**Welcome to Legal Internship**

Thank you for your interest in the Faculty of Law's Legal Internship unit. Legal internship differs from courses traditionally offered by the UWA Law School and introduces a dedicated clinical program into the curriculum. The unit gives students the opportunity to work in a legal environment for academic credit. Most students will attend their placement on one day per week for 12 weeks during semester 2. Other students will complete their placements intensively, usually in January/February. The students’ experience in their placements will be supplemented by regular seminars and an ongoing assessment program designed to build legal skills and encourage reflective practice.

Clinical legal education is a feature of most Australian law schools. In 2013, 26 of 33 law schools in Australia offered such courses; indeed as of 2014 all Go8 law schools will offer a clinical legal education option to students.

At UWA, legal skills are already taught throughout the JD program in some existing core units and electives culminating with the capstone units Procedure and Commercial Practice. Having said this, such experiences may be compartmentalized with the main focus being, of necessity, the rules of law. There is often little opportunity for students to experience legal problem solving in ‘real-life’ scenarios.

Indeed, Neumann notes that:

> ...the scholarship of law faculties has been overinvested in what Schon would have considered technical rationality (the rules of law) and underinvested in what he/she would have considered practical reflection (the process through which professionals solve problems).\(^1\)

Skills encountered within the curriculum can be complemented by students who choose to enter student competitions in legal writing, client interviewing, negotiation and mediation and mooting. Many students obtain clerkships or other forms of legal work experience. For the first time, however, our Legal Internship unit provides an opportunity for UWA law students to obtain valuable practical experience for academic credit.

---

Unit Objectives

The unit objectives are:

(i) to contextualize the study of law and student learning in other JD units;

Legal Internship builds on the knowledge and skills garnered in the JD through practical application in a professional practice environment. Students will be encouraged to think carefully about the work they do, what they have learned from their experience and reflect on how the law and the legal system actually affects the lives of members of the community.

(ii) to foster students’ ability to identify, develop and apply legal practice skills;

Students become active participants in their own learning thus leading to self-directed learning. The students will develop an ability to learn from experience. Active learning also fosters in students a sense of professional responsibility. Indeed:

…what law schools can provide is a toolkit – a set of understandings about experiential learning – that will enhance self-learning skills once the student is in the real world. ²

Students who learn from their experiences become life-long learners, a beneficial characteristic in their professional careers.

Legal Internship also offers students the opportunity to diversify their learning about the law and provides exposure to new areas of the substantive law.

(iii) to ensure students appreciate the importance of legal ethics within the practice of law;

Legal internship aims to promote development of professional and public responsibility. Exposure to and discussion of ethical issues with their supervisors provides the opportunity for students to think about – and contextualize - these issues of responsibility.

(iv) to foster students’ critical understanding of approaches to legal practice;

Students will be placed in a variety of legal environments. While all student experiences will be different, the regular seminars, discussions and the unit’s emphasis on reflective practice will inform students of the varying approaches to legal practice and provide opportunities for comparison and discussion.³

(v) to encourage students to critically analyse and reflect upon issues of access to justice and equity within the legal system.

Students will be encouraged to deal effectively with unstructured situations, to work collaboratively and recognise the limitations of ‘legal’ solutions to problems. Students will subject the legal system to analysis and criticism where appropriate.

³ Subject of course to confidentiality limitations.
The Internship

Legal Internship is comprised of four streams:

Social justice

The Social Justice Internship provides an opportunity for students to gain practical legal experience and provide vital services to disadvantaged members of the Western Australian community. It involves student placements in government departments and non-government and community organisations offering legal advice and representation to special interest groups.

Human rights

The Faculty of Law’s focus on human rights extends to the Legal internship program. Students can obtain work experience in organisations dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights in Australia and abroad. A range of organisations offer students the opportunity to experience evidence-based advocacy, research, litigation and community education in action.

Rural and regional

The Rural and Regional Internship provides an opportunity for students to gain practical legal experience in law firms and legal organisations in Geraldton, WA. Students will take part in a discrete induction program to introduce them to the legal environment in Geraldton, in particular the way law firms, government and non-government organisations collaborate to get the best results for rural and regional clients. Students may also have the opportunity to engage in research with students from other disciplines placed in Geraldton through our close relationship with Western Australian Centre for Regional Health. Rural and regional internships are offered intensively.

Commercial

The Commercial Internship provides an opportunity for students to gain practical legal experience in private law firms and government legal departments. Participation in the Commercial Internship introduces students to the skills, practical knowledge and understanding of values needed to practice as a lawyer.

For more information see: http://www.law.uwa.edu.au/students/internships/legal-internships/_nocache
The Unit

Legal Internship seeks to enhance and enliven student learning by importing a practical, experiential unit into JD program.

**Introductory session**

The unit will commence with an induction program in the Moot Court from 9.30am – 1.00pm on Friday 29 July 2016. This session will commence with a discussion of administrative issues and assessment. The session will then continue with a series of short sessions (some interactive) by the unit coordinator and guest presenters on various aspects of legal practice. **Attendance at the induction day is compulsory.**

**Seminar Program**

The fortnightly seminar program commences in week 2. Each seminar will focus on a particular area of legal practice, for example *inter alia* ethics, client interviewing and empathy training. Students will also be encouraged to swap information about their placement experiences, subject of course to confidentiality issues. **Students must attend 4 out of 6 seminars.**

**Student Placements**

For most students, placements will commence in week 2 of the semester. Students will attend their designated workplaces for one day per week (negotiated with the host organisation) for 12 weeks. Students undertaking their internship intensively will attend their designated workplaces for a period of 3 weeks.

**Assessment Criteria**

- **Placement - 30%**

20% of the assessment is allocated to a student’s performance during his or her placement. Supervisors play a central role in the assessment of the placement. Placement performance is assessed by the supervisor in close consultation with the unit coordinator.

- **Assignment - 35%**

Students are required to submit a research assignment (2400 words) about an issue of law or lawyering that has been of interest to them throughout the semester. It is intended to demonstrate student research skills within the context of their placement.

- **Reflective Journal - 25%**

Students are required to submit a reflective journal each fortnight to a maximum per fortnight of 200 words. A final journal of 600 words will be submitted at the end of the semester.

- **Seminar attendance - 10%**
Confidentiality

The material we provide to students stresses the importance of respecting the client confidentiality of the host organisation and its clients. Students will discuss their placements with the unit coordinator but only in circumstances that will not identify the client or clients in question. We are aware of the importance of client confidentiality and students will be reminded that the requirement of confidentiality continues beyond completion of the professional relationship.

The Faculty of Law respects the right of host organisations to have students sign an undertaking of confidentiality if this is considered necessary. We ask that any concerns regarding client confidentiality be raised with the course coordinators to ensure that issues are dealt with promptly.

Insurance

The University’s insurance policy covers students undertaking approved work experience programs for:

- Public liability
- Accidental death and capital benefits (including direct travel to and from the place of work) and
- Work Cover.

Students liaise with the course coordinators in relation to obtaining the necessary approval for their placement to be covered by the relevant University policy.

Payment of students

Students should not receive any payment for their work as part of Legal Internship.

Concluding remarks

Thank you again for your interest in the Faculty of Law’s Legal Internship unit. We hope this introductory material has encouraged you to be involved in this exciting unit. If you have any further questions or would like more information please contact Associate Professor Aviva Freilich (aviva.freilich@uwa.edu.au) or JD Director Penny Carruthers (penny.carruthers@uwa.edu.au).