

A Student's Perspective

I recently had the privilege of using Practical Law Canada in my Advanced Legal Research course at the University of Calgary. Our professor and library director led a guided demonstration on how to navigate Practical Law, then turned to the students to perform an in-class self-research assignment. The assignment focused on familiarizing students with search functions and content of Practical Law and then compared Practical Law to competitor products. Practical Law's ease-of-use is notable. The wide array of subjects and resource types are logically organized and can be intuitively located by searching within a subject area or by performing a general search. I was most impressed with the currency of the materials and the breadth of coverage. Practical Law covers such a wide range of legal subjects and each subject includes a Practice Note that provides a general overview of the area of law as well as more detailed Practice Notes on various sub-topics. Practical Law is also equipped with an extensive set of Standard Documents and Additional Clauses, which include Drafting Notes that can be useful to assist and teach students or lawyers unfamiliar with the document or a clause, as well as to remind experienced drafters of critical clauses or clause interactions. This commentary only scratches the surface of what Practical Law has to offer.

I strongly believe that Legal Research courses are only the starting point for use of Practical Law in an academic setting. This tool is too valuable to not be incorporated into substantive law and practice-based drafting courses. The quantity, and

more importantly, the quality of materials accessible on Practical Law will provide students a clear academic advantage by having access to additional up-to-date commentary and standard documents. I see Practical Law being particularly valuable in upper-level, corporate-focused courses that utilize a variety of web-based or instructor-provided resources instead of relying primarily on textbook readings. Practical Law can bridge this gap with topic overview and topic-specific Practice Notes. Furthermore, as law schools move away from traditional academic curriculums and towards incorporating more practice-based courses that develop lawyering skills, Practical Law can be highly leveraged as a primary tool for accessing and understanding documents, transactions, and filings through its Annotated Standard Documents and Clauses, Checklists, and more. Lastly, in addition to substantive and practice-based courses, law schools with student clinics will find this resource particularly useful. The quality of the Practice Notes and Standard Documents are an ideal starting (and often ending) point for drafting pro bono documents – whether corporate, commercial, employment, court filings, or other.

I cannot overstate the quality of this product and hope that law schools incorporate it into their curriculums – students will thank you for it!

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