

A QUICK OVERVIEW OF PRACTICING PRIVATE INTERNATIONAL LAW

In today's global economy, the demand for lawyers, and thus, for law students, with international experience continues to grow. Of course, demand is subject to world politics and the ups and downs of each nation's economy. Nonetheless, law students with cross cultural skills are well-equipped to thrive in the international job market both at home and abroad.

The Diversity of Opportunities within the International Law Field

There is great diversity in (a) Subject Matter, (b) Geography, and (c) the Types of Settings in which international lawyers practice.

Subject Matter:

When considering a career in international law, a law student has a variety of choices to make regarding the type of substantive practice she will focus on. International law simply means that more than one country is involved in the matters of a particular practice area, but it is not actually a completed career choice. So, for example, an international lawyer might be in international banking, international trade, international environmental law, project finance, international tax and so on. An international lawyer can focus on international regulatory law, international disputes or international transactions. As a result of this variety, a law student will want to consider what issues, policies, and/or subject areas are of greatest interest to make a career choice within international law.

Geographic Diversity:

International lawyers practice all over the globe. American lawyers can be assigned to an overseas office of a particular firm or corporation, a foreign office of an international organization or a US consulate or embassy in a foreign country. There are many different opportunities to live overseas as a US lawyer, depending upon the practice focus. In the private sector, this means the location is dependent upon the needs of global clients.

Most US lawyers practicing private sector international law do so in domestic offices, particularly on the coasts – New York, DC, and Los Angeles. Houston, Miami, Philadelphia, Dallas, and Chicago also have strong international practices.

Types of Settings:

International lawyers practice in law firms, governmental agencies, public international organizations, associations, and corporations. The vast majority of private sector lawyers practice in large international law firms. Some will practice in "boutiques" – firms that focus on a specific area such as real estate, sanctions, international trade.

Preparing for a Career in Private International Law

A law student considering a career in international law in the private sector, can begin to plan their career path from their first year in law school. The following are some suggestions that help

build the credentials necessary to practice in one of the substantive areas practiced internationally.

Courses to Consider:

Georgetown Law Center offers an amazing array of courses from basic courses such as corporations and antitrust to more advanced courses in subject areas of value to those contemplating a career in international law. When selecting courses students should not restrict themselves to courses that include the word 'International' in the course title.

It is difficult to suggest which courses to consider given the enormous number of classes offered at the Law Center. However, the following are examples of international-related coursework:

- Accounting for Lawyers
- Antitrust
- Artificial Intelligence, Robotics and the Law
- Business Basics for Lawyers
- Complex Derivative Transactions
- Corporations
- Corporate Finance
- Corporate Tax Planning in Practice: Structuring and Negotiation the Deal
- Cyber Threats: Information Security & Technology in the Practice of Law
- International Business
- International Commercial Arbitration
- Securities
- Tax
- Trusts & Estates

See link to JD Courses: <https://curriculum.law.georgetown.edu/jd/jd-alpha-schedule/>

The above list is a starting point - - it is simply a recommendation of courses to consider and in no way takes into account a law student's personal /specific interests whether they are in health care, environmental practice, communications, or other areas. Career advisors in OCS and OPICS and academic advisors in OAA can help guide the selection of coursework.

Georgetown Study Abroad Programs:

In addition to coursework at the Law Center, Georgetown has several opportunities to study abroad.

The Center for Transnational Legal Studies (CTLS) in London and Georgetown's agreement with Les Institut d'Etudes Politiques, Sciences Po are two such programs. Information on both can be found at: <https://www.law.georgetown.edu/ctls/> and <https://www.law.georgetown.edu/academics/transnational-programs/semester-abroad-opportunities/sciences-po-paris-france/>. Other programs in which Georgetown students have studied abroad include: Tsinghua, Leiden. Amsterdam. Bucerius, NLS, Hebrew University, Melbourne and Singapore.

Getting International Experience or Exposure:

There are several avenues to gaining experience in international law, in addition to academic coursework. Beginning the summer of 1L year, a Georgetown law student has the opportunity to participate in Georgetown's International Internship Program, providing international opportunities in both public and private law all over the world. Students have worked in law firms, corporations, non-profits and international organizations. The Offices of Career Strategy (OCS) and Public Interest and Community Service (OPICS) run the program. Information is available here ([LINK](#)). Deadlines and other information will also be advertised in *Career Clips*.

Additional international internship opportunities are advertised in Symplicity and on the following websites:

<http://www.hg.org/lawfirms.html>

www.legal500.com/index.php

www.myworldabroad.com

PSJD

<https://www.psjd.org/about-psjd>

Yale, Harvard, NYU Guides to International Law Internships

<https://hls.harvard.edu/dept/opia/job-search-toolkit/applying-for-jobs/job-search-databases/>

A list of where 1Ls spent their first summers appears on the Careers website and summer job evaluations are posted in Symplicity

Georgetown has a very large international LL.M. Program, bringing foreign lawyers from all over the world to its campus for one to two years of study. Many JD students interested in working abroad have reached out to LL.M. students, often meeting to improve their language skills and to discuss potential opportunities in their home countries. Numerous JD students obtained their international internship in this manner.

Understanding VISA Requirements:

U.S. citizens working or interning abroad over the summer may need to apply for a visa and/or work permit. Requirements vary widely depending on the country and the type of position. Consulting the website of the country's embassy or consulate is generally the best first step. The employer may also be able to provide some guidance, and students will want to confirm the length of the internship, whether they will be receiving any sort of payment or stipend, and the type of work. General information about requirements is available through the CIBT visa website search feature (<https://cibtvisas.com/>).

It's very important to begin this process early, as it may take anywhere from a few days to a few months to complete the visa process. As part of the process, you may be required to pay a fee and may be required to show proof of funds, proof of employment, proof of residence in the

country, and biometrics, such as fingerprints. Some countries also require a criminal background check.

Additional International Experiences located in DC and other cities in the US:

A law student who prefers to gain international experience while in Washington, DC has a lot of options for summer and academic year intern and externships. Many of these options fall in the public sector and will provide experiences that are marketable within the private sector.

Federal agencies which do international work include:

Agriculture; Commerce; CIA; EPA; FAA; FEMA; FBI; FTC, HHS; HUD; Department of State; Labor; IRS; Postal Service; NASA; Export Import Bank; Treasury; Millennium Challenge; NRC; Department of Defense; Transportation; USAID; Overseas Private Investment Corp; FCC; and Department of Justice

Intragovernmental Organizations in DC:

Additionally, there are numerous intergovernmental organizations in the greater DC area:

- The World Bank
- International Finance Corporation
- Inter-American Development Bank
- Organization of American States
- International Bank for Reconstruction & Development
- Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency
- International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes
- The Asian Development Bank
- International Monetary Fund
- African Development Bank
- European Bank of Reconstruction and Development

Associations:

The District of Columbia is “Association City USA” and many of them focus on international work. A sampling of international associations include:

- American Immigration Lawyers Association
- International Municipal Lawyers Association
- American Society of International Law
- Women in International Trade Association
- Humane Society

Private Sector Experience in International Law:

Large international law firms seek candidates from Georgetown for their summer associate programs. 1Ls interested in working for one of these firms should discuss strategies with their

OCS advisor. 2Ls interested in these opportunities will want to participate in Georgetown's On-Campus Interview program (OCI). Information on this program is located on the Careers Website under Recruitment Programs. In addition, many corporations hire law students for summer positions in their legal departments. The work often includes matters with an international focus. Georgetown also participates in a program with Citi Latin American in which a student spends half the summer in one of Citibank's Latin American offices and the other half with one of Citi's Latin American law firms.

Skills which are important to develop:

When international lawyers are asked about the skills required to successfully practice international law, they have recommended the following (in no particular order):

- Analytical reasoning and creative problem-solving skills
- Strong writing skills
- Excellent interpersonal communications skills -- including an interest & ability to network with people from other cultures
- Foreign language skills
- Substantive and academic experience in area of focus (for example, environmental, arbitration, tax, etc.)

In Summary - - Students hoping to become an international lawyer might be interested in knowing about a handful of JD Alumni - - and what they did in their quest to become an international lawyer.

AM – had a Georgetown International internship for 2 summer; last one in Paris, then worked at a major US law firm's Paris office

BJ – worked for 2 firms in DC and could not find anything international; finally picked up and went to teach abroad for a short while, and for the last decade has been with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

HC- Started her career at Linklaters in NY and then was sent to the firm's London office; after several years there, she transferred to Barclays London and now works for Tony Blair Associates.

DD – worked at Salans in NY and then went to Warsaw and started a firm with several other lawyers.

Here's hoping that you found this article of value as you contemplate BECOMING an international lawyer.