

# How legal tech is changing legal education

A case study at the HU University of Applied Sciences in Utrecht



# HU University of Applied Sciences integrated Berkeley Publisher into its curriculum

It only makes sense that as legal practices change, law curricula keep up. However, the latest developments in legal IT have hardly made their mark on law schools in the Netherlands. The HU University of Applied Sciences in Utrecht is an exception. As a non-academic institute focused on training legal professionals for business and the workplace, the HU keeps its finger on the pulse of legal tech — contract automation, eDiscovery, document assembly, expert systems, and other digital tools lawyers and other juridical professionals now use on a daily basis. If anything is clear about the way the workplace is changing, it's that we're only going to be spending more time using technology, and that IT skills will be in high demand.<sup>1</sup> An education at the HU prepares legal professionals for the future, and at Berkeley Bridge, we're happy to be part of that mission.

We met with HU lecturer and long-practicing lawyer Martijn Noordermeer to discuss how he's implemented Berkeley Bridge's Publisher as part of his undergraduate courses in private law.

## When did you start using the Berkeley Publisher?

It was in the spring of 2016 that we started our partnership with Berkeley Bridge at the law department within the HU University of Applied Sciences in Utrecht. Initially, that meant looking into the possible uses of Berkeley Bridge for advanced students in business law. In September of 2016 we actually used the software for the first time as part of a minor in Law & Business.



**Martijn Noordermeer**

*With over 20 years experience in the legal world, Martijn Noordermeer (1973) is an attorney at Nexa Velo, a boutique firm in Utrecht (Netherlands) focused on corporate law, as well as a lecturer in private law at the HU University of Applied Sciences. In addition to his long-standing interest in the latest developments in legal tech, his specialties include bankruptcy, IT-, and intellectual property law.*

## How have you integrated the Berkeley Publisher into the curriculum?

We're currently revamping our applied law curriculum, both part-time and full-time. During the first year of our part-time curriculum, students in the module Digitalization & Law learn how to draw decision trees on paper. Then there's a crash course teaching them the basics of making decision trees on the Berkeley Bridge platform. Finally, there's a hands-on workshop where the students build their own decision trees using the software. We do the same thing as one of the electives for the Law & Business minor.

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### **Why do you think it's important to use our software as part of legal education?**

We think building decision trees is a crucial part of acquiring the knowledge and skills a legal professional needs. And we think students have to get the hang of the many ways in which legal services are becoming digitized (legal tech). Not just building decision trees using software or document assembly, but also learning how to work with chatbots and other forms of legal tech (like corporate housekeeping systems) —we think they're essential skills legal professionals need. Not in the distant future, but now.

### **What's the experience at the HU so far?**

We're two years down the road and our experiences at the close of the 2017-2018 academic year have been especially positive. A fair number of professors have taken introductory courses, and they have been positive too, but it hasn't been easy to find enough professors who are comfortable teaching on decision trees. After some instruction the software is easy to use, and even professors and students who have little affinity with tech have picked it up quite quickly.

### **What feedback are you getting from students?**

Often students are sceptical at first, but — almost without exception — they realize at the end of the course how important it is to learn how to work with technology and with Berkeley Bridge's software in particular.

After a brief but intensive introduction, they manage to build decision trees independently, many of which are actually usable in the organizations they work with.

### **What developments do you anticipate going forward?**

We're going to take our experiences from the minor and from the part-time curriculum and further develop our full-time courses. We're currently researching the possibility of using the software at the start of the first year. In addition, we're figuring out how to expand decision tree training to different areas of law (besides business), as well as the final thesis. We're still focused on introducing and building relatively simple ("yes/no") decision trees, but we will look into teaching document assembly as well.

### **Any concluding remarks?**

Our collaboration between Berkeley Bridge and the HU's law program has been a great experience. Commercial Manager Rob van de Plassche is always willing to contribute to our meetings, and the other employees are easy to reach and respond quickly to any questions. We owe it to them that our courses on decision trees have been such a success.

## About Berkeley Bridge

Berkeley Bridge believes that the existing knowledge and experience in organizations is the most important precondition for success. The effective use of all information available allows organizations to optimize processes and to serve customers better.

Berkeley Bridge has been supporting organizations for over fifteen years by advising them and inspiring them in terms of knowledge systems. We provide solutions for designing, managing, and sharing knowledge in, inter alia, the legal domain, in health care, for the government, and in many other sectors. We do so with a team of enthusiastic knowledge experts and experienced developers from our office in Alphen aan den Rijn .

## Contact

Curious about what we can do for your organization? Please feel free to contact us for advice on how we can help you achieve your goals.



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