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“Innovation in the Law”: The Second Annual Edinburgh Postgraduate Law Conference

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2013 saw the success of the first annual Edinburgh Postgraduate Law Conference (EPGLC) on the theme of “The Law, Individual and Community”. Of the twelve panels included in the conference, three dealt specifically with areas within *SCRIPTed*’s remit, and provided original and quality research of postgraduate legal scholars in the areas of biotechnology patents, medical research and donation, and the implications of biotechnology for identity and the law. The final keynote address, delivered by Dr. Mark Taylor, Senior Lecturer, University of Sheffield, explored the careful balance and tensions between using technological advances in data processing for reasons in the public interest (especially in the health sector) and the public interest in maintaining robust privacy protection for individuals.

Building upon the success of the first conference and the enthusiasm of the postgraduate community within Edinburgh’s Law School to continue this endeavour, the second annual EPGLC was developed around the theme: “Innovation in the Law: New Challenges, New Perspectives”.¹ This theme will allow postgraduate legal scholars to address, *inter alia*, recent challenges posed by new technologies and how new perspectives help frame the challenges to drive innovative responses. Innovative practices and guidance *within* the law can foster new perspectives *on* the law and society, in a world of continuous change. It is anticipated that this theme will attract a wide variety of original and quality research from an international community of postgraduate legal scholars. Papers will be sought from all areas of law and related subject areas in promotion of interdisciplinarity. The challenges presented by recent events in surveillance, prospective changes to data protection law, and developments in biotechnology will provide scholars the opportunity to engage with relevant societal issues whilst developing key strands of their research.

The conference theme “Innovation in the Law” has also inspired innovation in how the conference is being organised. It will be ultimately delivered this December 1-2, 2014. The 2014 conference committee has embraced the benefits offered through social media and productivity technology in its first phase of organising the second EPGLC including reliance on social media (Twitter, Facebook) to market the conference and drive submissions to the call for papers internationally; development of consistent branding, represented on the conference website and all social media outlets; regular updates on the website’s blog giving postgraduates “backstage” access to the ins and outs of organising a postgraduate conference; use of QR codes on all marketing materials to promote ease of access to relevant information, among other innovative working practices.

In the spirit of innovation, as applied to postgraduate research, one of the training sessions offered at the conference will focus on the use of social media as a tool to promote effective communication of research. This session will highlight the benefits of extending research impact through social media channels and consider effective communication of research tailored to the multidisciplinary audiences reached through the likes of Twitter and other social media outlets.

¹ Edinburgh Postgraduate Law Conference available at <http://blogs.sps.ed.ac.uk/lawpgconference/> (accessed 15 Apr 14).

To foster interactivity through social media and the conference blog, those selected to present their research at the conference will be asked to write a blog post prior to December. This will promote interaction between presenters, participants, discussants and the committee *before* the conference, which will translate into further robust discussions during the twelve panel sessions. In light of this non-traditional submission, the conference will award presenters on the basis of 'Best Blog' as well as 'Best Presentation'. Finally, to benefit those in the postgraduate community who cannot attend the conference, we are exploring the possibility of live-tweeting and podcasting the panel sessions and keynote address. It is through this push for engagement via social media and other non-traditional channels that the 2014 conference committee hope to leave a legacy for future conference committees to carry on and further innovate from.