

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE JOHN CURTIN LAW CLINIC FOR CURTIN LAW SCHOOL STUDENTS

General information

Q: What is the John Curtin Law Clinic?

A: The John Curtin Law Clinic is a teaching clinic where Curtin Law School undergraduate and postgraduate students can apply and develop their practical legal skills while improving access to justice.

The Law Clinic's objectives are to:

- create opportunities for students to engage in professional activities and develop professional skills in a supervised, clinical legal education environment;
- provide assistance to vulnerable clients who would not otherwise be able to access legal services; and
- encourage students to critically reflect on their roles and responsibilities as future members of the legal profession, including in relation to access to justice.

Curtin Law School students have assisted hundreds of clients through the John Curtin Law Clinic since it opened in February 2017.

Q: What can students gain from participating in the John Curtin Law Clinic?

A: Students will gain practical legal skills and experiences. These experiences may assist you to decide whether you want to practise as a lawyer.

If you have already decided that you want to be a lawyer, participating in the Law Clinic can help you identify the area of law you would like to practise in.

Participating in the John Curtin Law Clinic can also give you meaningful experiences to refer to when applying for clerkships and graduate roles.

Finally, you may be able to count your hours in the John Curtin Law Clinic towards your Practical Legal Training (PLT) work experience hours.

Q: What sort of work do students do in the John Curtin Law Clinic?

A: Students work on matters in the following practice areas:

- **advisory services:** this involves working in Curtin Link¹ to provide legal services to social enterprises, start-ups, and not-for-profit organisations (e.g. if students are interested in working in corporate or commercial law);
- **discrimination law:** this involves assisting vulnerable individuals who have experienced unlawful discrimination – through direct casework and/or law reform research; and
- **disputes:** this involves assisting small **businesses** with commercial disputes (e.g. if students are interested in working in litigation and dispute resolution).

Students are responsible for (under supervision):

- meeting with clients and obtaining instructions;
- drafting legal advice;
- drafting legal documents (e.g. contracts, court documents, letters of demand, and law reform submissions);
- legal research;
- recording time; and
- managing client files using legal practice management software.

Students also gain exposure to a wide range of commercial documents, including: company constitutions, leases, supply terms and conditions, and negotiation correspondence.

¹ For more on **Curtin Link**, see:

<https://engage.curtin.edu.au/partnerships/business-industry/curtin-link/>

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Q: Can students participate in the John Curtin Law Clinic without prior legal work experience?

A: All students are encouraged to participate in the John Curtin Law Clinic – whether you have some or no prior legal work experience.

One of the main objectives of the Law Clinic is to provide such opportunities to Curtin Law School students. The Law Clinic experience has been specifically designed to optimise, wherever possible, the student learning experience.

Students attend weekly seminars to consolidate their client work in the Law Clinic. Seminars involve excursions to referral organisations, guest lecturers, workshops to develop practical legal skills, and discussions about legal practice and professional obligations.

Once students have completed the Legal Clinic unit, Curtin Law School may be able to facilitate external placements through the Legal Internships program. These include placements at the Magistrates Court and Children’s Court, and with barristers, in-house legal teams, law firms, and community legal centres. For more information, contact legal.internships@curtin.edu.au.

Legal Clinic unit information

Q: How do students participate in the John Curtin Law Clinic?

A: Students can participate in the John Curtin Law Clinic as:

- an undergraduate student, while enrolled in the optional unit **Legal Clinic (LAWS3005)** as part of your Bachelor of Laws degree – this unit is offered in **every trimester**; or
- a postgraduate student, while enrolled in the **Clinical Workplace Experience (LAWS5014)** or **Legal Workplace Experience (LAWS5007)** units as part of your Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice – for more information on

these units, contact the Curtin PLT team (curtin.plt@curtin.edu.au).

Curtin University provides insurance cover for enrolled students’ work undertaken while in the Law Clinic.

Q: Is a minimum Grade Point Average (GPA) required to participate in the John Curtin Law Clinic?

A: No, there is no minimum GPA to participate in the Law Clinic. All Curtin Law School students are encouraged to participate.

Q: Are there any assessments?

A: Yes.

For the **undergraduate unit**, assessment is on a Pass/Fail basis, determined on the basis of the following components:

- legal drafting;
- reflective learning participation; and
- professional practice skills.

For more detail on the assessments, please see the Unit Outline for the relevant study period.

No grade is recorded on your academic transcript and it does not affect your GPA. The unit is excluded from calculating your average in order to determine, for example, entry into the LLB(Honours) program.

For the **postgraduate units**, please contact the Curtin PLT team (curtin.plt@curtin.edu.au).

Q: What if I don’t have enough optional units to do both Legal Clinic and Legal Internships?

A: No problem. If you don’t have enough optional units to undertake a legal internship (as part of your undergraduate Bachelor of Laws degree),

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you can undertake a co-curricular, or not-for-degree placement (provided you are enrolled in a program of studies at Curtin University). The University will provide insurance coverage for you for up to 20 days provided you are not paid and are currently enrolled as a student (undergraduate or postgraduate) at Curtin University. Through these arrangements, you can undertake multiple placements, of up to 20 days each.

Legal Clinic and PLT work experience hours

Q: Can hours in the John Curtin Law Clinic as an undergraduate student be credited towards a student's Practical Legal Training work experience hours?

A: If you enrol in the Curtin PLT program, it is possible for your hours in the Law Clinic to be credited towards your PLT work experience hours, **provided that** the placement meets all requirements of the Curtin PLT [Work Experience Rules](#).

The undergraduate Legal Clinic (LAWS3005) unit has been designed to meet the key requirements of the Curtin PLT Work Experience Rules, namely:

- the supervisor must hold a current unrestricted Australian practising certificate or fall within one of the other categories of the Curtin PLT Workplace Experience Rules;
- the work performed must be meaningful legal, or law-related, work that includes most or all of the following:
 - (a) significant interaction with external or in-house clients;
 - (b) drafting documents;
 - (c) legal research; and
 - (d) using a file management system;
- the student has maintained a record of the hours worked and duties undertaken during

your workplace experience (see sample JCLC Student Record of Hours [here](#));

- students attend an induction prior to starting the placement; and
- the placement must be undertaken on a minimum attendance pattern of either (excluding breaks):
 - (i) 1 x 7 hour day per week; or
 - (ii) 2 x 4 hour days per week.

Students are responsible for satisfying all other requirements for the hours in the Law Clinic to be credited towards your PLT work experience hours, including that the placement must be undertaken **within 2 years** of starting your PLT coursework.

Students seeking to have your hours in the Law Clinic recognised by another PLT provider should contact the provider to determine whether such credit will be provided under that provider's PLT work experience rules.

Links to the national and WA PLT work experience requirements are included below:

- National Standards:
https://www.lawcouncil.asn.au/files/web-pdf/LACC%20docs/240769433_9_Standards%20for%20PLT%20Workplace%20Experience.pdf
- WA Standards:
<https://www.lpbwa.org.au/Documents/Becoming-A-Lawyer/Admission-Forms/LPB-Form-A5-Application-for-approval-of-PLT-course>.

For information on the **postgraduate units**, contact the Curtin PLT team (curtin.plt@curtin.edu.au).

Q: Why must students attend an induction prior to starting the placement in the Law Clinic?

A: The induction is required by the National Standards for PLT work experience. Some of the

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content covered during the induction is mandated by the National Standards. Material covered during the induction includes:

- how to make the most of supervision during workplace experience;
- how to obtain feedback on performance;
- working in a professional environment;
- communicating with supervisors;
- assessment information; and
- Law Clinic procedures in the event of a lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In relation to communications with your supervisor, students are instructed that:

- you must communicate with your supervisor at least once on each day;
- all communications with clients (written and verbal) must have your supervisor's prior approval; and
- if working remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, students must not have direct client contact in the absence of your supervisor (see further below).

Q: Where are the inductions held?

A: Inductions are usually held at Curtin Law School's city campus at 57 Murray Street, Perth.

Legal Clinic and the COVID-19 pandemic

Q: What arrangements does the John Curtin Law Clinic have in place to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic?"

A: The Law Clinic has detailed remote supervision and remote access arrangements in place to enable the Law Clinic to continue to operate during lockdowns. These arrangements have been approved by the Legal Practice Board of Western Australia.

The arrangements include the following procedures:

- students and supervisors can securely access the Law Clinic's practice management database whilst ensuring client confidentiality;
- students have frequent and structured contact with their supervisor with multiple methods of communicating with their supervisor (including by email, phone, and video-conference);
- client interviews take place via video-conference; and
- all legal advice is provided only with the prior approval of a supervisor.

Q: I have further questions that have not been covered in these FAQs. Who should I speak to?

A: Please see below contact details:

John Curtin Law Clinic and Curtin Link:
lawclinic-admin@curtin.edu.au

Legal Internships program:
legal.internships@curtin.edu.au

**Curtin Practical Legal Training
(Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice):**
curtin.plt@curtin.edu.au