

2012

Law In Society and the Irish Penal Reform Trust.

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Recommended Citation

Rogan, Mary, "Law In Society and the Irish Penal Reform Trust." (2012). *Posters*. 43.
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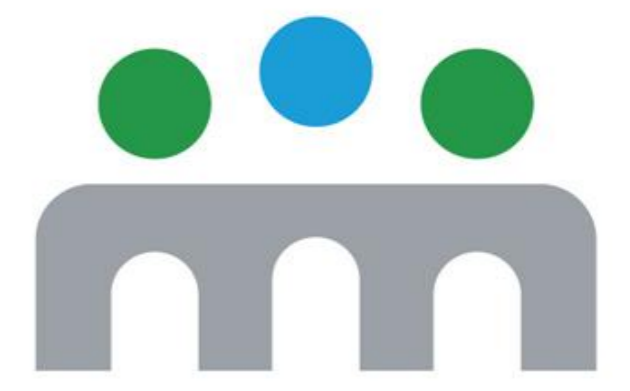
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students learning with communities



Students Learning with Communities

Law in Society LLB/PG Dip in Law Mary Rogan



The Vision

The School of Social Sciences and Law is committed to a socio-legal focus in its programmes and in research.

Law in Society enables students to gain a practical understanding of the links between law and social change or social problems. At the same time, students can use their developing skills of legal research in a 'real-world' context.

The module also aims to increase students' understanding of the ethical dimensions of legal practice and to promote interest in giving something back to the community.

The Project

Students are required to respond to the needs of a client, work to a brief set by that client and present their findings in an accessible way.

The students involved worked with the Irish Penal Reform Trust on a research project about the use of alternatives to custody for children convicted of a criminal offence. They presented their findings through a report and oral presentation and were encouraged to reflect on the role of law in society.

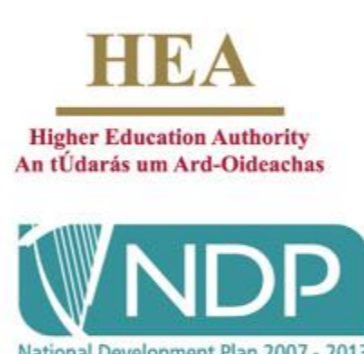
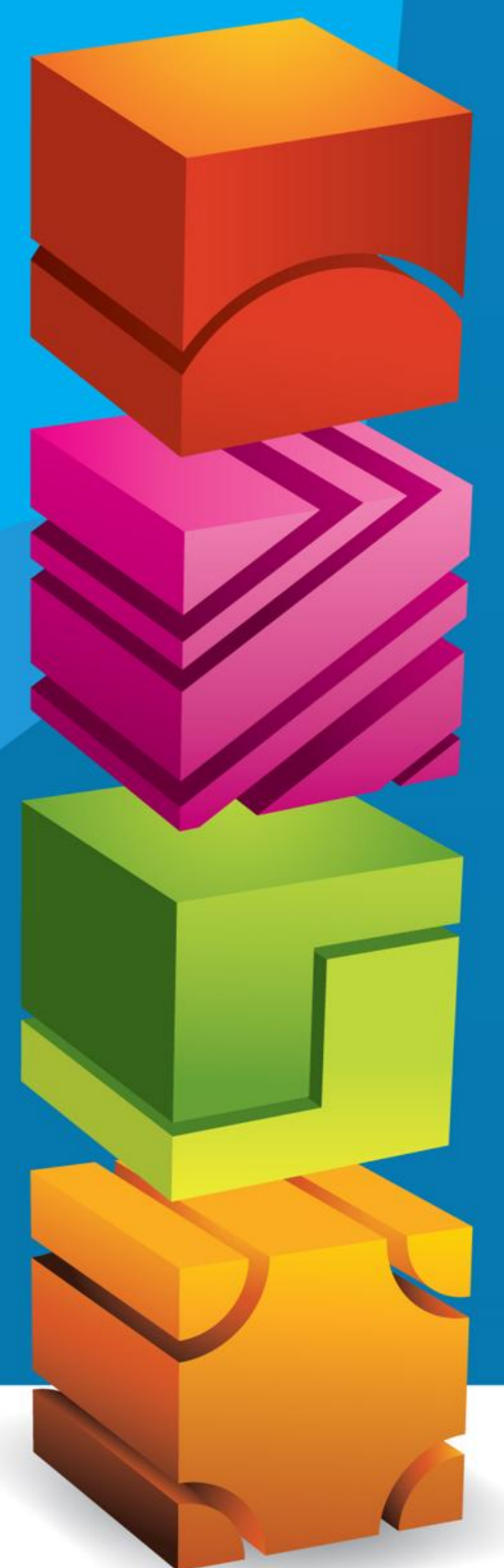
The Outcomes

Students worked as a group over a period of 12 weeks, dividing up the tasks and agreeing the format of the presentation between them.

The Irish Penal Reform Trust received a 100 page report and the main findings were also presented to the Trust's staff. It also made links with an important group – the lawyers of the future and raised awareness of its activities.

Students reported that, in particular, they liked using their research skills in a practical way and that the project had increased their understanding and interest in prison issues and sentencing.

It is planned to work with the Irish Penal Reform Trust again in 2010/11.





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Law in Society and The Irish Penal Reform Trust



The Practicalities

Each week, a two-hour workshop took place at which students gave updates on their progress, made decisions for future action and negotiated the project and its presentation. Workshops were scheduled for Friday evenings to facilitate students, many of whom were working while studying.

Students received a mark for the project and presentation which was applied across the whole group. This decision was made by the group itself.

About the Community Partner: the Irish Penal Reform Trust

The Irish Penal Reform Trust is Ireland's leading NGO campaigning for the rights of people in prison and the progressive reform of penal policy.

IPRT is committed to reducing imprisonment, respecting the rights of everyone in the penal system and progressive reform of the penal system based on evidence-led policies.

It does not receive any government funding. For more, see: www.iprt.ie

