

Our Co-Directors



Professor Irène Couzigou



Dr Erin Ferguson



Dr Clare Frances Moran

ACCPIL is co-directed by academics specialising in International Law, Public Law, and International Criminal Law.

Welcome from our Co-Directors

We are very pleased to introduce the first newsletter of the Aberdeen Centre for Constitutional and Public International Law (ACCPIL). The Centre brings together academics, research students and associate members working across public law.

The ACCPIL is led through a shared co-directorship model, with equal responsibility for the running of the Centre. This approach reflects both the

breadth of expertise within ACCPIL and our commitment to inclusive, collaborative research.

Over the coming years, the Centre aims to support excellent research through regular meetings, works-in-progress events, and opportunities for discussion and collaboration within and beyond the University of Aberdeen.

We hope this first newsletter gives a sense of the Centre's activities and the work of its members, and we look forward to building on this in future editions.

Irène, Erin, and Clare Frances

Editorial note

Dear ACCPIL Members,

Following the welcome from the Centre's co-directors, I am pleased to introduce the first ACCPIL Newsletter. The Centre will publish two newsletters each academic year - a winter edition and a summer edition - bringing together updates on ACCPIL's activities, highlighting research by our members, and sharing information about events organised or co-organised by the Centre.

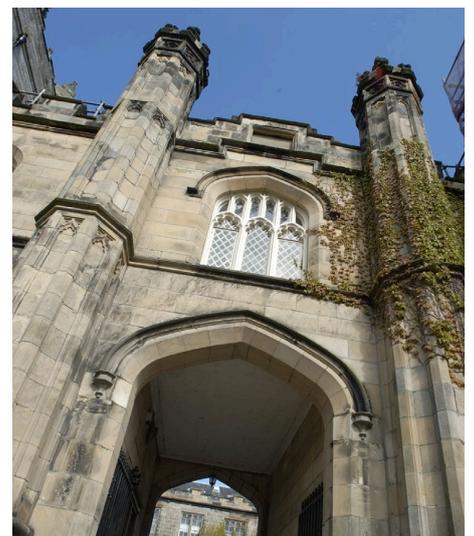
As this is our first newsletter, we have included a brief introduction to the Centre and highlighted the breadth of research activities represented within ACCPIL.

Our diversity of perspectives is a key strength of the Centre and is reflected in the research and events featured in this issue.

This edition looks back at ACCPIL activities from September 2025 to January 2026, including a number of events and examples of recent research by our members. Useful links to our membership, news, and events pages are included for those who would like to explore further. Information about events taking place in the second term will be shared in the next newsletter.

As this newsletter develops, we hope it will become a space to recognise the work of our members and to keep the wider ACCPIL community informed and connected. Suggestions for future editions are very welcome.

Wishing you all a successful semester ahead.



Best wishes,

Hallam Burnapp (Editor of the ACCPIL Newsletter)

About the ACCPIL

Who We Are

The Aberdeen Centre for Constitutional and Public International Law (ACCPIL) promotes research in constitutional law, legal theory, and public international law in their normative, theoretical, and practical dimensions. The Centre supports research addressing questions of good governance and the rule of law at UK, regional, and global levels.

ACCPIL brings together a diverse research community drawn from different academic backgrounds and career stages, including members of academic staff (including visiting researchers), PhD students, and associate members. Further information about our members can be found via the following ACCPIL webpages:

- Academic staff, including visiting researchers, can be found [[here](#)]
- Research students, working on a wide range of projects, listed [[here](#)]
- Associate members, contributing to the Centre's research culture and activities, found [[here](#)]

Further information about ACCPIL's aims, research priorities, and activities is available on the ACCPIL website [[here](#)]



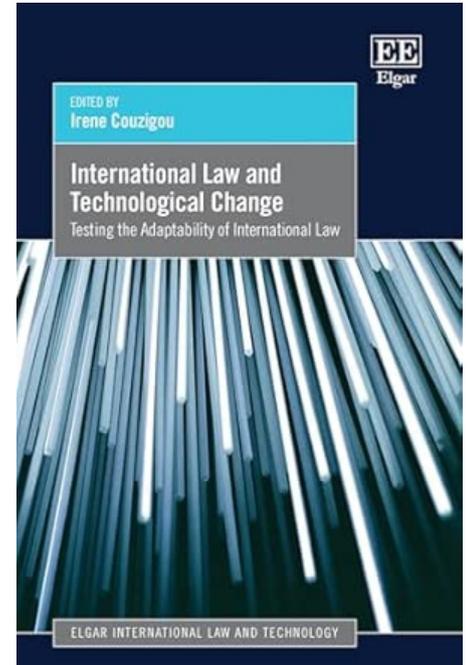
Selected Publications

Edited Volume (Book) - Edward Elgar, 2025

International Law and Technological Change: Testing the Adaptability of International Law

Edited by **Professor Irène Couzigou** and published in December 2025 as part of the Elgar International Law and Technology series, this volume examines how existing principles and rules of international law respond to contemporary technological change. The book makes a timely contribution to debates on international law and technology regulation, addressing questions of adaptability, governance, and legal continuity in an evolving technological landscape.

You can find the publication [\[here\]](#).

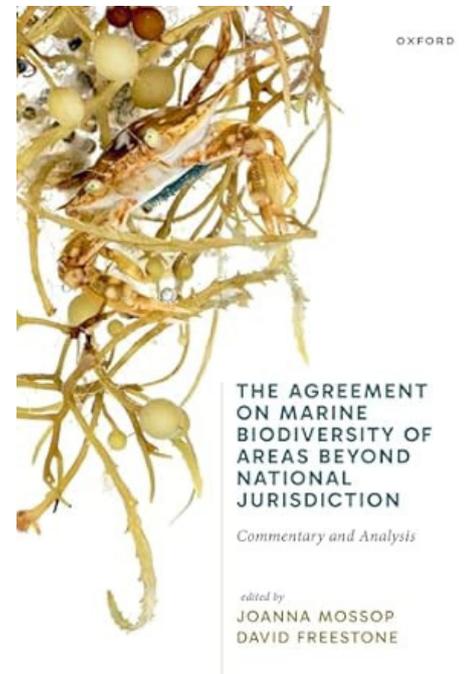


Book Chapter - Oxford University Press, 2025

The Agreement on Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction: Commentary and Analysis

Professor Abbe Brown has authored a chapter in *The Agreement on Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction: Commentary and Analysis*, edited by Joanna Mossop and David Freestone and published by Oxford University Press in November 2025. **Professor Brown's** chapter, co-authored with Marcel Jaspars, examines the relationship between the BBNJ Agreement and intellectual property law, contributing to a wider, authoritative commentary on the Agreement's provisions, negotiating context, and implications for international law.

You can find the publication [\[here\]](#).



Book Chapter - Editoriale Scientifica, 2025

Non-Military Coercive Measures in International and European Law

Muhammed Nurullah Benli, PhD student at the Law School and member of ACCPIL, has authored a chapter entitled "The Violation of Sovereignty in Cyberspace and Countermeasures" in *Non-Military Coercive Measures in International and European Law*, published by Editoriale Scientifica in late 2025. The chapter develops research originally presented at the 13th Summer School in International and European Law, hosted by the University Côte d'Azur, and examines the assessment of cyber operations and countermeasures under international law.

You can find out more [\[here\]](#).



Public Engagement and Impact

Evidence to the Scottish Parliament - Holyrood

Freedom of Information Reform (Scotland) Bill

In November 2025, ACCPIL research informed parliamentary scrutiny of the Freedom of Information Reform (Scotland) Bill through oral evidence to the Scottish Parliament's Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee. Drawing on long-standing research on freedom of information and transparency, **Dr Erin Ferguson** addressed the importance of extending FOI obligations to private bodies delivering public services and assessed the Bill's potential to strengthen transparency and accountability.



International Policy Engagement - United Nations BBNJ Process

Implementation of the Marine Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement

ACCPIL research has contributed to the development and ongoing implementation of the UN Agreement on Marine Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ), particularly in relation to access and benefit-sharing, capacity building, and marine technology transfer throughout 2025. **Professor Abbe Brown** has engaged in sustained policy work since 2019 in partnership with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Deep Ocean Stewardship Initiative, and academic collaborators, with a particular focus on the role of intellectual property rights within the BBNJ framework.

Following the adoption of the Agreement, this engagement has continued through policy briefs, public-facing events, and contributions to proposed UK legislation, including the December 2025 policy brief Towards coherence and avoiding undermining: policy recommendations on implementation of the BBNJ Agreement regarding Marine Genetic Resources. Related activities supported dialogue on treaty implementation and legal coherence during international and public engagement events in Aberdeen in 2025.

Policy Submissions to Parliamentary Committees - United Kingdom and Scotland

ACCPIL members contributed written submissions to key parliamentary consultations addressing emerging and complex legal issues in October 2025. In response to the Joint Committee on Human Rights' call for evidence on Human Rights and the Regulation of Artificial Intelligence, a submission was made by **Dr Erin Ferguson, Dr Clare Frances Moran, Professor Irène Couzigou, Professor Abbe Brown,** and PhD student **Nurullah Benli**, examining the human rights implications of AI regulation.

ACCPIL members also responded to the Scottish Parliament's Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee call for views on the proposed Ecocide (Scotland) Bill in October 2025. This submission, prepared by **Dr Erin Ferguson, Dr Mitchell Lennan, and Dr Clare Frances Moran**, engaged with questions of criminal liability, environmental harm, and legislative design. Building on this work, **Dr Clare Frances Moran** was subsequently invited by the Committee in November 2025 to give oral evidence on the Ecocide (Scotland) Bill.

Presentations at Conferences

Conference Papers - International Astronautical Congress (Sydney, September-October 2025)

ACCPIL research was presented at the International Astronautical Congress (IAC) 2025, held in Sydney from 29th September to 3rd October. PhD researcher **Hallam Burnapp** presented three papers addressing legal accountability, cybersecurity, and governance challenges in space activities. One paper examined *AI-driven cybersecurity for satellite systems*, focusing on legal responsibility and strategic stability implications arising from the use of artificial intelligence.

Further papers, co-authored with **Dr Maria Manoli**, were presented within sessions organised by the International Institute of Space Law and the International Academy of Astronautics. These contributions examined the public-private divide in international responsibility for space activities and the evolution of space governance from state-centred legal frameworks towards actor-centred norms of behaviour.



Conference Paper - Hague Asser Institute (The Hague, November 2025)

Early Career Conference on Emerging Disruptive Technology and Arms Control

ACCPIL research on artificial intelligence and armed conflict was presented at the Hague Asser Institute's Early Career Conference on Emerging Disruptive Technology and Arms Control. PhD researcher **Rosa Villar Orero** presented a paper examining the use of AI decision-support systems in targeting, drawing on current conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine. The paper explored the tension between AI-assisted targeting practices and the requirement for meaningful human judgment under the principles of distinction and proportionality in the law of armed conflict.



Conference Papers - University of Leeds (September 2025)

25th Anniversary of the Human Rights Act 1998

ACCPIL research was presented at a conference marking the 25th anniversary of the Human Rights Act 1998, hosted by the University of Leeds. **Dr Erin Ferguson** examined the impact of privatisation on the operation of the Human Rights Act, focusing on how judicial interpretations of “public functions” have narrowed its scope. PGR member **Magdalena Zabrocka** presented research on SLAPPs and human rights, arguing that states have positive obligations to protect freedom of expression under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights.



Presentations at Conferences

Conference Paper - Young Legal Researchers Conference (Hasselt, Belgium, December 2025)

ACCPIL research was also presented at the 6th Young Legal Researchers Conference, held in Hasselt, Belgium, which brought together early-career scholars to reflect on legal developments over the past quarter-century. PhD researcher **Lizeth Moreno Marquez** presented a paper entitled “*Between Ethics and Obligation: Institutional Conscientious Objection in Medicine in Legal Perspective*”, examining the compatibility of institutional conscientious objection with international human rights law and its implications for access to healthcare.



Other Research Activities

Academic Seminar - FCDO, London

In January 2026, **Dr Clare Frances Moran** and **Dr Mitchell Lennan** were invited to the Legal Directorate of the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) to attend their Academic Seminar at the FCDO's offices in London. Panels were convened on different contemporary issues in international law, including the Advisory Opinion on Climate Change and legal issues raised by the situation in Israel and Palestine, offering insight into the process of providing international legal opinion to the UK government. The event provided an excellent opportunity to network with other international lawyers from around the UK and to develop our links with the FCDO.

State of the World Workshop - Scottish Council on Global Affairs

ACCPIL has secured external funding to support research-led engagement on contemporary issues in international law and human rights. In December 2025, **Dr Erin Ferguson** and **Dr Clare Frances Moran** received funding from the Scottish Council on Global Affairs to run a State of the World workshop entitled “*Outlier or Leader? Scotland’s Approach to Human Rights and International Law.*” The workshop will be delivered in early 2026 under the auspices of the Aberdeen Centre for Constitutional and Public International Law (ACCPIL).

Doctoral Research Training - University of Bergen (Norway)

PhD Course in Comparative Law and Comparative Legal Methods

In September 2025, ACCPIL doctoral and postgraduate researchers participated in the PhD Course in Comparative Law and Comparative Legal Methods at the University of Bergen. **Lizeth Moreno Marquez**, **Tayo Gbemi**, **Andrew Walters**, **James Dodge**, and **Pierre de Gioia Carabellese** took part in the course, which brought together participants from diverse legal backgrounds in an international research environment. The programme focused on comparative legal methodologies, combining interactive workshops with applied discussions on integrating comparative perspectives into individual research projects.



Seminars and Lectures

During the winter semester, ACCPIL hosted a series of research seminars and guest lectures exploring contemporary issues in constitutional, public international law, and legal theory.

Research Seminar - Evaluating the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Criminal Sentencing

On 22nd October 2025, **Dr Ezeji Chiji Longinus** (University of Johannesburg; Visiting Researcher with ACCPIL) examined the role of artificial intelligence in criminal justice, with a particular focus on sentencing. The seminar considered potential applications of AI in crime detection and sentencing, alongside the ethical and legal challenges associated with its use.

Research Seminar - “No One But a Lawyer”

Professor Luís Duarte d’Almeida (NOVA School of Law, Lisbon) delivered a research seminar on 26th November 2025 exploring the divide between how lawyers and courts reason about the law and how law is understood by lay citizens. The lecture examined the jurisprudential implications of this gap and its significance for legal reasoning and compliance.

Guest Seminar - Repositioning Courts between Litigating Parties, Society and Politics

On 10th October 2025, **Dr Stijn van Deursen** (Utrecht University) presented research on the evolving role of courts in addressing socially and politically sensitive issues arising from political inaction. The seminar examined how courts navigate their position between litigants, society, and politics, drawing on empirical and interdisciplinary perspectives.

Guest Lecture - *The For Women Scotland Case*

Dr Alexander Maine (City St George’s, University of London) delivered a guest lecture on 1st October 2025 examining the Supreme Court’s decision in *The For Women Scotland Case*. The lecture explored the Court’s interpretation of the terms “woman”, “man” and “sex” under the Equality Act 2010, and considered the wider legal, political, and constitutional implications of the judgment, particularly in relation to trans persons’ rights.

Information about future ACCPIL events is available via the Outlook calendar and on the ACCPIL website [\[here\]](#)

Centre Updates

Sharing news

- Members are very welcome to share news of research activities, publications, events, or other research achievements with Irène, who will be happy to upload these to the ACCPIL webpages.

Website updates

- The ACCPIL webpages have recently been updated - thank you to everyone who contributed information.

LLM students

- If you know an LLM student who is particularly interested in ACCPIL’s work and would like to be more involved, please let Irène know and they can be added to the ACCPIL mailing list.

Grants lead

- Expressions of interest are welcome from members who would like to take on the role of grants lead, offering advice and support on funding applications.

Teams channel

- Members are encouraged to use the ACCPIL Teams channel to share updates about conferences, workshops, funding opportunities, and other relevant news.

And, of course, if you need anything, or have suggestions, queries or ideas, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us!

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