



AN INTRODUCTION TO CLERKSHIPS

2016 SULLY CAREERS GUIDE LIFT-OUT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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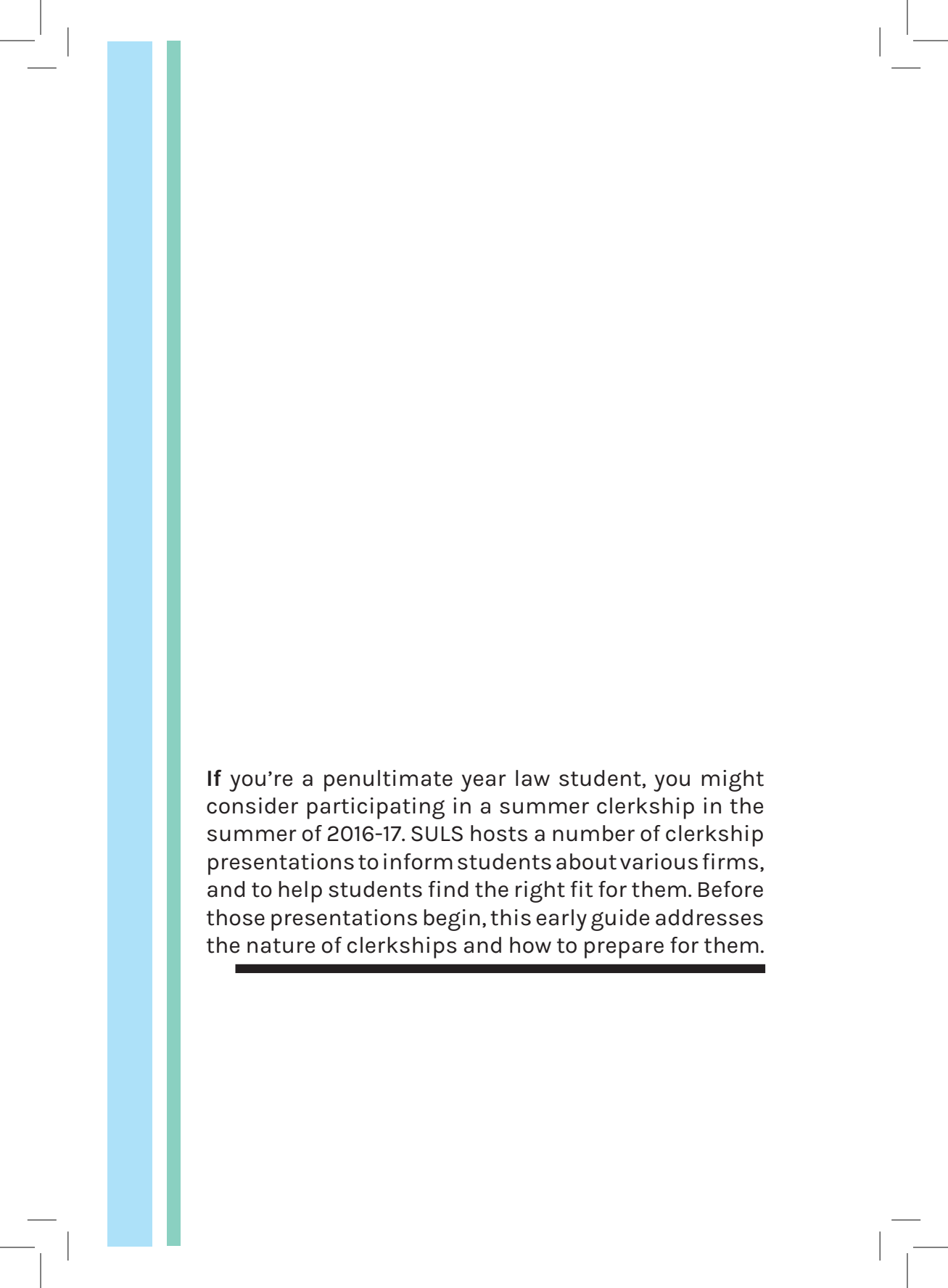
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The page features a light blue vertical bar on the left side, with a thin green bar immediately to its right. In the four corners of the page, there are small, L-shaped corner marks consisting of short horizontal and vertical lines.

If you're a penultimate year law student, you might consider participating in a summer clerkship in the summer of 2016-17. SALS hosts a number of clerkship presentations to inform students about various firms, and to help students find the right fit for them. Before those presentations begin, this early guide addresses the nature of clerkships and how to prepare for them.



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WHAT IS A CLERKSHIP?

The Basics

Summer clerkships are paid employment experiences in major commercial law firms over the summer break. For law students in NSW they are primarily based in Sydney, with other states and some overseas firms offering variations of the program.

The 2016 NSW Graduate Employment and Summer Clerkship Programs are coordinated by the Law Society of NSW for the benefit of law firms and law schools in NSW.

The Summer Clerkship Program is generally open to penultimate year law students only (LLB IV and JD II), however final year students with an extra semester left in their degree are also encouraged to apply.

Common Terms and Distinctions

+ "Big Six" = Allens, Ashurst, Clayton Utz, Herbert Smith Freehills, King & Wood Mallesons, Minter Ellison. Otherwise known as the "top tier".

+ "Magic Circle" and "Silver Circle" = UK-headquartered law firms regarded as the first and second-ranked groups of law firms respectively.

+ "White Shoe" = the US-version of the top tier.

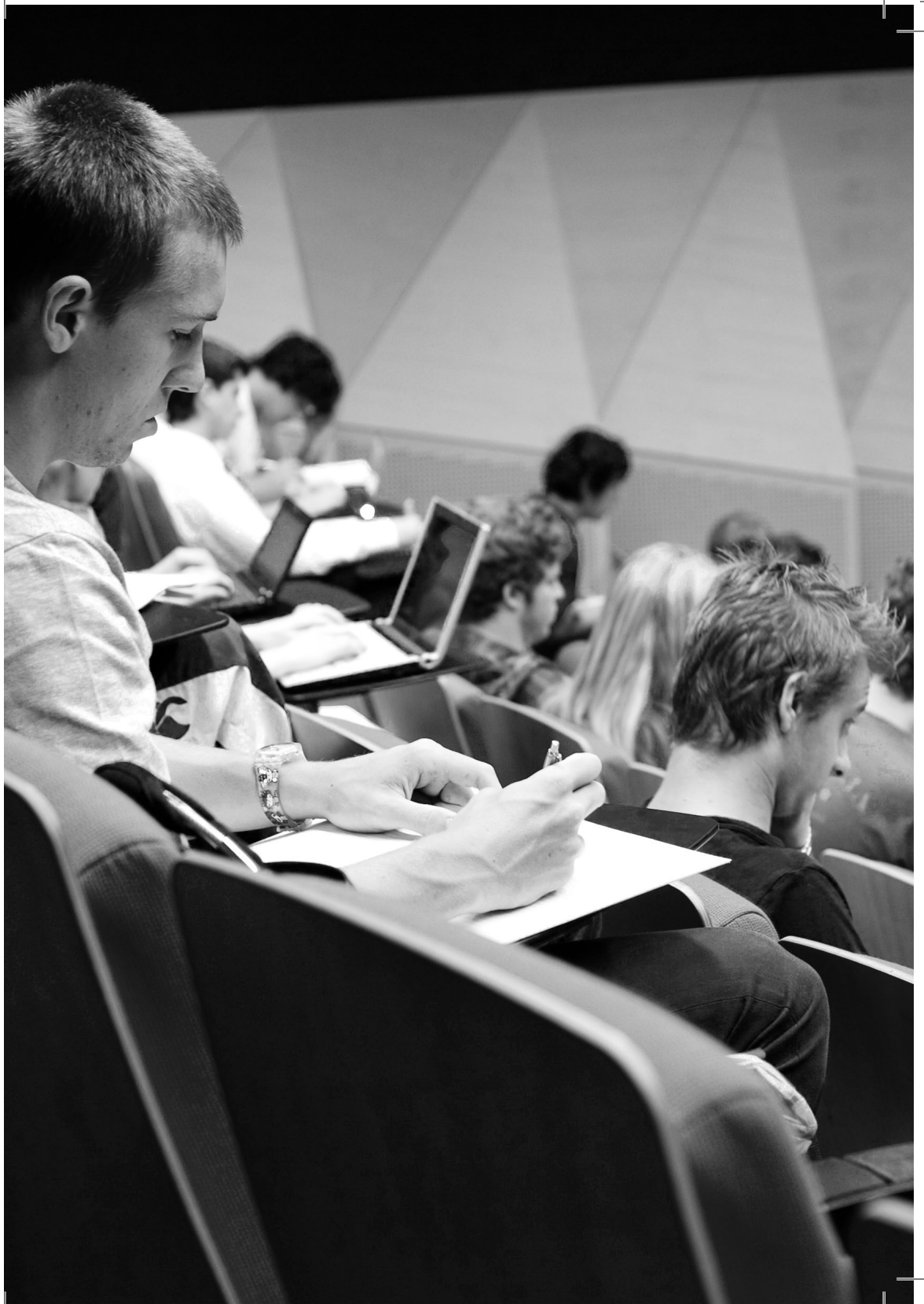
PARTICIPATING FIRMS

Summer Clerkships

Allen & Overy
Ashurst
Australian Government
Solicitor
Baker & McKenzie
Bird & Bird
Clayton Utz
Corrs Chambers Westgarth
DLA Piper Australia
Gadens Lawyers
Henry Davis York
Holding Redlich
HWL Ebsworth
Johnson Winter & Slattery
Jones Day
Maddocks
Minter Ellison
PWC
Thomson Geer

Graduate Intake

Australian Government
Solicitor
Brown Wright Stein
HWL Ebsworth
Jones Day



WHY APPLY?

Why Apply?

+ A clerkship is the best way to try out a law firm and find out if commercial law is right for you. You get to do your best Harvey Spector impersonation for ten weeks in an environment that supports and looks after you. Law firms don't expect you to know everything - you just need to be keen and eager to learn.

+ Clerkships can give you great training. The firms want to show you that they are invested in your future and are interested in your learning and development. At most firms, you will be given introductions to every practice group in the firm as well as their leading partners, and can get a feel for which practice group is right for you.

+ Certain practice groups can draw upon the knowledge you've picked up only recently in law school, which is an interesting opportunity to see your skills applied in real life, and might make all those late nights you've spent in the library seem a little more worthwhile.

+ Of course, clerkships often lead to a graduate job. Most firms recruit their grads through the clerkship process. The amount of clerks taken in any one year is often dependent on graduate business needs.

+ There's definitely a feeling of security knowing you can graduate, travel for a year if you want to, and come back to a job, an income and, hopefully, a firm you love!

Don't Feel Pressured

- + Don't do a clerkship just because everyone else is doing one.
- + Don't be overly wooed by everyone else's opinions on law firms- each firm has a personality as unique as each individual's. Find a firm that fits what you're looking for, whether it's reputation, culture or expertise in a certain area of the law.
- + A clerkship is not something you have to do, or need to do, but it definitely can be a great thing to do if you're interested in a commercial path.

Areas Of Law You Can Be Exposed To

- + Firms offer a lot of interesting services across a range of industries, including construction, energy and resources, technology media and communications, to name a few. Learning about these groups becomes easier with the help of a buddy and mentor, which is commonly organised by the firm.
- + Within industry areas, you'll have the opportunity to choose rotations in different groups like corporate, property, taxation, private equity, insolvency and M&A. Most firms offer two or three rotations over the summer.
- + The size of different practice groups can vary dramatically. Small groups can be closer to 15 lawyers whereas massive groups can require around 60 lawyers.

+ It is not uncommon to be placed in a group outside of your comfort zone, but that can often lead to very rewarding and interesting experiences. Keep an open mind and choose rotations that you think you might be interested in but don't know much about.

+ Groups can be either transactional, litigious, advisory, or a mix of the three.

+ Transactional groups deal with 'front end' work - negotiating with clients and developing and drawing up contracts and other document packages. For example, a front-end Construction group could deal with lots of negotiating over which party would bear the most risk in the contract in the event of defaults or delay.

+ Litigious groups deal with 'back end' work and basically everything after the contract is signed. Examples of back end groups include dispute resolution, litigation and insolvency.

+ Advisory groups provide legal opinions on certain areas of the law. For example, the tax group provides clients with advice on how changes to tax laws will affect their business.

What You "Need" To Get A Clerkship

Take away points: (i) You are the sum of your parts; (ii) Get involved in varied things; (iii) Try to improve your marks.

+ Ask yourself: "What kind of person am I?", "What is my personal brand or unique selling point?", "What are my strengths and weaknesses?". Whatever you have done or whatever you do, make it a selling point.

+ Marks are obviously important. Some firms may only look at applications of students with an average over a certain level. A distinction average helps a lot - but there's more to it than that. Have your marks improved throughout university? Have you been consistent? What are your strongest subjects? What does that say about you? The answers to these questions can be selling points, and can help to make a rogue bad mark unimportant.

+ You don't need to have worked in a law firm or barristers' chambers - don't let anyone tell you otherwise. General work experience is important because it shows you can study and hold a job down at the same time - time management is a crucial skill in a commercial environment. Think about what skills your job requires and how you can apply those to a commercial firm.

+ There are varied qualities firms look for in their clerks. People who are eager to learn and get their hands dirty. People who get along well with others and are team players. People who can think and communicate clearly - communication is the job of a lawyer and language is your tool. People with a sense of commercial awareness of the legal industry. People who have attention to detail. People who have interests and lives outside of law. People who are well-rounded individuals.

+ Firms want to know what kind of person you are beyond your WAM. Show them what you have been involved in and what it means to you (e.g. clubs, student leadership, hobbies, sports, jobs, interests).

+ Most importantly - firms aren't just after people who want to work in a commercial law firm - they want people who want to work in their particular commercial law firm, so tailor your application to each individual firm.

Finding the Right Fit

Take away points: (i) Get talking to people you know in the industry and contacts who have already gone through the clerkship process; (ii) Look into firms' websites and social media channels; (iii) Make the most of cocktail nights, interview and 'buddy' systems.

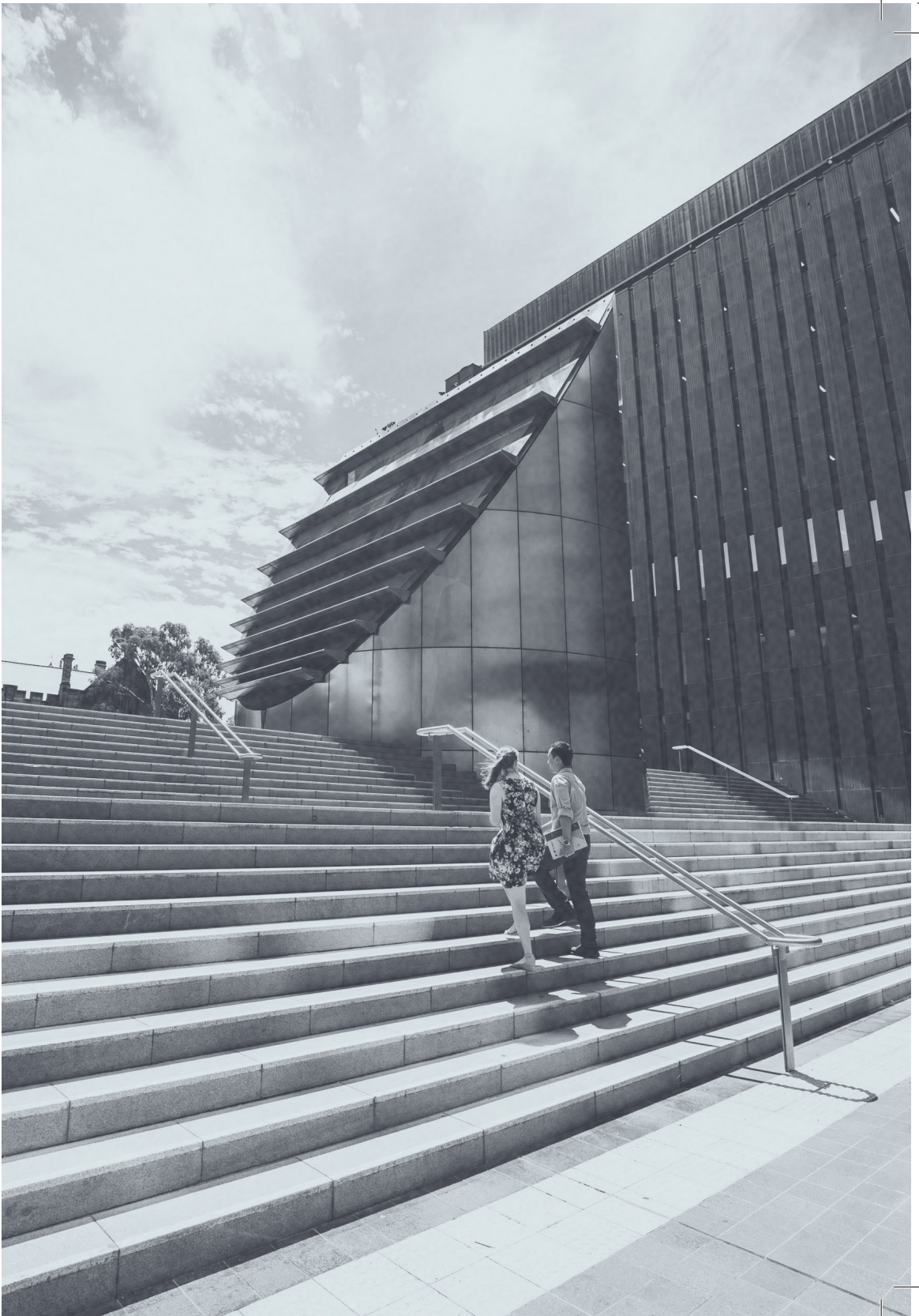
+ Ask yourself: "What qualities are important to me in a workplace?", "What kind of culture would I feel best in?", "What will make me happy at work?". It's as much about firms finding the right people for them as it is you finding the firm that's right for you.

+ Distinctions worth keeping in mind: top tier v mid tier v boutique; big firm v small firm; global v national; big clerk group v small clerk group.

+ Law firms are fundamentally similar. It could just be luck finding out what firm resonates the most with you. There may be differences in the competitiveness of a firm, how down to earth they are, or how strong they are in certain industries; but the cultures are essentially similar.

+ Do your research on the firms - they all have great website and Facebook pages that feature interesting articles and videos that are a good snapshot into the way the firm works.

+ A great way to find out what a firm is like is to go to the lunchtime seminars. These can be quite revealing - look at not just what they say, but how they say it and who is saying it. Do the people resonate well with you?



THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Key Dates for 2016

Wednesday 15 June

Applications for summer clerkships open

Sunday 17 July

Applications for summer clerkships close at 11.59pm

Monday 8 August

Interviews for summer clerkships commence

Friday 23 September

Offers for summer clerkships can be made

Tuesday 27 September

Offers for summer clerkships must be accepted or declined by 5.00pm

The application process is time-sensitive, so make sure you are organised throughout. Don't be that person that submits their application at 11.59pm on the closing date.

CVs

+ Tailor your CV for a corporate law firm. The Careers Centre (Sydney.edu.au/careers) and the SULLS Careers Guide offer great examples of what form this should take.

+ Be very aware of length - try and keep it as brief as possible. Two pages is a good length. Narrow your margins to allow more content to fit in. Have a professional formatting finish - including a suitable font. This is no place for 'Curlz MT'.

+ Save in PDF before sending - this is the professional standard.

Cover Letters

+ Recipient - as obvious as it seems, ensure it addressed to the right person. Check the recipient's gender. A list of HR representatives and recruiters can be found in the Careers Guide.

+ Length - your cover letter should be no longer than a page. Again, extend the margins if you need to fit more content in.

+ Demonstrate that you have 'commercial acumen' or 'commercial awareness'. This does not mean that you need to have done a commerce degree. Show that you have an understanding of commercial transactions in the media, in the community. Have an appreciation for how the firm works and its role in a transaction. Be able to talk about why a particular transaction or dispute interests you. Be aware of the distinction between a corporate firm and a suburban lawyer.

+ Example structure: Introduction - attraction to the firm and how your interests align - skills, achievements and experience - values - conclusion.

+ Always do a final check. Attention to detail is crucial.

Transcripts

- + You will usually be required to submit your academic transcript, and a certified copy is essential. After your first semester marks come out, send them in too.
- + Transcripts can take some time to order, so be prepared and have them organised early.
- + Each firm will require you to submit a scanned and certified copy of your transcript, via CVMail or through an online portal. As such, you only need to purchase one from Uni.
- + If you have an interview then you will need to bring a certified copy with you to the interview.

CVMAIL

- + CVMail is the database that many firms use to manage the clerkship process. This is a very useful site that helps to streamline the application process.
- + It has a host of information available to students on writing a CV and sitting an interview.
- + Once the application process is done, however, the firms usually email the address that you provided to them.
- + Familiarise yourself with CVMail now and find out which firms do and which firms don't use CVMail.

Interviews

- + Round 1 - a more structured interview. A mix of behavioural questions and getting to know you. It will usually be with one partner or with an HR representative.
- + Round 2 - a more informal interview. It focuses on getting to know you, and can take the form of an unstructured chat between you and one or more partners.
- + You will generally be emailed ahead of time detailing who will be interviewing you. This gives you an opportunity to research their background and areas of interest, but don't feel the need to be an expert on your interviewer's CV.
- + The questions that are asked during interviews are highly varied, and often difficult. A useful way to structure more complex answers is to use the STAR method

Situation - describe a situation or problem you have encountered

Task - describe the task that the situation required or your ideas for resolving the problem

Action - describe the action you took and the obstacles you had to overcome

Results - highlight the outcomes achieved

- + Prepare a few of your own questions to ask as well. It shows you're interested in the firm and want to be there.

Some examples are:

- What is the most interesting matter you've worked on this year?
- What aspect of the firm do you most appreciate?
- How would you describe the culture of the firm?
- With the benefit of hindsight, if you were starting your career now would you work at "X" firm and why?

Cocktail and Networking Evenings

+ Cocktail evenings are designed to see how you are in a social setting. It is a good opportunity for the firm to get to know you in a more relaxed environment outside of the interview setting, and for you to talk to as many different people as is necessary to give you an idea of the firm culture.

+ Wear a suit/corporate dress (cocktail dresses are not suitable).

+ Be on your best behaviour. Don't be "that person" - there's always one.

+ Be sure to be pro-active and mingle: don't limit your social interactions to your friends.

+ Be polite to other interviewees - remember: these people may be your future colleagues.

+ If you have to go to two in one night, email the firm that you are going to second and inform them that you will be late.

+ Remember: be yourself. They chose you to be a part of this late stage of the recruitment process for a reason.

OFFERS

Making decisions between different firms

+ Firms make offers on the same day to give people the best choice, and to ensure you can decide between multiple offers fairly.

+ There are a number of things that can inform this decision. (i) Call HR/buddies/partners for advice; (ii) Consider whether this is a firm you can ultimately see yourself working at; (iii) Consider the "specialty" of the firms; (iv) Consider the structural benefits to working at a certain firm e.g. some firms offer Paralegal opportunities in your final year of study.

+ Sometimes it can be as much as which firm gave you the best feeling. Go with your gut and the place where you think you'll be happiest.

+ If you do not get a clerkship offer but you're determined to work in commercial law, there are pathways you can go down. Try to secure a paralegal position so you can best qualify yourself for a graduate role. Or, consider delaying your degree by taking three subjects a semester, and having a go the following year. This sounds like an extreme choice, but is not uncommon in the law school community.


THE CLERKSHIP EXPERIENCE

Rotations

- + It is important to be open-minded and to attempt new areas you're not sure about. You could be surprised at what you end up liking. The people in your team can sometimes be more important to the enjoyment of your work than what specific area of law you are practicing.
- + Consider picking at least one transactional and one litigious rotation - people are often surprised by the difference in the type of work and which they prefer.
- + Be mindful of Litigation-based rotations in January - the work can often be quiet as the courts are closed.
- + The work done is usually a mixture of interesting and mundane tasks. As clerks are still very much in the process of learning, the work will rarely be too challenging. Depending on the business of your group or the culture of the firm, clerks are usually able to work reasonable hours - not too many late nights are required.

The Fun Stuff

- + There are lots of sporting opportunities to take advantage of for summer clerks: (i) Monday night sport at Rushcutters Bay; (ii) Firm lunchtime sports; (iii) Clerk-solicitor cricket matches; (iv) Beach volleyball competitions. Some of these are internal competitions and others are against other firms.
- + The Inter-Firm Cruise and Inter-Firm Trivia Night are annual traditions and a fun way to meet clerks at other firms.
- + Firm-wide and practice group Christmas parties are a lot of fun, and a great way to mingle with your future colleagues.



Good luck with your applications!
For any further enquiries about SULLS' programs or
the clerkship process, please feel free to contact
Evie Woodforde (Vice President Careers) at
careers@suls.org.au.

Otherwise, be sure to pick up the 2016 SULLS Careers
Guide in Week 13.



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