Permanency of Technology: How Those Changes Impact Attorneys’ Professional Responsibility and Ethical Obligations to Clients and Recommendations for Improvement*, 30 U. Miami Bus. L. Rev. 225.

⁶ Niehaves, B., & Plattfaut, R. (2014). Internet adoption by the elderly: employing IS technology acceptance theories for understanding the age-related digital divide. *European Journal of Information Systems*, 23(6), 708–726. <https://doi.org/10.1057/ejis.2013.19>

being left behind. This digital divide not only impedes access to necessary legal services but also raises concerns about justice and equality in the digital age. This paper aims to explore the intersection of elder law and the digital divide in current international research, scrutinizing how rapid technological advancements, particularly in artificial intelligence (AI) and other digital tools, are reshaping access to justice for older individuals. By delving into the challenges posed by the digital divide in elder law, this analysis of existing research will highlight the evolving role of technology in legal regulation and justice, emphasizing the necessity for inclusive digital legal solutions. Through this investigation, the paper will contribute to a deeper understanding of the implications of digital technologies like AI for the rule of law, especially for an often overlooked yet growing demographic in our society.⁷

iii. **Tara Kerins, LLM Candidate, TCD, 'The Future of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Court Rooms: The Risks and the Benefits.'**

Abstract: Technology is neutral, it is neither inherently good nor bad. Its true nature lies in how it is used. As we stand on the cusp of the age of Artificial Intelligence, we are faced with what may seem like the inevitable use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in Court Rooms. We hold the responsibility of governing how this technology is used in our courts and must now take the time to ensure the use of Generative AI in our courts improves the rule of law, rather than damaging it. This paper discusses the good, the bad and the ugly of AI use in a court setting. The main risks identified within the paper are that: 1. AI will erode fair trial rights if not designed with them in mind. 2. Fabricated law, such as fictitious cases, generated by AI will seep its way into our courts possibly influencing the common law. 3. The rule of law will be damaged as a result of a lack of both transparency and perceived fairness with AI judgements. The main benefits identified are that: 1. Access to justice will be improved, with AI aiding those who cannot afford legal representation in understanding the law, breaking the barrier of complex legal language. 2. Efficiency in the court systems will be boosted, aiding in clearing backlogs. 3. Administration tasks will become more accurate i.e., less risk of human error in document management, transcription, etc. 4. Language barriers will be broken, aiding where translators may be unavailable or too costly. The paper aims to shine a light on both the risks and benefits, allowing use to strike a balance between them. This research and other pieces like it will allow us to develop future proof frameworks for the use of AI in the courts, ensuring the rule of law is not only protected, but improved.

iv. **Sarah Byrt, EPA, Technology in Realising the Aarhus Convention – Access to Information'**

Abstract: Ireland ratified the Aarhus Convention in 2012. The EPA plays a meaningful role in realising the Convention. In the latest agreement between the European Parliament and Council on the revised IED, transparency and public participation will be increased. The PRTR will be transformed into an EU Industrial Emissions Portal where citizens can access data on all EU permits and local polluting activities. The EPA's Office of Environmental Sustainability deals with licensing and permitting of industrial activities, many of which fall under the Industrial Emissions Directive (IED). Article 24 of the IED provides for access to information and public participation. The EPA goes beyond these requirements to provide access to application documents, correspondence amongst other information searchable on the EPA Website. The EPA's Office of Environmental Enforcement recently launched LEAP. This provides public access to formal compliance & enforcement correspondence exchanged between the EPA and regulated operators in environmental enforcement. LEAP allows anyone to view details of EPA Site Inspection and Monitoring Reports, Incidents, Non-Compliances and Complaints, and information about Compliance Investigations. The PRTR is under the EPA's remit. The PRTR provides a publicly accessible and searchable database which the public can use to search for

⁷ Despite a slight dip in 2021 in the United States, life expectancy is generally trending upward around the world. See OECD (2024), Life expectancy at 65 (indicator). doi: 10.1787/0e9a3f00-en (Accessed on 18 January 2024); see also Arias E, Xu JQ, Kochanek KD. United States life tables, 2021. National Vital Statistics Reports; vol 72 no 12. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2023. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.15620/cdc:132418>.

installations in Ireland that release any of 91 PRTR pollutants in excess of specific thresholds or in excess of specific thresholds, or make off-site transfers of non-hazardous and hazardous wastes that are above specified weight thresholds. The register fulfils requirements of the Aarhus Convention as a simple means of accessing information about large scale producers of environmental emissions and waste movements. The EPA continually works to make data reporting tasks efficient and to improve data analysis and validation processes to ensure future data is as robust and accurate as possible. The use of technology in making information accessible and searchable aids in realising the law on public participation.

v. **Alison Hough, “The Intersection of Environmental Justice and Legal Technology”.**

Abstract: The Aarhus Convention guarantees a set of “procedural” environmental human rights, including the right to access environmental information, the right to participate in environmental decision making, and the right of access to justice in environmental matters. All EU members states and the EU itself are parties to this Convention, but these rights remain contested and under constant challenge in all State Parties. This paper outlines the potential for digital technologies like AI and Blockchain to play an important role in guaranteeing and enhancing the implementation of these important procedural rights, with a focus on the second and third pillars of the Convention, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters, in an Irish and EU context.

vi. **Obele Akinniranye, PhD Candidate, MU, “Transformative Access to Justice through Automation”.**

Abstract: Digital technology and AI automation are critical transformational instruments in accentuating society’s access to Justice. The presentation seeks to analyse how digital technological solutions transforms accessibility to justice. Using consolidated procedural basis, the presentation further examines the advantages as well as the concerns of digital technology as it relates to access to justice and proffers solutions to identified barriers to justice. An evaluation is undertaken of the transformative force of automation and proffers an objective and comprehensive framework to address weaknesses AI Systems generated in terms of accountability, ethical considerations, professional competence, potentials for bias and privacy matters etc. The scope also delves into the perspectives of LawTech versus LegalTech participants accessing Justice.

Keywords: Access to Justice, Technology, automation, AI, Barriers to justice accessibility, accountability, ethics, bias, privacy, LawTech, LegalTech

Abstracts Parallel Session 3, Room B55:

Regulation and Technology: How technology can improve legal governance and the rule of law.

Chair Gavin Sheridan, VizLegal.

i. **Prof David Cowan, MU, “A Technological Leviathan: Regulation or Strangulation?”**

Abstract: To improve legal governance, we need to get lawyers involved in at start of innovation and working on interdisciplinary solutions. This is the easy answer. The critical challenges lie in 1) the complexity of modern life, of which technology is an enabler/frustrater, 2) risk aversion, avoidance, and management. Problem remains one of human behaviour in the absence of deteriorating ideas of authority and shared values, resulting in increasingly digitalised divisions. This threatens the rule of law. Lord Bingham’s 8 sub-rules of law provide a useful framework in which to analyse the threats/opportunities of technology to the rule of law. The ultimate threat is the possibility of the emergence of a technological Leviathan.

- ii. **Anastasia Platonava, PhD Candidate TUS Athlone, “Legal Barriers to Blockchain Adoption in the HES of Ireland”.**
Abstract: The transformative potential of blockchain technology in education is poised to revolutionize access to education and help to achieve United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNDP, 2023). Blockchain technology has recently received significant attention from EU institutions, policy-makers and the government. Present and potential blockchain-based applications in education have been extensively explored and discussed in scientific papers and articles (Alammary et al., 2019; Mikroyannidis, 2020; Platonava A & Cashin M, 2023; Steiu, 2020). Within the research on blockchain's use-cases in education, scholars and researchers have explored various factors influencing blockchain adoption, including legal barriers (Kosmarski, 2020; Mohammad & Vargas, 2022; Park, 2021). Implementing blockchain for storing student’s data or academic credentials conflict with EU data privacy regulation (like GDPR) due to the unchangeable nature of blockchain. Using blockchain for digital rights management involves legal issues related to copyright and ownership. Introducing new forms of digital identity requires legal considerations and regulations of these identities in different contexts (academic credentials, exams, accessing student resources). Overcoming these legal barriers would require a creation of a blockchain ecosystem consisting of academic stakeholders, industry and government representatives, legal experts and technologists to develop frameworks that balance innovation and compliance. The Markets in Crypto Assets Regulation (MiCA) is one of the examples of these frameworks, potentially influencing the adoption of blockchain in the Irish higher education system. By addressing legal concerns and guiding universities toward accepting cryptocurrency payments for tuition, it makes it possible that more EU educational institutions will adopt such payments by setting rules for service providers and ensuring investor protection. This research is expected to provide a theoretical foundation for further research and analysis, aiming to guide lawyers, policymakers and educational stakeholders who might need a clearer understanding of the blockchain-based applications in education and legal implications of technology’s integration in this sector.
- iii. **Prof. Ben Turner, Lecturer Cardiff University: “Redefining “Possession” in Law: Digital Objects and Hegelian Personhood Theory”**
Abstract: What does it mean to “possess” something? Does grasping and physically holding it constitute possession? Does signing our name on an object constitute possession? Perhaps there is no single definition and possession can be demonstrated in a variety of ways according to context. For the law of England and Wales, “possession” involves the dual requirements of “actual control and intention” in order to establish possession. This idea of “actual control” is prohibitive of establishing possession in the case of intangible properties as the term is often used synonymously with “physical control”. Indeed, this idea has been recently validated by cases such as *Your Response v Datateam* [2014] EWCA Civ 281. However, this modality is not suitable for a digitised economy. The protections and efficiencies that arise from the ability to possess an item at law are not applicable to many digital properties. For example, intermediated securities are currently held via trust due to their intangible nature. This disenfranchises investors, stripping them of many of their rights. This paper argues that such issues can be avoided based upon a redefinition of the concept of possession. It will be shown that there are various concepts of possession in jurisprudence, many of which do not require physical possession. The paper will utilise Hegelian Personhood Theory to show how possession can be defined by modes such as “mark making”. It will also examine the concept of the “Digital Object” outlined by a 2023 Law Commission of England and Wales report and how a redefinition of the concept can give further weight to this third type, as well as give the digital economy efficient, effective regulation.
- iv. **Pok Yin (Boris) Luk, LLM, LLB, DPhil Candidate, “Regulation and Technology: How Technology can improve Legal Governance and the Rule of Law.” Remote presentation.**

Abstract: The convergence of technology and the legal industry has ushered in a virtually limitless era of possibilities. However, it also raises an important question: How can these developments be made to serve the cause of good government and rule by law? This essay evaluates various authoritative sources in order to face this problem head-on. At the core of this discussion is a crucial consideration: legal frameworks must move with progress in science and technology. According to Brownsword (2022), the rate of progress is greater now than it has ever been, even sometimes faster than traditional legal systems can keep up with. This highlights the importance of establishing flexible regulations that promptly respond to new problems and work effectively within changing digital environments.

De Abreu Duarte and Ettore (2022) note that the way technology interacts with legal governance, not to mention people's welfare, could be seen in one powerful example: the COVID-19 pandemic. The emergency has brought to light issues like contact tracing, data privacy, and so on that lawmakers must consider further in their future law enactments. In today's interdependent world, solving these problems becomes all-important to saving the rule of law from crisis and protecting individual rights. Brownsword's (2020) concept of law 3.0 adds another layer of complexity. It stresses the pertinence of the law-technology relationship, asking questions such as how technical means can be framed within a legal system to increase regulatory power, make opinions accessible for all citizens, or ensure the validity of judicial decisions. The struggle to reconcile innovation with established legal principles continues. Jones and colleagues (2021) provide a penetrating appraisal of how technology is changing the old scenery of legal practice. In their study, they explore the disruption caused by technological progress. As a result, technical progress has created new ethical dilemmas and complicated information security threats. These developments lead to tremendous difficulties for legal professionals.

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v. **Cormac Kilkenny, PhD Candidate DCU, "Beyond Code: Examining Smart Contracts in 'Real World' and On-Chain Transactions".**

Abstract: Web 3.0 is the current generation of the World Wide Web characterised by a shift to more decentralisation, interconnection and tokenisation. At the core of Web 3.0 is the blockchain which enables the creation of smart contracts that allow parties to automate, and create an immutable record of their transactions. This new technology poses potential challenges for established contract law principles, and raises questions as to whether smart contracts are legal contracts at all, and if they can be vitiated like traditional contracts? To answer these questions, this paper discusses smart contracts and how they might be used in different contracting scenarios. Two distinct types of smart contracts can be identified, namely the 'bilateral smart contract' and the 'decentralised anonymous smart contract'. When parties use a bilateral smart contract, they usually have an offline commercial relationship and simply use a smart contract to execute an otherwise offline agreement. As such it will be easier for the courts to determine the content of the agreement and whether it has been vitiated. However, the decentralised anonymous smart contract poses more challenges for the courts as these are created in contexts which lacks the pre-existing commercial relationship of the bilateral smart contract. Instead, the decentralised anonymous smart contract is typically used in peer-to-peer exchanges facilitated by decentralised crypto-asset marketplaces. In such a transaction, the terms of the agreement are not set out in plain language as they are in bilateral smart contracts, therefore it may be more difficult to determine what the parties truly agreed to and whether the agreement has

been vitiated. This paper first establishes that smart contracts can be legal contracts. It then argues that the doctrines of contract law including frustration, mistake, and misrepresentation, are more relevant than before in order to remediate parties who have suffered as a consequence of human error or technological glitches. Should either of these issues arise, the smart contract may no longer accurately reflect the intentions of the parties. Due to the immutability of smart contract transactions, and without contract law's intervention, parties to a smart contract may be left with unsatisfactory outcomes resulting from the execution of the smart contract's code.

Workshop 2 Abstract, B55:

i. Mr. Alan Car, TUS Midwest, "Academic assessment risks & legislative analogies".

Abstract: "A spectre is haunting higher education, where artificial intelligence is at risk of debasing the higher education's currency system through undermining the means of its valuation: assessment. This presentation will seek to focus on the challenges to academic assessment by analogy to Irish occupational health and safety practices drawn from the construction industry. It is argued that the proper lens of analysis is to focus on the problem on the basis of risk and risk management. Best practice examples exist within industry that can be used to de-risk higher education assessment with the focus of analysis on the assessment system or portfolio of assessments, be it semester, year, or programme of study. The immediate goal should be to de-risk this portfolio through the proper design and delivery of high value assessment. The benefits of the application of a health & safety model to assessment integrity is that all stakeholders benefit from the explicit identification and management of academic risk in a systemic way."



Student Legal Tech Hackathon – 12th Feb 2024, 1.30pm,

B54

No in-depth technical knowledge is required for this competition with a €100 voucher prize for the best team pitch, and goody bags for the runners. This is primarily a challenge of creative problem-solving skills. Runners up will receive goody bags.

The Challenge: At 1.30pm in Room B54, [Main Campus Building](#), TUS Midlands, Athlone, entrants will assemble to be given a brief with three options of problems to be solved through the use of digital technology applications.

In just over three hours students will have to formulate a response to the problem, and pitch it at 5pm to the panel of academics and practitioners who will vote on the best proposal. Pitches are restricted to three minutes long, plus five minutes for Q&A per team entry.

Enter here: <https://forms.office.com/e/StXBQrCqF9> or the QR Code above.

Rules:

1. Entrants can be individuals or teams with no limit on team size, and must attend in person.
2. Entrants must be current undergraduate or post-graduate students in any discipline in any higher education institution.
3. Entrants must register in B54 at 1.30pm, and fill in this form, to participate.
4. No intellectual property passes to TUS as a result of participating in this competition, the pitches will not be recorded, and the concepts pitched will not be publicised without the permission of the full team of entrants.
5. Entrants can use laptops, or libraries, any sources of information, do any research, and can use AI or other tech to develop their ideas. Ideas can build off and blend existing applications. However, plagiarism is not allowed, and ideas must be original, and any indication that solutions were copied from any other person or company will result in disqualification.
6. The Winners will be those who receive the highest number of votes under the marking scheme set out below from the panel of judges.
6. Disputes about these rules will be adjudicated under the TUS Student Grievance Policy, which entrants agree is applicable by entering.
7. No personal data other than the contact details necessary to enter the competition and communicate with the winners and runners up will be retained. The contact details of winners and runners up will be retained for the purpose of prize giving, and the winning teams name and institutional affiliation will be recorded as record of the competition in perpetuity. All the above data will be stored in the TUS MS 365 Account of the Conference Convenor Alison Hough alison.hough@tus.ie, subject to TUS security protocols including encryption and two factor authentication. All other entrant's personal data, other than the record of the winners/runners up will be deleted.

Things teams should consider in putting together their pitch:

1. Where will the app be deployed/put into practice (e.g. by lawyers in court, by conveyancing solicitors in the office, by members of the public with legal problems before they see a legal professional etc)?
2. Who is (are) the target user(s)?
3. What functions will it perform?
4. What is the technology basis of the application - e.g. will it use classic coding, software, algorithms, AI, blockchain, DLT, machine learning, data science and what the user interface and hardware elements of it will be? (this does not have to be very in-depth).
5. How will it be commercialized (how will you make money off it and how will you stop people just

stealing it and replicating it)?

6. What are the risks and benefits of the new application for the target user(s) and for society?

Marking Scheme:

1. Presentation (20%) (logical, engaging, clear).
2. Team Work (10%) (equal participation).
3. Problem Solving (20%) (solution proposed solves the problem described).
4. Application of the Tech referred to (30%) (based on sound principles, shows a basic grasp of the tech).
5. Feasibility (will work with the tech described, commercially sound, addresses potential problems)