

Fanshawe College

FIRST: Fanshawe Innovation, Research, Scholarship, Teaching

PAC Minutes

Law Clerk

11-2022

EFG Minutes - LCK1/2 - November 2022

Fanshawe College

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Attendees

External Attendees

- Andrea Catlin, Leners LLP
- Russell Connelly, Entertainment Partners Canada
- Ashley Jackson, Siskinds LLP
- Jackie McManus, Dyer Brown LLP
- Crystal West, Cohen Highley LLP
- Mary Williams, Harrison Pensa LLP

Fanshawe Attendees

- Tony Mallette, Acting Associate Dean, School of Public Safety
- Barbara Bidner, Program Coordinator, Law Clerk
- Betty Schoemaker, Law Clerk Co-Op Consultant, Fanshawe College
- Dee Morrissey, Curriculum Consultant, Centre for Academic Excellence
- Lyndsay Fitzgeorge, Curriculum Consultant, Centre for Academic Excellence

Regrets

- Susan Cluett, Acting Dean, Faculty of Health, Community Studies and Public Safety
- Tara Strong, Geotab

Introductions and Process Overview

- Meeting attendees introduced themselves.
- Dee Morrissey, Curriculum Consultant, provided an overview of the meeting purpose and goals for discussion.

Panel Discussion

1. *What are the key characteristics, knowledge and skills you are seeking in a recent graduate? What are your expectations for co-op students?*

- Expectations for co-op students are very similar to those for recent graduates (many recent graduate hires are former co-op students)

Characteristics

- Enthusiasm: ready to contribute
- Flexibility: contribute to whatever is necessary (i.e., filing)
- Curiosity: desire to learn about the firm and how to integrate into the company; desire to further learning
- Confidence: ask questions when necessary
- Self-directed: research information/processes when appropriate
- Professionalism: attire, behavior, office etiquette, communication

Knowledge

- Foundational knowledge of all areas of law (in-depth knowledge of specific areas of law will be developed on the job, according to the law clerk's role)
- Good understanding of role and expectations of law clerk within a law practice
- Knowledge of commonly used law practice software

Skills

- Communication skills: written and verbal communication, including face-to-face communication and telephone conversations; active listening
- Organizational skills
- Time management skills: managing deadlines, prioritizing
- Critical thinking skills

Co-op Student

- Key expectations for co-op students include professionalism, time management, and communication skills; employers can teach practice-specific technical skills, which is why there is a focus on “soft skills”

Recommendation: Increase emphasis on professionalism throughout the program, including in simulations, beyond Professionalism and Client Relations (Level 1).

Recommendation: Ensure that students have ample opportunity to develop verbal communication skills, particularly in simulations.

Recommendation: Ensure students have the opportunity to develop organizational and time management skills, particularly in simulations.

Recommendation: Develop and communicate minimum expectations for co-op placements to co-op employers to ensure students have a similar experience.

Recommendation: Review program software needs based on industry survey, starting with co-op employers, and purchase new software as required.

2. *Based on your experience with graduates of the program, what are their strengths? Areas for improvement?*

Strengths

- Professionalism of students: Professionalism and Client Relations course has really improved the program and the student readiness for employment. Professionalism is important in all areas of law; even more emphasis on professionalism would be better. See above recommendation.

Areas for improvement

- Wills and estates: Students, many of whom will work in wills and estates in their co-op or upon graduate, would benefit from additional content, particularly financial aspects (e.g., assets, GICs, registered plans, banking, accounting and financial statements)

Recommendation: Add content related to the financial aspects of wills and estates.

3. *What are the strengths of our current program’s structure and content? Areas for improvement? (review proposed changes)*

Strengths

- Mandatory co-op for all students (recent change)

Areas for improvement

- Student timetables after second co-op that accommodate part-time work (many employers hire students part-time after the first or second co-op term)
- Clarity and context around questions related to Job Skills for the Future for students and co-op employers (employers do not understand this portion of the final evaluation)
- Addition of mentor program

Proposed Changes to Program Structure and Content (presented by Barbara Bidner)

- Change names from Corporate Law and Commercial Transactions to Business Law – Intro and Business Law – Advanced
 - Proposed titles are broad and will encompass many areas of the law
 - Change will improve student understanding of the scope of commercial litigation
 - Some firms place wills and estates in their business law department
 - Participants support title changes
- Expand wills and estates content to two courses: Wills and Estates – Intro (3 h) and Wills and Estates – Adv (4 h)
 - Draft course learning outcomes for both courses provide appropriate breadth and depth (e.g., passing of accounts and guardianships)
 - Additional hours will accommodate financial aspects of wills and estates as noted above
 - Participants support expansion of wills and estates content
- Add Professional Practice course to Level 4
 - Students would benefit from additional hours preparing them for the transition to the workplace
 - Professionalism & Client Relations (Level 1) could expand focus on organizational skills and time management
 - Professional Practice (Level 4) would help students refine their understanding of professionalism and assist them in articulating their knowledge and skills

Recommendation: Provide better instruction to students related to Job Skills for the Future so that students can better articulate the Skills to their co-op employers, and can appropriately assess their demonstration of the Skills.

Recommendation: Assess the feasibility of implementing a mentorship program for Law Clerk students.

Recommendation: Change the name of Corporate Law and Commercial Transactions to Business Law – Intro and Business Law – Advanced, respectively.

Recommendation: Expand wills and estates content to two courses: Wills and Estates – Intro (3 h) and Wills and Estates – Adv (4 h).

Recommendation: Add Professional Practice course to Level 4.

4. *What types of experiential learning opportunities could we incorporate into our program?*

- Prismafact assignments are very beneficial to students and employers

Proposed experiential learning for Business Law – Intro LAB (presented by Barbara Bidner)

- Proposed lab assignments approved by participants; activities reflect entry-level expectations
- Other ideas: 1) managing digital minute book (in addition to physical minute book), 2) conducting research related to business loan 3) filing a PBSA registration

Proposed experiential learning for Law Clerk Simulation Lab/Legal Clinic (presented by Barbara Bidner)

- Intended to build skills and confidence for transition to the workplace
- Lab Equipment and Supplies: computers, print station, binding machine, filing cabinet, office supplies (file folders, labels), telephone, office desks/cubicles
- Plan to have students arrive to simulation lab in uniform, work on their file and complete what the “lawyer” would like them to work on that day
- Office simulation scenarios will prepare student for working in a busy office with interruptions and distractions; managing conflict
- Students will learn through demonstrations and practical evaluations
- Suggested activities:
 - using the phone (i.e., making and receiving phone calls)
 - filling out courier slip
 - using scheduling software
 - setting up meetings (e.g., Outlook, Teams, Zoom)
 - preparing meeting documents
 - docketing time (billable versus non-billable time)
 - binding a document
 - printing labels
 - using a photocopier and scanner
 - using Outlook to manage their BF tasks
- Simulation lab/Legal Clinic will greatly benefit the students and employers

Recommendation: Proceed with proposed curriculum changes to Business Law-Intro.

Recommendation: Proceed with simulation lab/legal clinic to assist in application of theory and to prepare students for the transition to the workplace in co-op and upon graduation.

5. *What are recent trends in your industry? (e.g., technology, labour market)*

- Remote work
 - Most firms are now hybrid, with law clerks having the ability to work from home, depending on the field and the preference of the team
 - Co-op students and graduates should be prepared to work both in the office and remotely
- Software used in the program include Microsoft Office Suite, Soluno, Quicklaw, Automated Civil Litigation, Caselines, Estate-a-Base, Primafact, Adobe Acrobat Pro DC, Fast Company, Ecore, Terraview, DivorceMate, Conveyancer/Unity, Concordance
 - Students should be familiar with Adobe (e.g., title a document, combine documents, edit a document), Outlook, Calendar
 - Estateably is another software application used for estates

- Fast Company is not used as much as it used to be for practice management; Athennian is an alternative
- Students need to understand the how and the why of software to adapt to different packages with similar functions

Recommendation: Prepare students for the hybrid workplace in which they will be moving from their home office to the workplace (e.g., ability to work independently, using software).

Recommendation: Survey industry to determine the software required for the program to keep students current.

Meeting Adjournment

- Dee Morrissey, Curriculum Consultant, provided an overview of the next steps and thanked attendees for their participation.
- Tony Mallette, Acting Associate Dean, thanked attendees for their time.
- Barbara Bidner, Program Coordinator, thanked attendees for their time.
- The meeting adjourned at 6:02 pm.