

BCU College of Law, Social & Criminal Justice Research Seminar Series Event Report

On Thursday 9th October 2024, Dr Alan Ma and his LLB Student Lila Gul gave the opening presentation of the BCU College of Law, Social & Criminal Justice Research Seminar Series' 2024/2025 session, entitled "Innovative teaching and learning approaches I have implemented at BCU." There were lecturers, postgraduate research students and undergraduate students like me in attendance of the very first seminar of this series.

Dr Alan Ma discussed expanding the hackathon methodology to legal teaching along with other disciplines. So, "What is hackathon?" In the Research Seminar, Dr Ma showed that hackathon is a portmanteau word made of "hacking" and "marathon." It was demonstrated through his slides that "hacking" means "creative problem solving, rapid coding and pushing boundaries to invent new solutions." Consequently, "-athon" refers to "where tech enthusiasts, come together for a short period (often 24-48 hours) to collaborate on innovation projects."

In addition, legal tech being one of his many areas of expertise, Dr Ma talked about the rise of legal tech and its influence on legal education in this research seminar. The legal industry is adopting technological advancements such as AI tools in order to reduce expenses and increase effectiveness. Furthermore, Dr Ma has introduced a hackathon-based legal module to Birmingham City University which seems to have illustrated that hackathon improved students' problem-solving skills along with student engagement. Moreover, he mentioned the challenges he faced such as the curriculum and logistics constraints. He dealt with them by making it more engaging for the students and gaining a free license from the software company to give his students practical experience of his teachings.

Last but not the least, he discussed his desire to expand this hackathon methodology and how he takes the student feedback he receives seriously in order to progress further.

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