



Summary of Open Justice Projects for the October 2026 presentation of *Justice in action* (W360)

This document provides a summary of the Open Justice projects planned for the October 2026 presentation of W360 to help you make an informed decision regarding which projects you wish to apply for. All these projects have been designed to develop your knowledge and skills and are transferable into legal practice and beyond. They all require **significant** time commitment and involve **group work**.

1. Project Availability: The Open Justice Centre cannot guarantee that all projects listed below will run in October 2026.
2. Project Selection Process: Once you have **registered** for W360, the Open Justice Centre will contact you via email and invite you to apply for the projects you are interested in. We use a questionnaire produced by an organisation called Unihelper to form teams and allocate you to project groups. Please complete the Unihelper questionnaire as soon as possible after you receive it.
3. Limited Spaces: To ensure a high-quality experience, student places for each project are capped.
4. Fair Allocation Process: If a project is oversubscribed, selection will be conducted randomly to ensure fairness.
5. Early reservation advice: If you have *reserved* on the course but do not plan to *register* until later in the year, please contact the Open Justice Centre for guidance at open-justice@open.ac.uk.
6. Project Allocation Guarantee: You are guaranteed a place in one of the projects you apply for, but we cannot guarantee that you will receive your first choice.
7. Questionnaire Submission Deadline: You must complete the online webform by **31 August 2026**. It is your responsibility to submit the questionnaire by this date. If you do not complete the questionnaire by the deadline, you will be allocated to a project with available spaces by the module team.

W360: Open Justice Projects

As part of W360, students are required to participate in an Open Justice Project that is designed to provide an opportunity to engage with real-world legal challenges. This may focus on access to justice beyond traditional client representation. Access to justice is broader than advising individual clients; it includes public legal education, legal

technology, policy research, and law reform efforts. These are practical legal projects designed to help students understand the wider access to justice landscape, including systemic legal barriers, community legal needs, and innovative solutions to improve legal accessibility.

All projects are collaborative and take place in Microsoft Teams. Every student enrolled on the module must participate actively in their assigned group. This includes responding to Teams messages, attending scheduled meetings, and maintaining regular communication with group members. For some projects, you will also work together to produce a joint final output. If you believe there are *exceptional circumstances* that may prevent you from working as part of a group, please contact **open-justice@open.ac.uk** *before* selecting your project.

Open Justice Legal Tech Project

The Open Justice Legal Tech Project is an opportunity for students to explore the intersection between law and technology by building their own legal chatbot. This project is not a traditional law clinic where you advise individual clients; instead, it focuses on problem-solving, innovation, and the practical application of legal knowledge in a digital format.

What you will do:

- Design and develop your own legal chatbot that addresses an access to justice problem.
- Work in small teams to support each other through the process of developing your own individual legal chatbot that helps explain legal concepts in a structured, accessible way.
- Engage with legal technology tools, gaining practical experience in how law is communicated digitally.
- Develop key skills in legal reasoning, technology integration, and user-focused design.
- You don't need prior technical experience, as the focus is on structuring legal information, designing a user-friendly experience, and thinking critically about how legal problems are framed.
- You won't be advising clients; instead, you will be exploring the value of technology in enhancing access to justice.

Expectations:

- Group work requires flexibility – collaboration is a key part of this project, but as with any teamwork, differences in commitment and working styles can arise. Clear communication and shared responsibility are essential.
- Self-management is key – while guidance is provided, you will need to take initiative in structuring your chatbot and managing your contributions.
- Attend regular project meetings.
- This is a learning experience, not a finished product. The goal is to develop skills and engage with legal technology, rather than creating a polished, public-facing chatbot.

By the end of this project, you will have gained hands-on experience with legal tech, a better understanding of how law can be communicated digitally, and practical problem-solving skills that are increasingly relevant in modern legal practice. This project allows students to understand innovative solutions and hopefully become champions for justice through legal tech.

Open Justice Policy and Law Reform Project

The Open Justice Policy and Law Reform Project offers students the opportunity to engage in real-world legal and policy research by either working with an external organisation or responding to a live consultation from the Law Commission. This project focuses on policy analysis, legal research, and advocacy, offering insight into how laws are reviewed, reformed, and developed in the UK, providing valuable experience in how law interacts with public policy and social change.

What you will do:

- Receive a brief from an organisation outlining a specific legal or policy issue they are working on, or as a group, agree and select a current consultation project from the Law Commission from a list provided by the module team.
- Conduct legal and policy research to analyse the issue, identify key challenges, and assess potential solutions.
- Write a policy report that the external organisation can use to support their campaigning, lobbying, or public awareness efforts, or a research report to be submitted to the Law Commission.
- Develop skills in critical analysis, legal writing, and effective communication for non-legal audiences.
- You will be focusing on legal and policy analysis rather than direct legal advice.
- An opportunity to influence real-world issues – the organisation may use your report to support their campaigns or policy advocacy efforts, or the research report will be submitted to the Law Commission as part of the public

consultation process if the report produced meets the quality and professional threshold.

- You will gain insight into how legal research supports policy development, social justice, and law reform.
- You won't be working with individuals or providing case-based legal assistance.
- While your research will be shared with the organisation, its use will depend on their needs.

Expectations

- Managing workload and teamwork – you will work in small groups, and collaboration will be key to ensuring the report is well-researched and well-written.
- Independent research skills – while guidance will be provided, you will need to take initiative in conducting legal and policy research.
- Attend small group meetings to support the group work.
- Balancing academic and practical writing – policy reports require a different writing style than traditional essays, emphasising clarity, conciseness, and recommendations.

By the end of this project, you will have gained hands-on experience in policy research, law reform, legal analysis, and advocacy writing, all of which are valuable for careers in law, public policy, government, NGOs, and social justice work.

If you are interested in law as a tool for social change, how laws evolve, and want to see how legal research supports policy development or ongoing legal reform, then this project will provide practical, real-world experience.

Open Justice Mental Health Wellbeing in the Legal Profession: Vicarious Trauma

This Legal Project focuses on the impact of vicarious trauma within the legal profession, particularly for those working in criminal law, advocacy, and support services. This project provides students with the opportunity to engage in legal research and public legal education by creating resources that help legal professionals, frontline workers, and law students understand, manage, and mitigate the effects of vicarious trauma.

Instead of providing direct legal support, students will research the psychological and emotional impact of exposure to traumatic cases, explore legal and ethical responsibilities, and develop accessible materials that promote awareness, resilience, and well-being in the legal profession. Students will also have an opportunity to

organise and run a free short online conference to raise awareness and facilitate a conversation in this area.

What you will do:

- Build upon current research in key legal and psychological issues related to vicarious trauma, including its effects on criminal justice professionals, ethical considerations, and best practices for managing exposure to distressing content.
- Develop clear, accessible public legal education (PLE) materials, such as guides, FAQs, infographics, or videos, to help legal professionals and students recognise and address vicarious trauma.
- Work in small teams to ensure that materials are accurate, practical, and easy to understand.
- Explore strategies for preventing and mitigating vicarious trauma, including workplace policies, mental health resources, and self-care approaches tailored to legal professionals.
- Enhance your understanding of criminal law and its emotional impact, while developing skills in legal research, communication, and policy awareness.
- You will not be providing direct legal advice or acting on behalf of individuals in legal matters. However, you will be given the opportunity to arrange an online conference to raise awareness of this important area.

Expectations:

- Clear and sensitive communication – you will translate complex legal and psychological concepts into accessible language while ensuring accuracy and ethical responsibility.
- Engagement with real-world legal challenges – vicarious trauma is a significant issue in the legal profession, requiring careful research and a balanced approach to legal and mental health perspectives.
- Teamwork and project coordination – working collaboratively, you will divide research tasks, develop content together, and ensure consistency across materials.

By the end of this project, you will have gained valuable experience in legal research, vicarious trauma, and public legal education, as well as organising and running an online conference. Your work will contribute to raising awareness of vicarious trauma in the legal profession, ensuring that legal professionals and students have the knowledge and tools to navigate its challenges effectively.

Open Justice International Law Project

The International Law Project provides students with the opportunity to engage in real-world legal research and advocacy on international law. The project changes every year and may explore either environmental law, human rights law, or international humanitarian law. This project involves working on legal issues that support an international non-governmental organisation (NGO), a community, or a group of individuals facing legal challenges.

Rather than providing direct legal advice, students will focus on legal research, evidence review and drafting reports or submissions that contribute to advocacy and legal interventions at an international level. This project allows students to develop expertise in international legal frameworks, cross-border legal research, and practical legal writing.

What you will do:

- Conduct research into international law related to a brief from an international organisation.
- Analyse and summarise evidence, legal principles, and existing research.
- Draft reports, submissions, or legal documents that may be used by the client for advocacy or legal proceedings.
- Work collaboratively with other law students to deliver the project brief.
- Attend seminars and meetings to develop a deeper understanding of international legal systems and professional skills.
- Engage in reflective practice to evaluate your learning and professional development.

Expectations:

- Professionalism and cultural competence – you will be working on international legal issues that require an understanding of diverse legal and cultural perspectives.
- Attention to detail and accuracy – legal research and documentation must be precise, well-organised, and aligned with the needs of the client.
- Adherence to procedures and protocols – you will follow the correct methodologies, ethical standards, and legal processes required for this project.
- Attend small group meetings to support the group work.
- Commitment to project outcomes – you will be expected to manage your workload effectively, meet deadlines, and contribute meaningfully to the team's work.

By participating in this project, you will develop key legal skills in international research, advocacy, legal writing, and professional collaboration, gaining valuable experience that will enhance your understanding of global legal challenges and solutions.

Open Justice Thames Valley Policing Project

The Thames Valley Policing Project offers students the chance to work on real-world policing challenges and contribute innovative, research-driven solutions. Students receive a brief from Thames Valley Police outlining the background to a current issue, such as the use of e-scooters and are tasked with researching, analysing, and producing a written response. Instead of providing direct legal advice, students focus on legal research, evidence review and drafting reports or submissions that support forward-thinking approaches to policing. This project enables students to develop valuable skills in criminal law, legal research, and practical legal writing.

What you will do:

- Conduct detailed research into policing issues based on a brief provided by Thames Valley Police.
- Analyse and summarise evidence, data, and relevant academic or policy research.
- Draft reports or legal documents that may inform Thames Valley Police's approach to the issue.
- Collaborate effectively with fellow law students to deliver a high-quality project outcome.
- Engage in reflective practice to evaluate your learning, skill development, and professional growth.

Expectations:

- **Professionalism and cultural competence:** You will explore policing issues that require sensitivity to diverse legal, social, and cultural contexts.
- **Attention to detail and accuracy:** All research and documentation must be precise, well-structured, and tailored to the needs of the client.
- **Active participation:** Attend and contribute to small group meetings to support collaborative work.
- **Commitment:** Manage your workload responsibly, meet deadlines, and play an active role in delivering the team's final output.

By participating in this project, you will build key legal skills in criminal law, analytical problem-solving, research, legal writing, and professional collaboration gaining practical experience that deepens your understanding of contemporary policing priorities.

Open Justice Family Law Clinic

The Open Justice Family Law Clinic provides students with the opportunity to engage with real-world family law issues under the supervision of experienced academic and legal professionals. Students will work alongside free legal advice organisations to support individuals navigating family law challenges. This project offers valuable practical experience in family law. Projects may include advising individuals or providing responses to website queries for other charities.

Students will carry out training and a simulated case, which must be completed before entering the live clinic. In the live clinic, students may have the opportunity to take notes for client interviews and will assist in legal research and draft letters of advice. Students may also draft guidance and other public legal education documents for charities. Many of the cases will involve domestic abuse, substance misuse, child parental separation and other sensitive family law matters. Students should carefully consider whether they feel comfortable engaging with such cases before applying. Often, these issues are raised for the first time at the interview, so students may not know what aspects of family law are involved before the interview. If hearing about these issues is likely to cause distress, we suggest you think carefully about doing another project.

What you will do:

- You may observe client interviews, gaining insight into family law casework.
- You will conduct legal research on family law, focusing on issues such as divorce, child arrangements, domestic abuse, and financial settlements.
- You will draft and produce high-quality legal documents, including letters of advice, guidance materials, and public legal education documents.
- You will collaborate with other law students to achieve successful project outcomes.
- You will attend meetings to enhance legal knowledge and professional skills.
- You will engage in reflective practice to assess your learning and professional development.
- You will always maintain confidentiality and professionalism.

Expectations:

- Professionalism and confidentiality – client interactions require the highest level of ethical conduct and discretion.
- Emotional resilience – many cases will involve domestic abuse and other highly sensitive matters. If you feel this would be too difficult, you may wish to consider an alternative project.
- Empathy and compassion – working on family law cases requires sensitivity and understanding of the personal impact on clients.

- Non-judgemental- working on family law cases requires self-awareness and the ability to support clients without passing judgement on their circumstances or decisions.
- Attention to detail and accuracy – legal research and document drafting must be thorough, precise, and aligned with professional legal standards.
- Commitment to project outcomes – you must manage your workload effectively, meet deadlines, and contribute meaningfully to the team’s work.

While we hope to offer opportunities for live client work, we cannot guarantee this, as it is dependent on factors and circumstances beyond our control. By participating in this project, you will gain experience in legal research, drafting, and case management. You will develop key skills for a career in family law.

Open Justice Business and Employment Law Project

The Business and Employment Law Project (the Project) provides students with the opportunity to engage in real-world business and employment law issues under the supervision of experienced academics. The Project will comprise two phases:

In Phase 1, students will be supporting business entrepreneurs who have been selected for the OU’s Open Business Creator Programme (OBCP). Students can find out more about this initiative here <https://business.open.ac.uk/open-business-creators> .

Students will meet online with some of the entrepreneurs selected for the OBCP to learn about the nature of their businesses and their legal concerns. Students will then research areas of business law identified as relevant to the needs of these entrepreneurs and produce for them engaging and accessible resources, in the form of toolkits, encapsulating the key points of their research. These toolkits will be published on the OU’s Open Justice site. Students will also have the opportunity towards the end of the Project, to deliver an online presentation to the entrepreneurs on the areas of law they have researched.

In Phase 2 of the Project, students will work with a charity that supports employment rights in schools, helping to provide legal information and educational resources to assist young people in understanding their rights at work. Students will focus on legal research, resource development, and public legal education, drawing on legal design skills to create accessible materials that empower young people to navigate employment law issues with confidence.

What you will do:

- Conduct legal research on business and employment law for the relevant end users.
- Draft and produce high-quality legal resources, including toolkits, FAQs, lesson plans, interactive activities, guidance documents, and presentations.
- Work collaboratively with other law students to develop materials that are clear, engaging, practical, and accessible.
- Attend briefings and small group meetings that support the delivery of the project.
- Engage in reflective practice to assess your learning and professional development.
- Maintain professionalism and follow all project procedures, instructions, and protocols.

Expectations:

- Clear and accessible communication – you will need to ensure that presentation of legal principles and concepts is clear, engaging and accessible to ensure the intended end users can understand their rights and obligations.
- Accuracy and attention to detail – all materials must be well-researched, legally sound, and relevant.
- Commitment to project outcomes – students must manage their workload effectively, meet deadlines, and contribute to team efforts.
- Professionalism and teamwork – collaboration is key, and all work should be conducted to a high professional standard.
- Willingness to use digital platforms (including Microsoft Teams) and tools (such as PowerPoint) responsibly and creatively in delivering the Project's objectives.

By participating in this Project, you will gain valuable experience in business and employment law, legal research, legal design skills, oral presentation skills and public legal education, while also helping aspiring entrepreneurs and contributing to an initiative that supports young people in understanding and asserting their rights in the workplace.

Open Justice Public Legal Education Project

The Open Justice Public Legal Education Project gives students the opportunity to design resources that help the public understand law, legal rights, and the workings of the justice system. Using the Open Justice Centre's virtual courtroom, students will create public legal education (PLE) materials that support people who are representing themselves or attending court as a witness or juror. This is not a traditional law clinic

involving client advice. Instead, the focus is on legal design, digital communication, and the practical application of legal knowledge to address real access-to-justice problems. Students are free to choose the legal issue or area of law they want to explore.

What you will do:

- Conduct legal research on an access-to-justice issue of your choice.
- Design and develop your own PLE materials, aimed at helping the public understand a legal process, right, or problem.
- Work in small support teams, sharing ideas and feedback while each student produces their own final materials.
- Explain legal concepts clearly and accessibly, using a structured, user-friendly design.
- Develop key skills in legal reasoning, problem-solving, communication, and user-focused design.
- Explore legal literacy; you will not advise clients but will investigate how accessible information can empower court users.

Expectations:

- Collaborative working: Teamwork is central to this project. Differences in working styles may arise, so clear communication, flexibility, and shared responsibility are essential.
- Clear and accessible communication: Your PLE materials must be accurate, easy to understand, and visually appealing for a non-specialist audience.
- Strong self-management: Guidance will be provided, but you are responsible for planning your time, driving your own work, and meeting project deadlines.
- Attendance at project meetings to ensure ongoing engagement and support.
- Willingness to use digital tools, such as PowerPoint, Canva, or other design platforms.
- Individual outputs within a group context: Although you will work in groups for peer support, each student will produce their own PLE resource.

What you will gain

By the end of the project, you will have hands-on experience with legal design, a deeper understanding of how legal information can be communicated effectively, and practical problem-solving skills that are increasingly valuable in modern legal practice.

High-quality materials may be showcased on the Virtual Courtroom website.