



Cornell Law School

Lawyers in the Best Sense

Careers in Legal Academia

**Cornell Law School
Academic Placement Committee**

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Careers in Legal Academia

A Handbook Prepared by the Academic Placement Committee, Cornell Law School

Have you ever considered the possibility of teaching law? If so, this handbook is for you. Law teaching can be a fulfilling and exciting profession, but it's not for everyone.¹ The goal of this handbook is to provide an overview of the world of law teaching so that you can assess whether it is likely to be a good match for you, given your interests, talents, and record of achievement. The handbook also identifies the steps that students and alumni can take during and after law school to prepare themselves for the very competitive selection process. Finally, the handbook lays out the steps involved in applying for law-teaching jobs and offers advice to maximize the chances of obtaining these positions.

This handbook is the work of Cornell Law School's Academic Placement Committee.² The committee's purpose is to assist Cornell Law's current students as well as alumni who are interested in pursuing teaching careers. The committee includes faculty and administrators with considerable experience on both sides of the academic job market. Committee members stand ready to help potential applicants identify the strengths of their academic and work records in terms of what is most desirable for a law-teaching position. The committee offers individualized assistance to student, alumni, and other institutional applicants who are in the process of applying for law teaching jobs. If you are interested in exploring the prospect of law teaching, or intend to do so very soon, please contact us!

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¹ For instance, you will need to be geographically flexible when looking for positions, and if coming from a large law firm you should expect a significant pay cut.

² This updated handbook builds on an earlier version prepared by the Law School's Alumni in Academia Committee, in collaboration with the Office of Public Service.

Types of Legal Teaching Positions

Depending on the focus of their teaching and scholarship, law professors fall into distinct categories. Some professors concentrate on teaching and research in the doctrinal analysis of law (doctrinal or stand-up faculty), whereas others focus on the teaching of legal writing or other legal-practice skills (clinical and legal-writing faculty). There are different expectations for these distinctive concentrations, so we will treat them separately.

“Doctrinal” or “Stand-Up” Law Teaching Positions

What Do Doctrinal Faculty Do?

Whether they are called doctrinal, classroom, or “stand-up” teachers, faculty members in this group teach most first-year and upper-class courses.³ Stand-up faculty earned this name because they mostly stand in front of a classroom full of students and teach legal analysis and legal doctrine using casebooks. When one thinks about a first-year torts or civil procedure class, the person at the front of the classroom falls into this category. They generally do not represent live clients, supervise student lawyers in legal clinics, or teach students about drafting and negotiation. Of course, at some schools, doctrinal teachers may include legal skills such as research and writing in their courses along with substantive law, or may supervise legal clinics. But typically they concentrate on conveying the theories of law and legal doctrine to their students.

What is not always apparent about this category of law teachers is that scholarship rather than teaching is the primary focus of their professional lives. The hiring, evaluation, promotion, and compensation of doctrinal law professors are mostly based on their records of publication. While many people are attracted to this career because they enjoy classroom teaching, it is far more a research and writing job than a teaching job. There is constant pressure to research, develop, write, edit, publish, and promote one’s scholarship while at the same time stay up on class preparation, meet with students, and teach class. Professors also travel to conferences and faculty workshops at other schools to present works in progress and completed papers. Without a lot of fire in the

belly to succeed as a scholar, it is hard to balance these responsibilities.

So one question you should ask yourself, if you are interested in the prospect of a doctrinal law teaching position, is whether you have a passion for legal scholarship. Are there questions about law that you feel driven to investigate further? Did you enjoy writing your law review note? Do you relish the idea of delving deeply into legal research? If you find the prospect of researching and writing attractive, that’s a good sign. If you found writing your note an agonizing process and don’t have a burning desire to undertake research, then this job is probably not for you.

Admittedly, there is some variation among law schools in the balance between demands to teach and demands to publish. More scholarship-oriented law schools may hold their faculty to high publication standards while de-emphasizing teaching demands. Some schools have high expectations for classroom teaching and student advising by their doctrinal faculty. We like to think of Cornell as a place that expects its core stand-up faculty to be both excellent scholars and dedicated teachers. Some schools have historically been less focused on research, writing and publication, expecting their faculty to focus more on teaching. However, in recent years, the buyers’ market for new law teachers has enabled virtually all schools to hire promising junior scholars; overall, the pressure to publish has increased across the board. The historical division between research-oriented law schools and more teaching-oriented law schools has blurred considerably.

Teaching loads at many schools give an indication of the importance of research. The typical teaching load at American law schools used to be 2-2, meaning two courses in the fall and two courses in the spring. Many schools now have a 2-1 teaching load, however, and one of those courses is often a seminar, which may require fewer classroom and preparation hours. Freeing up time for research and writing shows the law schools’ strong expectations that each faculty member will write and publish outstanding scholarship that will make an impact on the field.

³ We avoid the term “tenure-track” faculty because at many law schools clinical and legal-writing faculty are also on a track toward either traditional tenure or some hybrid status such as renewable long-term contracts.

What Are Law Schools Looking For In Doctrinal Law Faculty Applicants?

It used to be easier to generalize in answer to this question. Law school faculties that saw themselves as research-oriented faculties were looking for the best and the brightest law graduates. New hires generally had a similar pedigree: Top grades (summa or magna cum laude) from a T14 law school; membership on the school's flagship law journal; a board position on that journal – preferably editor-in-chief, managing editor, or articles editor; a judicial clerkship on a federal court of appeals, and perhaps the Supreme Court; and maybe a year or two in practice, either with a prestigious government agency (such as the White House Office of Legal Counsel or the Securities and Exchange Commission) or a top private law firm. Based on these credentials, a school was supposed to have confidence that the newly hired faculty member would go on to produce influential legal scholarship. Ph.D.'s in other disciplines were practically unheard of. There was no expectation that the candidate had published anything beyond a student note before entering the teaching market.

Schools have come to recognize that top grades and credentials do not necessarily predict excellence in scholarship. Instead, the very best predictor of publication success in the future is publication success in the past. Nowadays it is virtually impossible to get hired anywhere without having at least one substantial article published beyond a student note. Indeed, top schools routinely hire entry-level faculty who have published books with major university presses. Credentials remain important. Successful candidates for faculty positions generally have the same sorts of impressive resumes as in the past. The difference is that the golden resume, by itself, is no longer enough. One must also demonstrate the capacity to write excellent legal scholarship *by writing excellent legal scholarship*, or at least scholarship that demonstrates a great deal of potential.

One of the most important trends in the legal academy in the last fifteen to twenty years has been the rise of interdisciplinary scholarship. Law professors have always incorporated concepts from history, philosophy, economics, and sociology in their scholarship, but prior to the last two decades or so they had generally done so in a somewhat informal way, and typically in the service of making some point about law as law. The tendency today, by contrast, is to emphasize scholarship that satisfies the standards of another field on its own terms. For example, it is no longer possible to get away with half-baked economics or empirical methods.

Today, interdisciplinary law-and-economics work or empirical scholarship should incorporate economics or empirical methods at the level of sophistication one would expect from someone with a Ph.D. in those disciplines.

Because of the importance of pre-hiring publications and interdisciplinary scholarship, many of the strongest candidates for entry-level classroom teaching positions now have Ph.D.'s in some coordinate discipline, such as history, psychology, economics, or philosophy, and expect to write on law-and-that-discipline. Of course, not all new law teachers possess a Ph.D., but there is little question that the J.D./Ph.D. resume, including several substantial publications, is the new gold standard.

Many law schools offer graduate degrees such as the LL.M. or the J.S.D. A common question is whether one of these degrees is either necessary or sufficient to obtain a doctrinal law teaching job. It is important to differentiate among these programs. The LL.M. program at many law schools is designed to give foreign-trained lawyers a year's worth of exposure to the American legal system, with the expectation that they will return to their home jurisdictions and practice law. This kind of LL.M. offers little to no advantage on the teaching market. Other schools offer specialized LL.M. degrees in subjects like tax, intellectual property, and environmental law. With the possible exception of the tax LL.M. from a few schools (NYU, Georgetown, and Florida are three examples), specialized LL.M. degrees are perceived as merely replicating the course offerings of the J.D. program, and thus do not offer significant advantages to prospective law teachers. A very few schools offer a research-based LL.M., which may be useful as an opportunity to get some writing done and build connections with faculty members at another school, but these are unusual.

The case is a bit different with J.S.D. (or S.J.D. – it's the same thing) programs. Traditionally, these research-based doctoral programs mostly attracted foreign lawyers whose home jurisdiction required a doctoral degree for any university teaching job. The best prospective law teachers in Canada, for example, have traditionally received J.S.D./S.J.D. degrees from top U.S. law schools. Here in the U.S., however, it is fair to say that the credential by itself is not worth much on the U.S. teaching market. This does not necessarily mean that U.S.-trained lawyers should not consider a J.S.D. program. What may be most valuable about these degree programs is the opportunity to do sustained legal research and writing

under the direction of a prominent scholar in the candidate's chosen field. If doing a doctoral degree enables one to work with Professor X, who will be a real mentor and not merely a figurehead advisor, then it may make sense.

Law schools recognize the dilemma inherent in their hiring practices. They will only seriously consider candidates who have a record of publication, but it is hard to see how a smart, ambitious lawyer with aspirations to enter law teaching could write the required articles without doing a Ph.D. or J.S.D., both of which can take many years. To address this issue, many schools have created fellowship programs, often called Visiting Assistant Professor ("VAP") programs, although the precise names vary. Sometimes VAP programs include a teaching component, so that participants teach first-year legal research and writing (as in the Chicago Bigelow Fellows program or the Columbia Associates in Law program), or have an opportunity to teach doctrinal courses in other areas. VAP positions generally include a stipend, a travel and research budget, office space, secretarial support, and other accouterments of visiting professor status. At some schools, VAPs also get the opportunity to attend faculty colloquia and workshops.

In theory, doing a VAP is an excellent opportunity to get some writing done, make connections with other faculty members, and hang around in a university environment while absorbing the atmosphere and norms of academic life. The problem is, as soon as they were created, VAP programs became nearly as competitive as tenure-track teaching positions. The quality of the VAP applicant pool is often such that a school can take its pick from numerous candidates who have top credentials and already have several published articles. Aspiring law professors who are not able to enroll in a Ph.D. or a J.S.D. program or land a VAP position must thus rely on work they produced as students (more about that below) and whatever they manage to write in their "spare" time.

Developing a Scholarly Research Agenda

Given what has been said about the relative importance of teaching and research, it should be clear that a new doctrinal teacher should be ready to go full steam ahead on scholarship on Day One. Scholars starting out in the profession should aim to develop a reputation for doing thoughtful, interesting, creative work. This generally requires sustained attention to some problem or set of problems that preoccupy scholars in that area. A scholarly research agenda is simply a program of

investigation and writing that aims to provide new and improved ways of thinking about these issues.

How do you develop a scholarly agenda? The best advice is to follow your interests and to capitalize on your strengths. You may always have been fascinated by a particular problem or issue – the effect of punitive damages, how judges are influenced by cognitive biases and heuristics, how juries make decisions, the best way to regulate form contracts in software licensing, and so on. Your summer work or law practice may have alerted you to important problems in particular areas of practice. Or, you may have specialized training in or an inclination toward particular methodological approaches, such as law and economics, empirical legal studies, law and philosophy, or legal history.

Some issues naturally imply a methodological commitment. Studying the history of the civil rights movement requires one to have some advanced training in history, for example. Other legal problems may be amenable to different approaches. One might use formal modeling to critique some aspect of the existing law regulating corporate governance, or conduct large-scale empirical studies to demonstrate the inadequacy of some regime of rules. Scholars may study the legal profession from the standpoint of its history, its portrayal in novels and films, the sociology of its makeup, or the normative foundations for lawyers' obligations. A research agenda must answer these sorts of methodological questions before proceeding to more specific considerations of the precise issue to be studied.

In the application process itself, the term "research agenda" is often used to refer to a specific document setting out the candidate's research goals, methodological approaches, and a short summary of one or more works in progress. Although many law school hiring committees will not initially ask for a research agenda document, preparing one is an invaluable experience. Other than the question, "tell me about your job talk" (see below), the most common question at initial interviews is "what are you working on next?" That question implicitly asks about your research agenda. If you have taken the time to write out a research-agenda document, you will be better equipped to answer this question.

What Can Students Do In Law School To Prepare For A Career As A Doctrinal Law Professor?

The most important thing is to get top grades. While good grades are not enough, it is virtually impossible to get hired as

a doctrinal law teacher without having achieved some academic distinction. This may mean scaling back on non-academic activities or even academic activities such as moot court that do not contribute directly to one's performance on exams. An exception may be journal work. Serving on a law journal is one of the few opportunities students have to engage directly with actual legal scholarship. As scholarship is such an essential aspect of a career in legal academia, the more one is involved with it, the better.

It is also important to establish good working relationships with faculty members who can serve as scholarly mentors. This may mean someone in the relevant field, but it can also mean a faculty member with good connections and an interest in helping out prospective law teachers. At a minimum, however, it is essential to work closely with someone who can serve as an advisor on your area of research interest. Taking a seminar with the professor or working as a summer research assistant or teaching assistant are good first steps to developing a closer working relationship with the professor. This faculty member will eventually be in a position to write recommendations on your behalf when you are a candidate on the teaching market, and might also take more proactive steps, such as calling appointments-committee members at other schools on your behalf.

At some point in the second or third year, students interested in law teaching should try to find opportunities to do the kind of legal research and writing that law professors do. This should be under the guidance of a professor who is well established in the relevant sub-discipline. Many top law schools, including Cornell, offer research colloquia for credit, such as the Law and Economics Colloquium, and the Law and Humanities Colloquium. The colloquia often involve presentations by visiting faculty members from other schools and invite response papers or more extended writing from students. By listening to a range of speakers talk about their legal research, students will learn about a variety of legal scholarship models. In addition, written work done to fulfill the writing requirements of the colloquia could be further developed in an independent reading or writing project with a faculty member. With enough research, writing, and creativity, this project could become a published law review article, the first step on the road to a career in law teaching. In sum, take advantage of opportunities both inside and outside the classroom to develop legal research and writing during your time in law school.

Clinical Teaching Faculty Positions

What Do Clinical Teaching Faculty Do?

In contrast to doctrinal classroom teaching just described, clinical faculty members teach and mentor students by working with them in the representation of real clients. The clinical faculty member's workload often emphasizes teaching more than scholarship, whereas for the doctrinal teacher it is just the opposite. However, most institutions expect their clinical faculty to produce some scholarship.

Clinics are pedagogical tools designed to help students to bridge the gap between classroom theory and post-graduate practice. The skills that clinicians teach, the substantive knowledge they impart, and the amount of work they do for the clinic's clients varies with the types of clinics they run.

Many clinics represent individuals at the trial or administrative level. In those settings, students are the lead lawyers: they interview and communicate with clients, gather facts, research and analyze law, draft pleadings, motions and briefs, take and defend depositions, and argue before triers of fact. Clinical faculty help students develop these skills by creating and critiquing simulations and role plays, conferencing before meetings, depositions and arguments, and reviewing all written work. In these types of clinics, faculty will also assist students in analyzing issues of professional responsibility and foster students' development of professional skills such as clear communication and time management. Clinical professors review each student's skill development at every step of the representation.

By contrast, in clinics which represent clients at the appellate level, clinical faculty may have greater responsibility to represent clients directly and students may serve a more supporting role. In these types of clinics, students research the law and draft briefings, either for the client or on behalf of amicus parties. Here, clinical professors typically take the lead or work closely with students in forming strategy, dictating the content of briefs, and arguing before decision makers. Students are part of a team with the professor as the leader. In these types of clinical settings, professors tend to evaluate students' researching and writing skills based on their written work.

The clinical faculty community is tightly-knit and works to improve the status of clinicians and clinical pedagogy more broadly. The two biggest clinical teaching associations are the Clinical Legal Education Association (CLEA) and the AALS

Section on Clinical Legal Education. CLEA in particular has many helpful resources for new clinicians on its [website](#).

What Are Law Schools Looking For In Clinical Law Faculty Applicants?

When hiring clinical law teachers, law schools are looking for attorneys with several key characteristics. First, law schools seek highly competent practitioners. Often, if they are filling a position in a particular clinic or are interested in building a new clinic with a specific focus, law schools seek experienced practitioners with strong experience in a narrow field. In addition to strong legal skills, aspiring clinical teachers must demonstrate their ability to teach and mentor students. While sometimes law schools will hire clinicians who merely have an aptitude for teaching, most schools prefer to hire attorneys who can provide some evidence that they will teach students well. Ideally, law schools are looking for attorneys who have taught in other contexts and have received written evaluations. By serving as an adjunct faculty member, teaching continuing legal education courses, or securing a clinical teaching fellowship,⁴ attorneys can obtain the experience that law schools are seeking.

In addition to strong practical and teaching experience, some law schools are also seeking attorneys who will produce scholarly writing. This trend toward scholarship coincides with the emergence of tenure-track positions for clinical faculty. Some law schools have a single, unitary tenure track for clinical and podium faculty with similar scholarship expectations, some have a separate clinical tenure track, and many schools hire clinical faculty on fixed, long-term contracts. Clinical scholarship tends to focus on clinical pedagogy as well as both theoretical and practical work in the faculty member's practice area.

What Can Students Do in Law School (And Beyond) to Prepare for a Career in Clinical Teaching?

There are several ways to prepare for a career as a clinical professor. Successful applicants for clinical positions share some of the same characteristics as successful doctrinal position applicants. For example, distinguishing oneself academically in law school is a positive here too. But in contrast to the doctrinal applicant, gaining practical experience is essential for the clinical law teaching applicant.

And, not just any experience will do. Attorneys should specialize in substantive areas of law which are amenable to clinical teaching. Experience litigating on behalf of underserved communities, low-income plaintiffs or criminal defendants can be valuable, since many law school clinics serve the indigent. Civil rights, human rights, or constitutional law practice, at the trial or appellate levels, may also appeal to law schools developing clinics in these areas. While no one practice area is off limits, attorneys with expertise working on complex commercial transactions may find that their experience is not a good fit with law schools' clinics' needs. Finally, attorneys seeking to transition to clinical teaching should consider taking opportunities to become recognized experts in their field. By making presentations to bar associations or judges, writing articles for practitioners, and by working on high-visibility matters, attorneys who improve their national profile will be attractive to law schools.

On a related note, for two reasons, most clinical faculty members have gained their experience in the public sector or with smaller firms. Because attorneys who work in these settings get hands-on, practical experience early on in their careers, they are often the best qualified to transition to a clinic in which they must use and impart those skills daily. In addition, because most law school clinics serve underserved people or underrepresented causes, attorneys who have worked in government, the public interest or in smaller, plaintiff-side firms have the requisite mindset to champion the rights of clinical clients and impart that attitude to their students.

A special note for law students: in addition to gaining practical experience, especially in the public or small-firm sectors, enrolling in clinical courses as a student can be very helpful, even in a job search which may take place years later. Participating in clinics will show future employers that your interest in this kind of work has deep roots. And, having been a clinic student, you will have important insights into what students need from their faculty supervisors. Finally, those alumni who have stayed in touch with their clinical professors after graduation will benefit from mentorship and information about developments in the area and job openings.

⁴ Various law schools offer fellowships or LLM programs which will allow attorneys to enhance their clinical teaching skills. See, e.g., <http://www.law.georgetown.edu/academics/academic-programs/fellowships/>.

Legal Writing Teaching Positions

What Do Legal Writing Professors Do?

Every law school has a mandatory first-year legal-writing course. A typical legal-writing course spans a full academic year (and some extend beyond the first year). Like other law-school courses, the legal-writing course includes a few classroom sessions per week. In the course, students are required to complete multiple written assignments (including, for example, memoranda, litigation documents, and client letters) and, usually, some oral assignments as well (including, for example, a moot-court argument). Legal analysis and legal research are also key components of a legal-writing course. Responsibility for teaching the research component of the course is, typically, shared between the legal-writing teachers and law librarians. Much of the work done by legal-writing teachers occurs outside of the classroom. Indeed, legal-writing teachers spend a large percentage of their time intensively critiquing students' work and holding individual conferences with students.

Most schools have a legal-writing program, which may be overseen by a director who supervises and coordinates the work of the teachers in the program. Law schools staff these programs in various ways. The most common model is to use full-time professors, but some schools use adjunct teachers or a mix of full-time and adjunct teachers. A small but growing percentage of legal-writing teachers are hired on a tenure track. A few schools maintain programs in which the legal-writing teachers stay for only a few years while they prepare themselves to apply for tenure-track or long-term contract positions teaching doctrinal, clinical, or legal writing courses.

Depending on the school, legal-writing teachers may also teach other courses. These additional courses are often skills-focused (rather than theory- or doctrine-focused) and address a skill with which the teacher has had practice experience, such as appellate advocacy, contract drafting, and client counseling.

Much of the scholarship in the field of legal writing focuses on pedagogy and interdisciplinary work in rhetoric, linguistics, and critical theory, as well as about the proper design and administration of legal-writing programs and law-school curricula. Particularly well known publications in the field include *Legal Communication & Rhetoric: Journal of the Association of Legal Writing Directors* and the publications of the Legal Writing Institute. Nevertheless, the focus of most legal-writing positions – at least those that are

not on the tenure track – is on teaching rather than scholarship, although scholarship is usually encouraged.

The legal-writing field is notable for its myriad opportunities for professional development. [The Legal Writing Institute and Association of Legal Writing Directors](#) hold large-scale, biannual conferences, and each year there are many smaller, regional conferences as well. Active list-serves affiliated with those two organizations connect the national community of legal-writing teachers.

What Are Law Schools Looking For In Applicants For Legal-Writing Positions?

The successful candidate for a legal-writing position will have a strong academic record, several years of practice experience, outstanding writing ability, excellent “people skills,” and solid references. An enthusiasm for teaching legal writing is also critical.

Teaching experience adds to the attractiveness of a candidate. Although teaching as an adjunct (part-time) faculty member is not typically a good way to obtain a doctrinal teaching position at a law school, it may be a useful vehicle for legal-writing instructors. Thus, a legal writing candidate who wants to enhance their credentials may wish to teach, initially, on an adjunct basis. (See below for more on adjunct teaching positions.) Many law schools also hire legal-writing-focused VAPs.

What Can Students Do In Law School (And Beyond) To Prepare For A Career In Teaching Legal Writing?

A law school student who foresees an interest in teaching legal writing should strive for excellent grades, particularly in writing courses, and should try to write as much as possible (for example, in seminar courses, on a journal, or as a research assistant). Thus, some of the suggestions made earlier for those interested in doctrinal teaching positions apply also to the aspiring legal-writing teacher. If the opportunity exists, the student should also try to serve as a teaching assistant for the law-school's legal-writing course.

As with clinical faculty, successful legal writing candidates often have several years of practice with extensive writing and oral advocacy experience.

The Hiring Process for Law Teachers

Overview

For those interested in doctrinal positions, the Association of American Law Schools (“AALS”), the trade association to which most U.S. law schools belong, has a centralized hiring process. The vast majority of entry-level doctrinal law teachers are hired through this process. It costs a few hundred dollars to join the hunt for a teaching position. This fee entitles you to a subscription to the AALS *Placement Bulletin* and to have your Faculty Appointments Register (“FAR”) form included in the distribution to schools. On the other side of the table, so to speak, are members of law schools’ faculty appointments committees (the usual name, because new members are appointed to the faculty, not just hired). Appointments committees may be divided into entry-level and lateral subcommittees, and may have separate chairs. Your dealings, at least at first, will generally be with committee or subcommittee chairs, but you may also interact with administrative assistants who have been assigned to help keep the process organized on the hiring school’s side.

The application and hiring process for clinical law professors overlaps with that of doctrinal law teachers. As with stand-up classroom teachers, the AALS lists clinical teaching positions in its *Placement Bulletin*. Candidates interested in clinical teaching complete the FAR form, and many law schools interview clinical teaching candidates at on the same schedule as doctrinal faculty. However, there are often clinical openings posted outside of the AALS process. The Clinical Legal Education Association posts on-line listings. Law schools themselves often advertise clinical openings on their websites. And lateral candidates learn of positions via a listserv maintained for clinical professors. As in all walks of life, informal contacts can also lead to opportunities, and that appears to be especially true for clinical teaching. Aspiring clinicians should make outreach to their law school and re-connect with professors there, especially those in the clinics. Additionally, clinical faculty at local law schools may be happy to meet with attorneys and share their insights as well as information about open jobs.

Candidates interested in legal-writing positions may also list themselves in the AALS FAR. In addition, open legal-writing positions are typically advertised in the AALS *Placement Bulletin*, on the website of the Legal Writing Institute, or,

more rarely, in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. The bulk of the advertisements appear in the fall for positions to begin in the following fall; however, openings can arise throughout the year. Candidates for advertised positions apply directly to the school. Initial interviews for legal-writing teachers are held either on campus or via zoom. Call-back interviews, at which candidates present a job talk, are usually held within several weeks of the initial interview.

The FAR form

The hiring process begins with candidates filling out the one-page FAR form. It is basically a standardized and abbreviated CV, with space for listing one’s degrees and other academic credentials (graduation honors, journal membership, etc.), work experience, publications, and areas of teaching interest. There are some other entries too, including geographic restrictions and a list of references, but far and away the most important information on the FAR form is J.D. school, graduate degree if any, publications, and areas of interest. The AALS website permits candidates to upload a full CV and other material, and candidates should do that. However, in making their first cut, many schools look only at the FAR form. So it is crucial to complete the form in a way that makes apparent the strengths of your background, credentials, and achievements.

There is a lot of folklore about how best to fill out one’s FAR form. We strongly advise you to ask the Cornell Academic Placement Committee for feedback on your FAR form. The faculty members on the committee have extensive experience reading and evaluating thousands of FAR forms, and they will be in a position to help you maximize the presentation of the best parts of your record and avoid common mistakes.

In particular, you will want to discuss with others the FAR form listing of potential courses you might teach. The set of courses offers you an important opportunity to define yourself, and to demonstrate how you would contribute to a law school’s curriculum. You want to signal your willingness to help out with required courses in your areas of strength, yet also indicate more specialized courses that you would be able to offer. To ensure serious consideration for clinical or legal-writing positions, candidates who are focused on these positions should list those courses as ones that they are most interested in teaching.

The key thing to keep in mind is that all of the FAR forms in a given year are bundled up and made available to

appointments committee members in a sequential series of “distributions” beginning in the early fall. FAR forms that are completed in time for the first distribution will all be sent to appointments committees first, followed at a later time by the group of forms completed by later deadlines. **It’s very important that candidates complete their FAR forms in time to be included in the first distribution.** The reason is that many schools find all the candidates they need, and more, in the first distribution, and will give minimal or no scrutiny to candidates whose FAR forms are included in later distributions.

Committee members cull the FAR forms, trying to find the 20-30 candidates they would most like to schedule for initial interviews (more about that below). It is hard to give more than a cursory look at any single form, and committee members inevitably develop a kind of shorthand scan and categorization process: “Oh, here’s someone who wants to do empirical work on the effect of stock options on share prices; she has a Ph.D. in economics from MIT, a J.D. from Stanford, clerked for Posner, and worked in M&A at Wachtell; has a paper in the UCLA Law Review and one coming out in Chicago . . . impressive! She wants to teach corporate, securities, finance, and a seminar on corporate governance.” Committees vary in their screening procedures, but in general aim not to spend too much time on the initial cut through the FAR forms. Once a subgroup of promising FAR forms is assembled, committee members may review the CV, contact the candidate’s references, and read some of the candidate’s published scholarship before calling to set up an initial interview.

Recognizing that their FAR forms will be one of about 700 or 800 in the pile (really, it’s that many some years), some candidates have taken to sending personalized application packets to the appointments committee chairs at some set of law schools. Sometimes the mailings are in response to a job listed in the *AALS Placement Bulletin*. These packets include not only full CVs, but may also include a detailed statement of the candidate’s research agenda, reprints of published articles, and a manuscript of the candidate’s job talk paper (more on job talks below). While these mailings certainly don’t hurt, it is not clear whether they help. Hardly anyone can read dozens of research agenda statements, let alone full papers, before scheduling candidates for initial interviews. In the event a committee member sees an interesting-looking FAR form and wants to follow up by reading some of the candidate’s published work, it is often easier simply to

download the paper from SSRN, Heinonline, Lexis, or Westlaw, rather than trying to track down the candidate’s mailing (is it in the committee chair’s office? the faculty assistant’s files?). Members of the Academic Placement Committee can help you think about whether to do a personalized mailing, and if so, what it should include.

The Former Faculty Recruitment Conference

Historically, the Faculty Recruitment Conference was a massive weekend-long series of screening interviews, scheduled in advance by the appointments committees of the attending law schools. Candidates attended these 20-25minute initial interviews in the Marriott Wardman Park hotel in Washington, D.C. on a Friday and Saturday in late October or early November.

The Faculty Recruitment Conference was one of the lesser casualties of the pandemic. It no longer exists. Today, hiring institutions will set up individual initial interviews—typically via zoom—starting soon after the first distribution and continuing until they have filled their call-back schedule.

Candidates for doctrinal teaching positions should expect these interviews to be substantive and intense. The focus is usually on the content of a job talk paper, and committee members want to see whether the candidate is conversant with the literature, can anticipate and deal with counter-arguments, can explain the significance of the research to non-specialists, and has a broader, longer-term agenda that is related to the paper under discussion. There may also be some questions about areas of teaching interests and maybe even pedagogical methods (how do you feel about the Socratic Method?), but candidates should be prepared for what can be described as a moot court argument on their work. Candidates for clinical and legal writing positions should also expect to discuss their research, but these interviews are more likely to emphasize pedagogy. Candidates for legal-writing positions should be prepared to discuss their teaching methods, their proposed curriculum for a legal-writing course, and the role of a legal-writing course (and other skills courses) in the context of legal education. Questions about the practice experience of clinical and legal-writing candidates are also common.

Preparing for and scheduling interviews for initial screening interviews is a bit of an art. The Academic Placement Committee will help you prepare for them by doing a mock AALS interview. To maximize the likelihood of doing an effective interview that shows off your strengths, you should

be in touch with a member of our Committee during this process.

You should hear about any invitations within a few weeks of your initial interviews. You may hear as soon as the same day of the interview. No news is probably bad news, but some schools schedule campus interviews on a rolling basis, so no news may mean that you are on a waitlist.

Campus Interviews and Job Talks

The most important stage of the interviewing process is the campus visit and job talk. For doctrinal candidates, a job talk will be a workshop-style presentation of a scholarly paper. It is intended to resemble the work-in-progress talks that faculty members give as part of the development of their own work. A typical workshop includes a short (15-20 minutes is ideal) presentation of the ideas and arguments in a paper. Candidates for law school teaching positions generally do not simply read their papers, as is common in some other disciplines such as philosophy. Rather, the presentation is a somewhat extemporaneous, but nevertheless carefully structured, overview of the main claims and supporting arguments. The remainder of the time is spent in Q&A. A candidate's performance in this portion can be the deciding factor. Faculty members will be looking to expose weaknesses in the argument, to see how far the argument can be extended, to test your ability to analogize with other legal problems, to compare the paper with other work in the field, and generally to see how well it holds up as a coherent, persuasive piece of scholarship. Some faculty members delight in tripping up under-prepared candidates, but ideally the questioning in workshops is conducted in a spirit of community inquiry, with all the participants working together to find the best parts of the paper and improve the weak spots.

Law schools vary in terms of whether faculty members will have read the paper in advance of the talk. Candidates can expect some participants to have read the paper carefully and to have questions about specific arguments, sometimes down to the page and footnote number. Other participants will be improvising questions at the workshop. It is important to prepare for both types of questions by giving a clear overview of the argument, anticipating and dealing with counter-arguments, and, of course, knowing the paper inside and out.

The campus visit typically also includes a series of office interviews with small groups of faculty. During these sessions, you can expect follow-up questions about your job-

talk paper, your broader research agenda, teaching, and other subjects. An office interview resembles the screening interview but with a broader slice of the faculty and at a somewhat more relaxed pace. Someone will probably ask you if you have any questions. Generic questions candidates sometimes ask include "what kind of support do you provide junior faculty?" or "how easy is it to collaborate on research with colleagues in other departments?". It is fine to ask this sort of generic question, but you should do some homework about any school to which you are invited to give a job talk, which will allow you to demonstrate genuine interest in the school. In addition to office interviews with faculty, many schools provide an opportunity to meet with a designated group of current students, the dean, and potentially others (such as a representative of the library). Although faculty and the dean play the leading role in hiring, you should assume that you are being interviewed by everyone you meet.

For clinical law teaching candidates, the job interview process is becoming closer to that used to hire doctrinal teachers. Requiring job talks of aspiring clinical teachers is a relatively new phenomenon, which goes hand-in-hand with the advent of tenure-track or renewable term positions and an increased interest in scholarship. At a law school that has a strong scholarship requirement, the clinical candidate may be asked to present a paper in progress at the job talk. In other cases, the job talk may consist of a discussion of how the candidate might constitute a new clinic or build upon an existing one. During the interview process, the law school is trying to assess not only whether candidates have the knowledge and skills the school needs, but also whether they have the temperament to provide students with a pedagogically sound experience. When interviewing for a clinical position, candidates should be aware that they are being evaluated on a number of levels.

For legal-writing positions, the job talk generally focuses on a topic related to pedagogy rather than scholarship. For example, candidates may be asked to speak about how they would go about the task of teaching a particular lawyering skill, or about the role of a legal-writing course or other skills course in the context of the law school's curriculum. You should confer with the appointments committee chair at the institution at which you are interviewing for specific advice about the best approach to your job talk.

In addition to the actual presentation, a campus visit generally includes office interviews with faculty who sign up to

participate. These interviews can sometimes be a continuation of the job talk. Some faculty members may find your job talk ideas engaging and want to pursue additional angles with you. Others might want to press you further if they did not receive what they believed to be a satisfactory answer during the workshop. Office interviews may also be an opportunity to talk about teaching preferences, to explore further the candidate's research agenda, or to work through ideas for clinical teaching. One feature of most office interviews is the opportunity for the candidate to ask questions of current faculty. "Is there anything we can tell you about School X?" is a common question.

Recommendations

At some stage in the process, either before the hiring conference, or before on-campus interviews, the appointments committee will talk to a candidate's references. Some recommenders are very active early in the process and send emails or make phone calls to appointments committee chairs to advocate for their very best candidates. These calls can also be targeted, if recommenders know people at schools that may have a need in the candidate's area. Please get in touch with Cornell's Academic Placement Committee early in the process to talk about the best approach to working with your recommenders.

Offers, Exploding Offers, Strategy, and Negotiation

If you have gotten to the point of receiving offers from law schools, congratulations! We hope you have already been in communication with the Academic Placement Committee for advice about the process. Things can get a bit tricky if a school is being aggressive and trying to obtain a commitment from a candidate before she has finished the on-campus interview process at other schools. Some schools make so-called "exploding offers," which require a candidate to accept or reject by a certain date, often in the quite-near future. Other schools are more flexible. The way a school behaves in the recruitment process may tell you something about its culture, values, and collegiality. Or it may not. A school may want to give you as much time as you need to make up your mind, but fears that if you say "no" late in the game, the school's second and successive choices may already have taken other offers. This dynamic is more likely to occur at a school that is substantially resource constrained, and thus only able to make a fixed number of offers in any academic year.

There may be very little room for negotiation over salaries in entry-level hiring. Schools usually have a standard entry-level salary for doctrinal positions, and that is it. There are exceptions, however. For legal-writing positions and clinical positions, the salary is usually fixed in a range, with the actual salary dependent upon the candidate's practice and teaching experience. You should ask about non-salary compensation, such as the housing allowances sometimes offered by schools in cities with a high cost of living, and funds to hire research assistants or to cover conference travel. Finally, you may be able to negotiate the package of courses you will teach the first year, but at some schools the need for particular courses may trump your preferences. The dean may simply say something like, "Okay, you'll be teaching contracts, securities, and M&A."

Adjunct Faculty Positions

What Do Adjunct Faculty Teachers Do?

It's worthwhile discussing an additional option for law teaching: the part-time adjunct faculty member. Adjunct faculty members are typically experienced practitioners who teach one class at the law school in their area of specialization. Because they are working lawyers, they often teach in the evenings, once per week. Adjuncts are hired on a contractual basis and are re-appointed each year. The salary range is wide: adjunct faculty may earn from \$2000 to \$10,000 per course.

Law schools hire adjunct faculty for a few reasons. First, in some cases, adjuncts teach courses in narrow areas of law with which full-time faculty may not have interest or expertise (e.g., complex litigation, or Water Law). In other situations, law schools may hire adjunct faculty to teach skills-based courses like Trial Advocacy. Adjunct positions may also be an effective way for a law school to develop relationships with prominent alumni.

Several factors motivate busy lawyers to seek adjunct positions. Some simply enjoy teaching. Others teach to give back or pass their knowledge on to the next generation of lawyers. Some attorneys may seek to burnish their professional biographies to impress clients and colleagues with their expertise.

It is important for aspiring full-time law professors to know that adjunct positions are not typically conduits to permanent positions as doctrinal faculty members. Attorneys who are

interested in transitioning from practice to full-time teaching should not look toward adjunct positions as a back door into stand up teaching positions. In some cases, however, adjunct teaching positions may be a way for those considering clinical or legal-writing teaching to gain experience, credentials, or connections.

What Are Law Schools Looking For In Adjunct Faculty Candidates?

When hiring adjunct faculty, law schools seek attorneys who are experienced lawyers and good teachers who fill a curricular need. Since gaining substantive knowledge and practical lawyering skills takes time, adjunct faculty members are typically more senior lawyers, rather than new graduates. Aspiring adjunct faculty members should try to gain teaching experience to show their enthusiasm for teaching, develop requisite skills, and, if possible, acquire formal evaluations to provide to interested law schools. To gain teaching experience, practitioners might mentor junior attorneys at their organization, teach CLE courses, or lecture at a local community college.

The Hiring Process for Adjunct Faculty

Unlike other types of law school teaching positions, there are no formal mechanisms for finding position openings. Adjuncts are not hired through the AALS Faculty Recruitment Conference, as is the case for full-time teachers of law. Rather, adjunct faculty positions are filled through relationships and networking. On some faculties, the dean of the law school may select alumni to fill these posts. At other schools, faculty members may recommend their former students or practitioners with whom they have worked in the past. Some schools give preference to their graduates, while others are more concerned with curricular fit. Aspiring adjunct faculty members should build relationships with law schools in their local area as well as with their alma mater to learn of opportunities and offer their expertise. Current students who may someday want to teach in an adjunct capacity should make connections with their law school deans and professors and maintain those connections while in practice.

Conclusion

We hope this handbook will be useful as you explore whether law teaching is a good fit for you, and that it will help you become more competitive for a position in law teaching. Please don't hesitate to contact any member of the Academic Placement Committee for further advice and information.



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