

How legal tech is changing legal education

A case study at the HvA University of Applied Sciences in Amsterdam



Berkeley Bridge powers award-winning legal tech education at the HvA in Amsterdam

Law was one of the first subjects ever taught at universities, being part of curricula since the Middle Ages, and the basics of that education stayed the same for centuries. In the Netherlands, that changed in 2002. That's when the so-called universities of applied sciences (HBO in Dutch) started teaching law, and did so differently than the academics: with an eye toward its application, not its fundamental philosophies.

If some academic programs have been slow to pick up on the way IT is changing legal practice, the opposite is true at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (HvA). The school is a founding partner of the Dutch Legal Tech Alliance (LTA), an initiative to incorporate legal tech into education that counts five LLB programs and over 12000 registered students as its members. The HvA recently received a substantial grant from the Comenius program, part of the Netherlands Initiative for Education Research, in order to revamp the curriculum around legal tech and make course materials freely available to other schools.

The man behind it all is Ivar Timmer. He is now a Senior Fellow with Comenius: concretely, that means that he has a €100.000 budget to use for a two-year project at the HvA. He's using part of the money to translate results from the Legal Management research group into material for courses in Legal Information and Documentation Management, where students work with The Berkeley Publisher to learn how to collect, organize, and distribute information in a juridical context.



Ivar Timmer

Since 2004, Ivar Timmer has been an associate professor at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (HvA). He teaches at the masters program in Legal Management, which he founded in 2009. The author of four books, he recently co-authored and edited Legal Management, on approaching juridical processes from an organizational perspective. Additionally, he is completing a PhD at the VU University in Amsterdam on legal risk management. Before coming to the HvA, he spent several years working as a legal counsel. He received his LLM from the University of Amsterdam.



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When did you start using the Berkeley Publisher?

Back in 2008 I believe. It's been more than ten years.

How have you integrated the Berkeley Publisher into the curriculum?

In the second year, we teach students how to make simple decision trees and how to program for the software. As part of their internships and thesis work in their final year, students often use Berkeley to develop applications to automate processes at organizations and help implement them in actual practice.

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

To prepare our students for the future. We expect the use of advice tools to grow. And designing decision trees is a great intellectual exercise for law students.

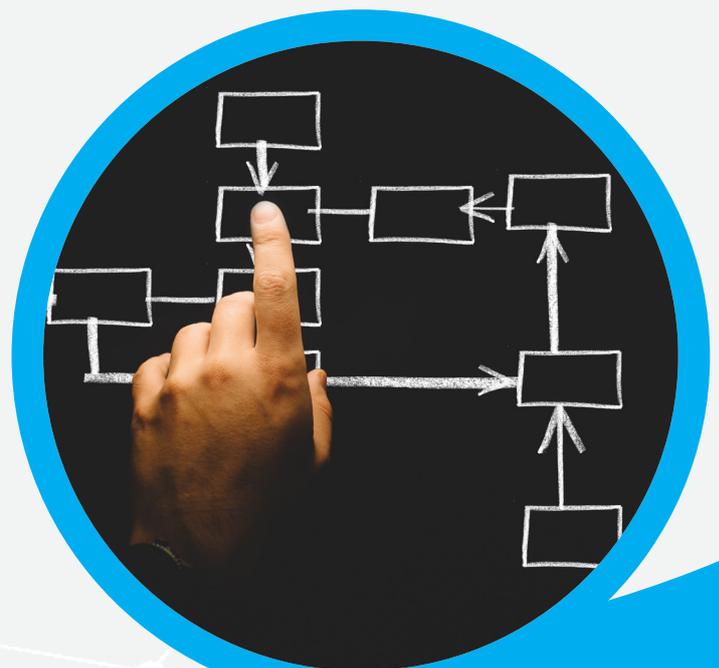
What feedback are you getting from students?

Many of our students understand the benefits working with Berkeley and comparable software can bring, especially the students who integrate it into thesis work and internships. With the rise of legal tech, students are taking a more positive stance toward technology in general.

That was very different only a couple of years ago, when they cared most about learning legal content. Our attention to legal tech makes them realize how important this type of technology is.

What developments do you anticipate going forward?

Doing a good job developing advice tools does take a lot of skill. We recently decided to intensify our training in this area and put more emphasis on getting the design phase right.



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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