



## 2015 Deakin Golden Key Clerkship and Traineeship Handbook

**Seasonal clerkships** are programs generally available only to penultimate or final year law students and are used by firms to assess potential trainees. Clerks will typically be placed within one practice area of the firm and given a wide range of tasks, so that the firm may assess their competency and approach towards work. Firms also place great importance upon whether or not the clerk is a good cultural fit. This refers to your attitude, personality and work ethic and whether these match the characteristics the firm desires.

The length of these programs can vary, however most of them span a 3-4 week period. There are 3 common clerkship intake periods in November/December, January/February and June/July. Clerkships are an important but not essential step in obtaining graduate employment. They are predominantly employed by mid and top-tier commercial law firms and where such a program is in place, trainees are primarily drawn from this pool. Where you have completed a clerkship with a firm, it is the following year that you would apply for a traineeship position with that firm.

**Traineeships**, also known as articles or graduates positions, are programs available only to graduate law students and will generally span the course of one year. These are paid positions which will count towards your practical legal training requirements for admission as a lawyer. Where these trainee positions are not filled by clerkship participants or the firm has no clerkship program, they will be opened to the market; meaning that any final year student or graduate will be considered.

**Other** options are also open to students in the pursuit of graduate employment. While many students focus on the above programs, there are many other paths. Government departments such as the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade often target law graduates, especially those with a double degree in a relevant area. Non-law organisations such as banks and the Big 4 accounting networks (EY, PwC, KPMG & Deloitte) are steadily expanding their legal departments. This is an area which can provide graduates with access to some of the largest international organisations and can open doors around the world. These workplaces do not conform to the LIV Guidelines and will generally open applications early in the year, so ensure you are organised in researching and applying for these positions.

Many legal services firms do not have formal clerkship and traineeship programs, but they may offer part or full-time paralegal positions to graduates while they complete a PLT. To find out more about these programs research them online, speak to practising lawyers or contact the Deakin Law Society, your faculty advisors or the Deakin University Chapter Committee of the Golden Key International Honour Society.

*We have outlined below the 4 main steps in the clerkship and traineeship application process.*

## 1 RESEARCH

The first step for clerkship and traineeship applications is to research potential firms. Initially this will involve researching the firms who actually offer these programs. This is best achieved by:

- Looking at which firms are signatories to the 2015 Law Institute of Victoria Traineeship and Seasonal Clerkship Guidelines. Firms that are signatories may not necessarily offer a program each year; this is just an acknowledgement that if they do run a program they will abide by the guidelines.
- Signing up for a free CVMail account as discussed below.
- Speaking to the Deakin Law Students Society, lecturers, practising lawyers or Business & Law faculty advisors.

The next step is researching the nature and activities of each firm. Each firm is different and therefore it will look for different things in its clerks and trainees. The size, location and structure of a firm will also affect the particular challenges it faces and the focus of its activities. Many commercial firms will operate in different industries and have different strengths. These considerations should guide where you apply and the content of these applications. The best way to be aware of and understand these things, is to speak to senior practising lawyers or read legal publications such as Lawyers Weekly, Business Review Weekly or the Australian Financial Review.

Don't be afraid to look outside the box and consider smaller or regional firms that don't advertise widely. These firms can fly under the radar of many students and as a result their positions can be far less competitive. This is important where some firms receive over 1,000 applications for only a handful of positions.

## 2 APPLICATIONS

*Clerkship applications open at 9am Monday 13<sup>th</sup> July and close at 11:59pm Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> August.*

*Traineeship applications open at 9am Monday 20<sup>th</sup> July and close at 11:59pm Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> August.*

Applications are generally made via three ways:

- **Website**  
Some firm websites have a feature which allows you to apply for the relevant program by entering your personal details and uploading the appropriate documents.
- **Email**  
Some firms will simply request that you email your applications to their HR department or a specified HR representative.
- **CVMail**  
This is a free online service which streamlines the application process for both students and employers. There are approximately 20 firms that will only accept applications via CVMail. It is quite easy to create a free account and this is an essential step in the application process.

\*Where a firm does not advertise a clerkship or traineeship program online, don't be afraid to call or email them to discuss whether they offer such work on an ad hoc basis.

The application process varies between firms and some may require varying levels of information from applicants. All firms will require 3 basic documents; a cover letter, resume and up-to-date copy of your official academic transcript. Many firms will only ask for these three documents, however some will require you to provide answers to certain questions such as:

- What prompted you to apply for this position?
- What sets you apart from other applicants?
- What are your personal interests?

- Do you have any legal experience? Provide details.
- Which of our practice groups attract your interest?
- What areas of law particularly interest you and how have you come to develop this interest?
- Do you have any experience in business, technology or project management? Provide details.
- What are the most important aspects to you in selecting a law firm with which to start your career? (Select 3 from the list provided)
- Tell us something about yourself that we won't read in your CV that would contribute to our culture.
- Are you an active member of a committee or club? If so, provide details of your role and responsibilities.

The application period lasts approximately 1 month however we strongly advise that you begin this process immediately and don't put it off. The applications can be quite time consuming and the last thing you want to be doing is juggling assignments and applications 4 weeks into the semester.

### **3 INTERVIEWS**

*Clerkship interviews and information sessions will be organised and held at any time between Monday 17<sup>th</sup> August and Friday 9<sup>th</sup> October. Exact dates will vary between firms.*

*Traineeship interviews and information sessions will be organised and held at any time between Monday 24<sup>th</sup> August and Friday 25<sup>th</sup> September. Exact dates will vary between firms.*

Each firm has its own personalised process for assessing applicants and the methods can vary significantly between firms. Methods include:

- **Phone interviews**  
These interviews will generally be conducted by a single HR representative.
- **Face-to-face interviews**  
These interviews will generally be conducted by a HR representative and senior lawyer.
- **Information sessions or cocktail evenings**  
Some firms choose to host events where applicants can meet with firm representatives in a semi-formal or casual setting. The format varies and may include a Q&A session, round table discussion or simply an informal chat with lawyers and recent graduates. These are a great source of information about the organisation and can help you to better understand the culture and focus of the firm and then apply this to your interviews.
- **Aptitude tests**  
Some of the larger firms ask that applicants take an online test which cover similar problems to that faced in the secondary school GAT or academic scholarship tests. Deakin Student Life can help you prepare for these as they have staff who specialise in such tests.

The exact process will be communicated to successful applicants via email, phone or the CVMail automated interview scheduler. The best way to be adequately prepared is to speak to fellow students or graduates who have recently been through this process.

Some firms are quite slow in organising interviews and some have a habit of not contacting unsuccessful applicants. If you do not hear from a firm for some time, call or email them to see whether interviews have been offered yet. If you are unsuccessful at this stage it is a good idea to ring the firm's HR department to discuss the interview. Most firms will be forthcoming in providing feedback to unsuccessful applicants which can assist you to perform better in future interviews.

## 4 OFFERS

*Clerkship offers will be made after 10am on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> October.*

*Traineeship priority offers will be made between 10am Tuesday 11 August and 4pm Thursday 13 August.*

*Traineeship market offers will be made after 10am on Monday 28 September.*

There are 3 types of offers that are made here:

- **Clerkship Offers**

Where a firm offers you a place in one of their clerkship intake periods.

- **Traineeship Priority Offers**

Where a firm offers you a place in their graduate program as a trainee on the basis of a clerkship you have previously undertaken with them. You will not need to pass through the typical traineeship application process here as these offers are made during the application period. Most firms will simply require that you submit another cover letter, resume and academic transcript in order to be considered.

- **Traineeship Market Offers**

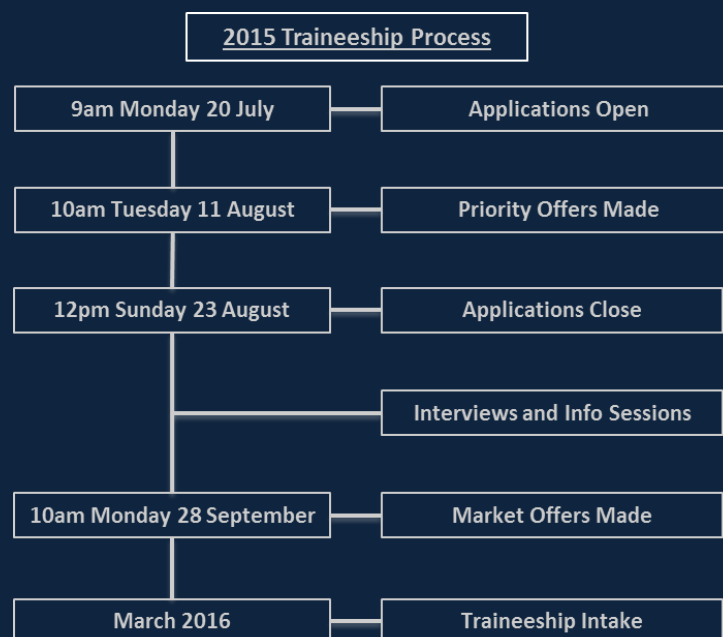
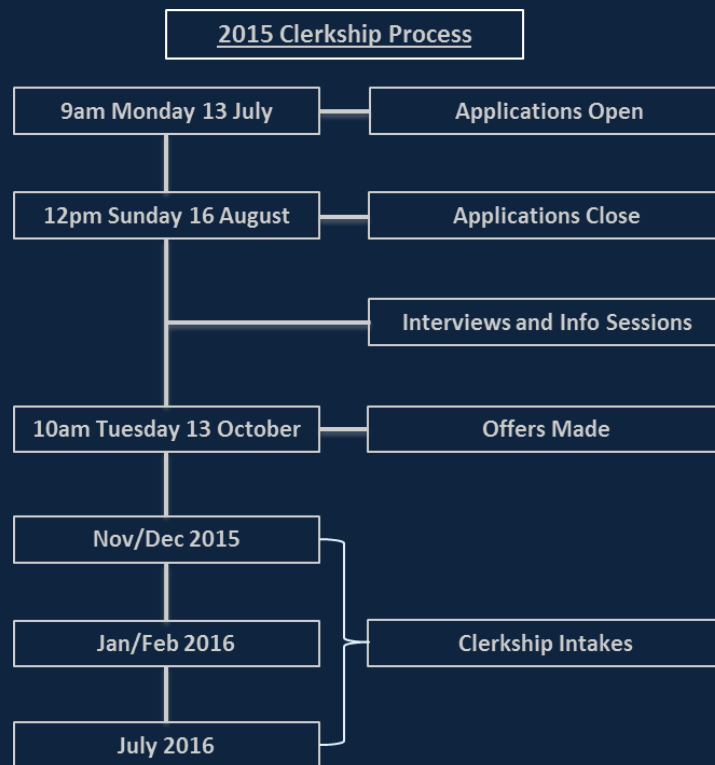
Where a firm offers you a place in their graduate program as a trainee but you have not previously undertaken a clerkship with the firm. A firm will take graduates from the open market where it has no clerkship program or it does not fill its trainee program from its pool of clerks.

If a firm wishes to offer you a place in their program, you will receive a phone call within the above times, where an offer will be formally made. Most firms who run a clerkship program do so over multiple summer and winter intake periods. Where a clerkship offer is made by such a firm, you will also be asked which intake period you wish to be a part of.

There is no requirement that you must accept or decline the offer immediately. The guidelines state that once made, an offer will remain open for 24 hours. Where you are awaiting an offer or rejection from multiple firms, the guidelines state that you may not hold more than 4 offers at a time for more than 2 hours.

In the lead up to this offer period you will need to consider the dates of each firm's intake periods and the firm(s) with which you would rather work. For example Norton Rose Fulbright runs a highly sought after program, but it only has a single-intake 10 week program split over two periods in summer. If you accept a placement within this program, this may take away your chance to be involved in two separate summer clerkships.

You should consider which firms are involved in the deals, cases and other work you are interested in. You should also give weight to the type of workplace that best suits your personality and style of work.



\*These dates are according to the 2015 LIV Guidelines and some may vary between firms.

If you have any further queries:

- email us at [goldenkey.deakin@gmail.com](mailto:goldenkey.deakin@gmail.com)
- visit our website <https://goldenkeydeakin.wordpress.com/>
- visit our Facebook page 'Deakin Golden Key' <https://www.facebook.com/deakingoldenkey>

*Prepared and compiled by Todd Bromwich, Communications Officer for the Deakin University Chapter of the Golden Key International Honour Society. Thank you to Bronte Wright and Rhys Chalmers for their invaluable assistance.*