

1. Weekly overview

Week 1 introduces LAWS13025 as a capstone unit built around a one-week (approx. 40-hour) professional placement worth roughly one-third of learning hours. The focus is not substantive law but **how to learn from experience**: adopting an intentional, reflective approach so placement experiences become genuine professional development. This underpins the reflective habits used throughout the unit and a future legal career.

2. Key concepts and principles

Experiential learning ("learning by doing"). Understanding law means knowing how to apply it, not just knowing it. Placements supply real or simulated problems that build this — but you cannot learn from an experience you don't understand, so refresh foundational knowledge beforehand.

Intentional (not incidental) learning. Without an active mindset, experience just "washes over" you (the "don't be a pineapple" idea). The **plan** → **do** → **reflect** → **integrate** cycle structures learning; the hardest step is honestly identifying gaps in your own knowledge and skills.

Observation as active work. Because students are not admitted lawyers, many placements centre on observation — still "doing": noticing what happens, why, and why it matters, then adapting good practice.

Reflective and critical writing. Reflection situates you and your actions in context and allows first person, but is not "all about me." **Critical reflection is not criticism** — it is evidence-based analysis asking "why" and "how." Structured models help: **Bolton** (What? So what? Now what?) and **Driscoll's** elaboration.

Ethical fitness. Following Mescher, ethics cannot be reduced to a code; lawyers need reflective moral deliberation. Ethical breaches can cost more than legal ones — negligence may mean compensation, but an unethical decision can cost reputation and a practising certificate. Reflection creates space to resist commercial and time pressure.

Confidentiality in reflection. De-identify all client discussion — removing names is not enough, since location, age, employment and similar facts can identify. Focus on the task and your conduct, not the client.

3. Key authorities

Authority	Relevant principle	Practical significance
Mescher, 'Reflective Thinking Can Be the Key to Best Decisions' (2009) 47(6) Law Society Journal 38	Codes alone are an inferior morality; lawyers need reflective skills for moral deliberation, drawing on character and virtue.	Reflection helps resist pressure to 'read down' the law and honour duties to profession and community.
Legal Services and Complaints Committee v Staffa [2025] WASC 6	Lack of insight and failure to appreciate impropriety raise the risk of recurrence and may show unfitness to practise.	Failing to reflect makes things worse — the 'cover-up worse than the crime'; misleading the regulator led to being struck off.
Cantatore, The Law Clinic Experience: A Guidebook for Students (2023), ss 1.2 & 4.8	Placement learning develops communication, drafting, research, problem-solving, networking and an ethical mindset.	Frames the concrete benefits students should intentionally pursue.
Wizner, 'The Law School Clinic' (2002) 70 Fordham L Rev 1929 (reference)	Legal education should build competence and public-service values; students should see how law functions and malfunctions.	Places placement learning within a justice / public-service purpose.

4. Practical application

Preparing for placement — work through who, what, where, (wear), why, when: identify your supervisor and contacts, refresh relevant knowledge, confirm dress code and what may be taken in/out of the building, plan travel, and manage your own schedule (timing differs per student).

Managing multiple roles — you are at once a student, a quasi-professional, and a representative of yourself, your host and CQU. Protecting your reputation protects the host's and the University's, sustaining future placements.

5. Risks, systems and controls

- **Risk:** Breach of client confidentiality in reflective work or notes.
Control: De-identify beyond names; focus on task not client; keep records secure; ask staff using general terms.
If it fails: Academic integrity breach; potential end of a legal career.
- **Risk:** Ethical compromise under time or commercial pressure (as in Staffa).
Control: Reflective practice and ethical fortitude; correct rather than conceal mistakes; show insight and remorse.
If it fails: Finding of unfitness to practise; loss of practising certificate.
- **Risk:** Passive ("pineapple") engagement — experiencing without learning.
Control: Intentional plan-do-reflect-integrate cycle; active observation.
If it fails: Lost learning and weaker professional development.

6. Weekly consolidation

Five key takeaways

1. The placement is one-third of learning; academic content still matters and frames it.
2. Learn intentionally through plan-do-reflect-integrate — don't let experience wash over you.
3. Observation is active learning; watch how skilled practitioners work and adapt it.
4. Critical reflection is evidence-based analysis (why/how), not mere criticism.
5. Ethical fitness and reflection protect your career; failing to reflect (as in Staffa) makes matters worse.

Three revision questions

6. Explain the four stages of the intentional learning cycle and your input at each stage.
7. Why does Mescher argue a code is insufficient, and how does reflection assist ethical decisions?
8. What does effective de-identification require, and why is removing names alone inadequate?

Further material to review

- Cantatore ss 1.2 & 4.8 and the Wizner article — engage with the full readings; slides quote only extracts.
- Gibbs and Driscoll models are referenced but full citations are not supplied — verify before citing.

Sources used

Week 1 Study Guide; Week 1 Lecture transcript; Workshop 1 transcript and slides; Mescher (2009); *Legal Services and Complaints Committee v Staffa* [2025] WASC 6; Cantatore (2023); Wizner (2002).