

CAREER DEVELOPMENT



CRIMINAL LAW CAREER GUIDE



**DALHOUSIE
UNIVERSITY**

SCHULICH SCHOOL OF LAW

Updated October 2021

Criminal Law Career Guide

INTRODUCTION

Studying Criminal Law at the Schulich School of Law provides interested students with a broad, practical, and well-rounded education. Course offerings include both large and small group classes that combine lectures, discussions, and active learning techniques. Students are provided training in trial and appellate advocacy skills, in-depth approaches to advanced concepts and substantial opportunities for experience and clinical learning.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE CERTIFICATE

To graduate with a specialization in Criminal Justice, students must:

- Complete the mandatory core criminal law courses [LAWS 2008 Evidence](#) and [LAWS 2091 Criminal Procedure](#) (Eight credit hours total);
- Complete eight credit hours of electives chosen from the lists below. Students must take at least one course from each basket.
 - Basket 1: Advanced Criminal Law Electives
 - LAWS 2045 Criminal Law Problems
 - LAWS 2197 International Criminal Law
 - LAWS 2235 Mental Disability Law: Criminal
 - LAWS 2276 Imprisonment and Prison Policy
 - LAWS 2307 The Law of Sexual Offences
 - Basket 2: Social Justice Electives
 - LAWS 2074 International Human Rights
 - LAWS 2188 Restorative Justice: Theory and Practice
 - LAWS 2251 African Nova Scotians and the Law
 - LAWS 2278 Public Policy in Practice
 - LAWS 2290 Advanced Aboriginal People and the Law
 - LAWS 2018 Children, Youth and the Law
 - LAWS 2198 Critical Perspectives on Law
 - LAWS 2191 Animals and the Law
 - Basket 3: Experiential Learning
 - LAWS 2046 Criminal Trial Practice
 - LAWS 2092 Criminal Clinic
 - LAWS 2107 Gale Cup Moot
 - LAWS 2160 Supreme Court of NS Placement
 - LAWS 2135 Court of Appeals Placement
 - LAWS 2171 Sopinka Moot/McKelvey Cup
 - LAWS 2238 Public Law Placement
 - LAWS 2295 Criminal Appeal Practice
 - LAWS 2308 Clinical Advocacy Law and Policy: Responding to Sexual Violence
 - LAWS 2003 Dalhousie Legal Aid Clinic (This course is 13 credits, but only 6 count toward certificate)

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING – GET HANDS ON EXPERIENCE

[Dalhousie Legal Aid Service \(DLAS\)](#): Third-year students can spend a term working at the where they may participate in youth sentencings, bail hearings, peace bond applications and prison law work.

- [Pro Bono Dalhousie@Schulich Law](#) provides an opportunity for 180 student volunteers to work with more than 50 community organizations, 15 of which currently deal with criminal justice issues including the Elizabeth Fry Society, the Canadian Prison Law Association and Innocence Canada.
- [Sopinka and Gale Cup moots](#):
- [Criminal Clinic course](#), students shadow a defence lawyer, Crown attorney or judge for a term, attending trials and gaining exposure to the criminal justice system.
- [Sexual Assault Clinic course](#) students learn through field activities with crown attorneys who specialize in this area, and other professionals involved in sexual assault cases.
- [Criminal Appeals Practice](#) and [Criminal Trial Practice](#) courses, students are given practical exposure to the entire process of conducting an appeal or a trial in a criminal case.

INTERNSHIPS

The Schulich School of Law Academic Excellence Internship programs offers a student an opportunity to complete a paid summer internship (10-12 weeks) and gain experience in organizations dedicated to criminal justice. Students submit a proposal outlining the project/work they intend to carry out over the summer signed by a member of the organization they propose to work. Contact Shawn.Swallow@dal.ca for more details.

Past Internship Organizations	
Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights (Ottawa)	John Howard Society
Amnesty International Canada	Justice Canada (Crimes Against Humanity & War Crimes Section)
Atira Women's Resource Society (Vancouver)	Legal Aid Manitoba
Atlantic Refugee Clinic	Nova Scotia Court Services
Avalon Sexual Assault Centre	Nova Scotia Court of Appeal
Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network	Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission
Canadian Red Cross	Nova Scotia Legal Aid
Canadian Rights and Freedoms Centre	Nova Scotia Prosecution Service
Canadian Centre for Legal Innovation in Sexual Assault	PEI Human Rights Commission
Community Justice	People's Legal Café – The Canada Rights and Freedoms
Dalhousie Legal Aid	The BC Civil Liberties Association
Dying with Dignity Canada	Romeo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative
Elizabeth Fry Society	The Seven Steps Society
Halifax Sexual Health Centre	
Innocence Canada	

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Summer and articling positions are available in both private practice (large, mid-sized and small/boutique criminal defence firms) and government (Ministry of Justice and the Department of Justice). The process for applying for summer and articling positions varies between different cities and provincial jurisdictions. Most locations have a formal recruitment process regulated by the provincial Law Society that establishes recruitment guidelines that can cover everything from setting all the important dates (i.e. application deadline and On-campus interview day) to how much time an employer must allow for each OCI interview and how long employers must leave offers open for on Call Day, etc....

The Career Development Office publishes on [MySchulichLaw](#) recruitment guides for each geographic market outlining the key dates and application process. There are many employers who still require summer and articling students who continue to hire on an ongoing basis throughout the year.

NETWORKING AND JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES

Many students, when they think of networking, think of going to an event, like a reception or cocktail party, and trying to talk to as many people as they can or hand out business cards. Often, students are reluctant to network because it is time consuming and can be seen as using people or asking for favors. However, that is not what networking means.

Networking is nothing more than getting to know people and people getting to know you. It is about cultivating connections with people and building a professional community that may be helpful to your professional development, including finding a job. It can take virtually any form you can imagine, from making cold calls to working a room at a cocktail party, to conducting informational interviews, volunteering, and more.

In a highly competitive and tight legal job market, finding that first job out of law school is as challenging as ever—and that means networking with potential employers is as important as ever. In a tight job market, it has been estimated that at least 80% of all jobs are found through some form of networking. That is - they are almost always filled through some type of personal connection. Networking, when done right, can be an efficient way of discovering jobs that may never be posted anywhere – they are simply advertised by word of mouth. Students, who have built a professional community have increased their potential for getting a job in a tight legal job market

Networking *is*:

- Communicating and connecting with professionals to build community.
- Learning about other lawyer's and legal professional's experiences and career paths.
- Getting advice and insight about entering the legal field; and
- Obtaining referrals for other potential networking contacts.

Beyond just finding a job, networking is also an important part of the legal profession and something that all lawyers, whether they like it or not, must do as part of their careers. It is critical for building and maintaining a legal practice. Networking impacts your ability to attract, and retain, clients and is a key skill all legal employers look for in hiring as well. Being able to develop and keep a client base is critical when you are in private practice regardless of the size of firm. Building your professional community – through former classmates, clients, fellow lawyers, judges, as well as through community and professional activities – is critical to your career.

Networking is not: asking someone for a job

While most people are happy to share their own experiences and provide advice, they generally do not appreciate being asked directly for a job on the first contact. Often asking for a job will end the professional relationship before it has begun.

NETWORKING – GETTING STARTED

Make A List of Possible Contacts

You do not have to know or be related to lawyers or other legal professionals to have valuable contacts. Networking occurs in all areas of your life, not just law school. When making up a list of potential contacts, think broadly – you never know who someone might know. There is no one resource and your list of contacts will continue to change and grow over time. Some possibilities include:

- Family: spouse/partner and extended family (and their contacts)
- Former employers and co-workers
- Professors, from both undergraduate, graduate school and law school
- Neighbors/family friends
- Members of organizations you belong to (Toastmasters, Rotary) or volunteer with (Habitat for Humanity)
- Other professionals: doctors, dentists

Start by making a list of who you know, how you know them and how that person might be helpful to you. After you brainstorm about your existing contacts reach out to the people in your network to see whom they may know. Ask for advice and assistance; do not ask for a job. Your goal is to have them refer you to others. In this way, your list of contacts will grow exponentially.

1. **What is your goal in networking:** Learning about a particular field of law? Meeting someone who works for a specific employer. Getting a job in a certain field? Meeting lawyers and legal professionals and making new contacts in an area of the law?
2. **How much time can I devote to networking:** Think about your schedule and what is reasonable? Can you devote an hour or two per week? If so, how do you want to use that time: Volunteering? Writing? Meeting one-on-one with people for coffee? What strategy makes the most sense given your goals? Set aside a time each week to evaluate your progress and set some new goals for the following week.
3. **Keep a record of your activities:** If you are meeting with people for informational interviews, you need to keep a good log of who you talked to, when you met, who they referred you to, and when you need to follow up with them. See the Appendix section for a sample contacts sheet. Be consistent about keeping track of all of your activities - you may want to refer back to them later.

Develop Your Elevator Speech

Whether you are meeting with people one-on-one for informational interviews, or talking with them at a social event, you will need to have your elevator speech ready. This is a brief soundbite you will use to introduce yourself and let others know a little bit about you and what it is you are interested in.

For example:

1. I am a first-year law student at Dalhousie Law School, I am interested in environmental law.
2. I am a second-year student at Dalhousie Law School and am interested in learning more about the day-to-day practice of criminal law.
3. I will be graduating from Dalhousie Law School this spring. I hope to build upon my experience during law school and practice with a smaller law firm doing family law.

Cultivating New Contacts

Regardless of your current list of contacts, you will want to continue to cultivate new contacts who can provide you with advice and help on your professional development. Some good prospects to start with include:

- Law school classmates, faculty, and staff
- Career and Professional Development panelists or student group program speakers

- Mentor programs (Weldon Mentor Program)
- Alumni contacts (undergrad as well as law school)
- Legal professionals who are members of specialty organizations or sections (Canadian Bar Association)

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

Start seeking out these meetings sooner rather than later. They are a great way, not only to build connections with lawyers, but also to start gaining firsthand information about the various practice areas which you might be interested in. Additionally, they are great sources of advice, both for school, and for ways in which to approach the job market. By building your network of information early, you can make more informed decisions and will have these connections well established before you need a job.

Do not assume that an informational meeting means they have a job for you. However, it is a good opportunity to make a connection. If they, or their firm, is not hiring now, perhaps they know someone who does, or will know someone in the future. Make sure they have your contact information and let them know that if something comes up or if they hear anything - you would love to hear about it.

FIVE STEP PLAN TO CONDUCTING INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

Step One: Identify Who You Want to Interview

- **Start with people you know.** Do you have a family member or friend who is a lawyer? Ask them to go to lunch, or coffee and talk about their career. Even if they do not work in the exact practice area you're considering, they may have some general observations that are useful, and, more importantly, probably knows people who work in other areas of the law. After your discussion, you can ask for introductions to these people, smoothing the way for an informational interview with them.
- **Make a list of employers you are interested in working for.** Research the lawyers who work there and identify ones you can contact. Look for alumni who work there or summer/articling students.

Step Two: Ask For an Informational Interview

- Use a "5 – Point E-mail" to ask for the interview
 1. Keep it short – 100 words or less
 2. Do not mention "jobs" – in the subject line or in the body of the email
 3. Connection (if you have one) goes first
 4. Generalize your interest (*researching practice areas*), but also focus on person you want to interview (*want to learn more about your experience in family law*).
 5. Maintain control of the follow up

Example (with connection)

Subject: Dalhousie Law Student Seeking Your Advice

Dear Ms. Smith,

My name is _____, and I am a first year Dalhousie Law student who was referred to you by _____, partner with _____ firm. May I have 10 minutes of your time to ask you about your legal career? I am researching practice areas and want to learn more about your experience in criminal law. Your insights would be very helpful.

I realize this may be a busy time for you. If we are unable to connect this week, I will try again next week to see whether that is more convenient.

Thank you for your time,

Susan

Example (without connection)

Subject: Dalhousie Law Student Seeking Your Advice

Dear Ms. Smith,

My name is _____, and I am a first year Dalhousie Law student and found your profile while researching local firms. May I have 10 minutes of your time to ask you about your legal career? I am researching practice areas and want to learn more about your experience as a defence attorney. Your insights would be very helpful.

I realize this may be a busy time for you. If we are unable to connect this week, I will try again next week to see whether that is more convenient.

Thank you for your time,

Susan

Step Three: Ask meaningful, thoughtful questions.

In advance of the interview, think about what knowledge you want to gain from the experience and prepare questions you would like to ask. Your goal should be to get insights into the career path of the person you are talking with, what they do on a daily basis, what they like (dislike) about their job and gather any tips and career advice. Another important goal is to ensure you ask if there is anyone else, they could refer you to for a similar conversation. Outlined below are sample questions.

What do you do?

- What do you do in a typical day? Week? Month? Year?
- What are your major job responsibilities?
- What skills do you most use in the course of your work?
- What percentage of your day is spent dealing with people? With paper?
- Who are your clients?
- How do your clients or cases come to you?
- How much does your work vary from day to day? From week to week?
- What professional publications do you read, and why?

How did you get to where you are?

- Why did you choose this field of law?
- How did your interest in this area develop?
- How did you get started in this career?
- Did you take any courses or do any internships that helped you get started in this area?
- What work experience did you have prior to your current position?
- Was your pathway like other people who do similar work?
- What do you know now that you wish you had known before you entered this field?

How do you like what you do?

- What do you most enjoy or find satisfying about your work?
- What would you change about your work if you could?
- What are the greatest pressures, frustrations, or anxieties in the work?
- Do you think your satisfactions/frustrations are typical of people working in this field?

Always ask: Is there anyone else who you would recommend me to speak to?

Step Four: Write down your thoughts and impressions of the interview.

Include any interesting or important points including your impressions of their average workday, details about the work culture, what they liked or disliked about their career.

Step Five: Follow up and thank the interviewer

Follow up within 12 hours of the interview to thank the interviewer for their time. You can include a brief description of parts of the conversation that found particularity interesting. Following up also allows you to ask a follow up question or clarify and discussion points.

Criminal Law –Job Search Resources

ORGANIZATIONS

- CBA Criminal Justice Section: <https://www.cba.org/Sections/Criminal-Justice>
- Criminal Lawyers Association: <https://criminallawyers.ca/>
- The Canadian Criminal Justice Association: <https://www.ccja-acjp.ca/pub/en/>
- Trial Lawyers Association of BC: <https://www.tlabc.org/>
- The Criminal Justice Association of Ontario: <https://www.cjao.ca/>
- The Nova Scotia Criminal Lawyers Association: <http://www.nscla.ca/>
- Defence Counsel Association of Ottawa: <https://www.dcao.com/>
- The Federation of Ontario Law Associations: <https://fola.ca/>

- Provincial Bar Associations:
- Canadian Association of Crown Counsel: <http://www.cacc-acje.ca/en/index.php/front>

JOB BOARDS – search by keyword and location

- *Indeed*: <http://ca.indeed.com/> Search by keyword and location
- *Eluta*: <https://www.eluta.ca/>
- *Neuvoo*: <http://neuvoo.ca/en>
- *CharityVillage*: <http://charityvillage.com/> - good resource for students looking for non-profit organizations (Internships)
- *MySchulichLaw*: <https://schulich-law.admin.12twenty.com/Login?isLogout=true>
- ViLaw Portal: <https://recruitcdn.viglobalcloud.com/LoginApplicant.aspx?Site=1>

NATIONAL DIRECTORIES

- NALP Canada: <http://www.nalpcanada.com/>
- Canadian Law List: <https://www.canadianlawlist.com/>
- Martindale: <https://www.martindale.com/by-location/>
- Lexpert: <https://www.lexpert.ca/>

PROVINCIAL/TERRITORIES EMPLOYERS

Alberta

- Legal Aid Alberta: <https://www.legalaid.ab.ca/join-us/student-programs/>
- Ministry of Justice: <https://www.alberta.ca/internships-student-employment.aspx>

British Columbia

- Legal Aid BC: <https://lss.bc.ca/general/careers>
- Ministry of Attorney General BC: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/justice/for-legal-professionals/articled-student-program>

Manitoba

- Legal Aid Manitoba: <https://www.legalaid.mb.ca/lam/careers/articling-students/>
- Minister of Justice and Attorney General:

New Brunswick

- New Brunswick Legal Aid Services Commission: <http://www.legalaid-aidejuridique-nb.ca/home/>
- Justice & Office of Attorney General:

Newfoundland and Labrador

- Legal Aid NL:
- Department of Justice and Public Safety: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/jps/careers/articling-clerks/>

Nova Scotia

- Legal Aid NS
- Department of Justice NS: https://novascotia.ca/just/Legal_Services/articling_program.asp

Ontario

- Legal Aid Ontario Job Board: <https://www.legalaid.on.ca/more/corporate/careers/>
- Ministry of the Attorney General - <http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/abt-apd/recru/index.html>

Prince Edward Island

- Legal Aid PEI
- Department of Justice and Public Safety:

Saskatchewan

- Legal Aid Saskatchewan: <https://www.legalaid.sk.ca/careers.php>
- Ministry of Justice: <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/jobs-working-and-training/job-training-and-financial-support-programs/articling-student-program#:~:text=To%20contact%20students%20who%20are,call%20306%2D787%2D5660.>

Northwest Territories

- Government of NWT: <https://www.fin.gov.nt.ca/en/services/careers-gnwt>

Nunavut

- Government of Nunavut: <https://www.gov.nu.ca/justice>

Yukon

- Government of Yukon: <https://yukon.ca/en/apply-articling-student>

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

- The Legal Excellence Program: <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/abt-apd/recru/lep-pea/index.html>