Frequently Asked Questions About Clinics

Does a clinic fit into my overall academic plan?

Before applying to a clinic, you should think about how a clinic will factor into your schedule, how it will affect your academic plans, and how it will factor into your overall degree requirements. For those of you who are planning to sit for the New York Bar Examination (NYBE), please take careful note of the eligibility requirements for the NYBE at http://www.nybarexam.org/Rules/Rules.htm#520.6.

What is the difference between in-house and externship clinics?

Two main categories of clinics are offered at HLS:

➔ **In-House** clinics are fully functioning law offices at HLS, directed by HLS Clinical Professors and Instructors. Students engage in their clinical work at either the Cambridge campus of HLS or at WilmerHale Legal Services Center in Jamaica Plain. Students take a related class at the Cambridge campus of HLS.

➔ **Externship** clinics are located outside of HLS. Students are placed at an organization in the greater Boston area, as well as in other cities throughout the United States, and take a related class at Harvard Law School. Students work off-campus at their placements and take a related class at the HLS campus.

Please note: If you are accepted into an externship clinic through the General Clinic Application process, you are not automatically guaranteed a clinical placement. After your acceptance, you will still need to be matched to a specific placement. Some placements reserve the right to review, interview, and select the externship students who will be placed with them. Some placements may also request supplemental materials such as a cover letter, writing sample, or request a phone or in-person interview.

Do all in-house and externship clinics require both clinical work and a related classroom course?

Yes. Clinics always include hands-on clinical work and a related classroom component. The classroom component provides the academic and substantive law background to the clinical work. Generally, the class must be taken simultaneously with the clinic. To view a list of clinics and the course(s) associated with each clinic, please see the Course Catalog. The Office of Clinical and Pro Bono Programs will take care of your enrollment in the required related course.

How much of a time commitment is a clinic?

Since clinic work involves real clients and cases, clinics are a serious professional and academic commitment. You must be prepared to dedicate a significant amount of time and effort to a clinic, and may enroll in no more than one clinic per semester. Due to the significant time commitment involved in a clinic, the Graduate Program encourages any LL.M. student considering more than one clinic during the academic year to seek academic advising before deciding to do so. Clinics generally require 12 to 20 hours per week (depending on the number of clinical credits for which
you are enrolled and in addition to the time and work related to the classroom component) in the fall or spring semesters, and full-time over the three-week winter term. Students register for one credit per 4 hours (per week) of clinical work. For example, if a student agrees to work 12 hours per week in a clinic, the student registers for 3 clinical credits. Classroom hours and classroom credits for the related (and required) class are in addition to the clinical hours and credits.

**Do I need to have prior academic or professional experience in a particular issue area before applying to a clinic?**

No. Applicants need not have prior legal or academic experience in the issue areas that a clinic works in. Students will receive the necessary training on the relevant substantive issues and skills required to work in a clinic. Students with a new or exploratory interest in a field are welcome to apply. If there are more applicants than spaces available, some preference may be given to students with the strongest relevant experience and/or those students whose academic and career goals have the closest connection to the clinic.

**What is an independent clinical?**

The Independent Clinical Program is designed for those students who are interested in a specialized area of the law or field of practice that is not currently offered in HLS’s existing clinical curriculum. Independent Clinicals are not part of the General Clinical Application. To initiate the Independent Clinical process, students must meet with Sheryl Dickey (or if she is not available, either Elizabeth Solar or Jill Crockett) at the Office of Clinical and Pro Bono Programs (OCP) to discuss their ideas about placement settings, supervising attorneys, and faculty sponsors, as well as the details of the work they will be proposing.

Please note that you should meet with an advisor very early in the process so that you have many weeks (and preferably months) to work on setting up your proposal and drafting your application. Students may work at legal services, public interest and other nonprofit organizations, criminal defense agencies, governmental agencies or the judiciary. Projects may include direct client services as well as broad based advocacy, but must involve legal work supervised by a licensed attorney. An application must be approved by OCP in order to be eligible for clinical credits.

Applications are due to the Office of Clinical and Pro Bono Programs by the following deadlines:

- **Fall 2018:** August 28, 2018 (midnight)
- **Winter 2019:** October 30, 2018 (midnight)
- **Spring 2019:** January 11, 2019 (midnight)

**Do clinics meet the requirements for courses that count towards eligibility to sit for the New York Bar Exam?**

If you are a student who will be utilizing your LL.M. degree to be eligible to sit for the New York Bar, under Rule 520.6(b)(3)(vii)(a), you can count your credit hours earned in clinical courses, field placements, externships and other experiential courses towards the required credits. At HLS, this includes both in-house clinics and externships. Please consult Nancy Pinn in the Graduate Program if you have additional questions related to eligibility.
HLS Student Practice Organizations
(Not-for-Credit Pro Bono Opportunities)

In addition to our clinical programs, you can engage in pro bono work through the Student Practice Organizations (SPOs) at Harvard Law School. A list of the SPOs with links to their websites can be found below. The SPOs are student-run entities with HLS supervising attorneys and staff to assist and guide students. If you are interested in joining an SPO, you can learn more about each SPO (including their projects, the required time commitments, and their application processes) starting in September 2017. You do not need to register for these opportunities because they are not offered for academic credit.

**Harvard Defenders**
Students represent low-income defendants in criminal show-cause hearings.

**Harvard Immigration Project**
Students gain hands-on experience in immigration law through direct representation of clients in deportation proceedings, providing immigration services for clients seeking adjustment of status, family derivative claims, and other follow up services.

**Harvard Law Entrepreneurship Project (HLEP)**
Students provide legal research and analysis to student entrepreneurs at Harvard and MIT.

**Harvard Mediation Program (HMP)**
Students provide mediation services in landlord/tenant, small claims, and other cases.

**Harvard Mississippi Delta Project**
Students engage in a broad range of projects in the Mississippi Delta, including legal assistance and policy analysis related to public health, education, food law, access to financial services, and building local leadership.

**Harvard Negotiators**
Students develop skills in negotiation and dispute resolution by conducting research on negotiation theory, training outside organizations in negotiation skills, and participating in competitions and simulations.

**Harvard Prison Legal Assistance Project (PLAP)**
Students represent inmates in Massachusetts state prisons in disciplinary hearings and parole board hearings.

**HLS Advocates for Human Rights**
Students engage in human rights advocacy including representing the interests of victims of human rights violations.

**Project No One Leaves (PNOL)**
Students help former owners and tenants stay in their homes after foreclosure.

**Recording Artists Project (RAP)**
Students offer pro bono counsel to underserved area musicians seeking assistance with a range of legal matters.