

**THE REAL DEAL: USING AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT TO PROMOTE STUDENT
ENGAGEMENT IN THE FIRST AND SECOND YEARS OF A REGIONAL LAW
PROGRAM**

CAROLINE HART, SARAH HAMMER, PAULINE COLLINS AND TONI CHARDON

ABSTRACT

Reports into university students' experiences indicate that student engagement is decreasing. Universities need to be able to effectively engage with students to foster teaching and learning. In light of the recent endorsement by the Council of Australian Law Deans of the threshold learning outcomes - that emphasises legal education as being more than legal knowledge - the use of authentic assessment may become far more relevant as a means of developing broader knowledge and skills. The literature has consistently linked authentic assessment with student engagement. But what is the reality of using authentic assessment to engage with students? This article reports on a study into the use of authentic assessment by law academics as a means of engaging with students, in the first and second years of a regional law program. The study reports on law academics perceptions of what is student engagement, what is student engagement and how do law academics use authentic assessment. The study reveals some negative experiences of both law students and law academics associated with using authentic assessment. The study also identifies some possible factors that, if taken into account, may positively assist with the use of authentic assessment as a means of promoting student engagement.