

Laidlaw Scholars Undergraduate Leadership and Research Programme
Summer I Reflection

Crime Fiction and the Law of Fraud

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“Education never ends, Watson. It is a series of lessons, with the greatest for last”. This quotation from Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Adventure of the Red Circle* was the first line of the LinkedIn post I made back in March to announce my acceptance into the Laidlaw Scholars Programme. While I was intimidated by just how much I had to learn at the start of this program five months ago, I could not have imagined how enriching the entire experience would be so far.

After the initial excitement of being accepted into the program, I felt an immediate rush of worry regarding whether or not I would be able to actually fulfill the program’s requirements. I was a first year student with no university-level research experience who had not touched a single detective or mystery novel in her life. Naturally, I was questioning whether or not this research was something I was capable of. As I hadn’t experienced much Laidlaw programming yet, I had the expectation that my research summer would solely consist of me poring over pages and pages of old detective books. While this was definitely a key part of my work, my research not only ended up being more exciting than I had initially imagined, but I was also able to gain a lot more than just analytical skills through different aspects of the program.

When I had written and revised my initial research proposal throughout the application process for Laidlaw, I had always mentioned how reviewing real-life cases of fraud and historical trends during the scope would be essential for the research. I had also believed that I would need to analyze at least ten legal treatises in order to describe fraud trends in detail. As evident from these two issues, one of the biggest challenges I faced was the ability to narrow my focus in my work. However, it was through meetings with my supervisor, Professor Stern, that I realized the importance of quality over quantity. After discussing the length requirement for my report, we realized that there simply would not be enough space to delve into historical trends and real-life cases. As a result, the decision was made to focus only on analyzing the stories based on plot-related elements and criteria from the legal treatises. This made me feel much more confident about my work, as by the start of Week 3, I finally felt that my research was heading in a specific direction. I’m very grateful to all of the support provided to me by Professor Stern, as I went from someone who had no idea how to use legal databases or analyze treatises, to using them consistently throughout my report.

Aside from the technical content-based aspects of my research, I also received a lot of generalized support regarding my overall concerns about the program. One of the best portions of this summer were definitely my weekly Deep Dive meetings. The aspect of having a group to meet with throughout the program to discuss my research helped me be more accountable. I knew that in order to have a meaningful discussion at the next Deep Dive meeting, I would have to reach my weekly research goals. I think the Deep Dives also served as a great opportunity to reassure any worries I had. I was not the only person

who was worried about meeting deadlines, or the only person who felt like she had no idea what to do sometimes. Being able to talk about how I felt as the research progressed weekly in an informal way made the entire research process feel less intimidating. Coupled with the check-in meetings I was able to have with Elena, I really felt that I had many opportunities to just voice all my concerns—even the silly ones—leaving me with the clarity to continue working on my project.

Both my research experience and the support from the Laidlaw community helped me develop my leadership skills in ways differently to what I had imagined. While I knew that leadership was not simply about taking the lead in a conversation or activity, I was able to learn more about how to be a leader in smaller and more committed ways. Prior to my biweekly meetings with Professor Stern, I would take the time to carefully craft questions that would prompt our discussions, rather than just asking questions for the sake of asking. I tried to keep this mentality throughout every aspect of my summer, with research and Deep Dive meetings included. When writing the report, I wanted every line and bit of analysis to have significance. As a result of this approach, I cut down quite a bit of unnecessary filler content that I had previously included. With our Deep Dive meetings, I would do my best to give meaningful responses to the discussion prompts instead of my usual habit of speaking for a long time.

The biggest leadership lesson I have learnt from my time in the program so far has been the significance of taking meaningful actions. By forcing myself to slow down and think about the next question I wanted to answer in a Deep Dive session, or the next line that I was going to write in my report, I became more confident in myself and my abilities. When I was more sure of the quality of the work I was putting forward, it lessened the worries I had about program expectations. This meant that creating a research poster or doing legal research did not appear as intimidating when my every action was well thought out.

While I certainly am nowhere near receiving the last greatest lesson of my lifelong journey of learning, I can say that I definitely experienced a series of valuable lessons during this research summer. From realizing just how much work goes into a report, to benefitting from the countless resources of the Laidlaw community, I am beyond excited to continue my lifelong series of lessons in education throughout the remainder of the Laidlaw Scholars Programme.