

## **Frequently Asked Questions - Career Exploration**

As you think through the four pillars of the 1L Career Foundations program, you might have some questions about certain aspects of the legal profession or your law school experience. Please consult these FAQ documents to help put the things you are learning in context. Each FAQ document will focus on one aspect of the 1L Career Foundations program. Please feel free to reach out to OCS or OPICS for more information.

### **What is the difference between a practice area and practice setting?**

We typically refer to a “practice area” as the major subject matter in which an attorney practices. Practice areas might have statutes or agencies that govern the specific area of law, or they might feature repeat private actors. Examples of practice areas include antitrust, criminal law, corporate law, and white collar defense. Check out our [JD Careers Practice Area Pages](#) for more information.

A “practice setting” typically means the employer or work setting where an attorney practices. Common practice settings include working for a government agency, public interest organization, judge, law firm - small, mid-sized, or large firm - or a corporation. Different work settings will come with different expectations on hours, culture and content of the work. Check out our [JD Careers Practice Setting Pages](#) for more information.

### **What do you mean when you discuss public sector employers? What is the difference between the public sector and public interest?**

There is some overlap between the terms “public sector” and “public interest.” Typically, we use the term “public sector” as a catchall to mean any and all non-private legal employers, i.e. employers that do not operate as for-profit businesses such as law firms, corporations, or investment firms. The public sector includes federal, state, and local government agencies, including public defenders and prosecutors’ offices. It also includes nonprofit organizations (both domestic and international), labor unions, and direct legal aid organizations.

Sometimes the term “public interest” means a narrower group of nonprofit organizations that work to achieve mission-driven outcomes through legal representation and policy advocacy - the ACLU is a classic example of a public interest organization. A public interest attorney will normally represent individuals, groups, or causes that are not often served by the for-profit bar.

If that isn’t complicated enough, there are also [public interest law firms](#) that operate as for-profit businesses that nonetheless endeavor to serve

underrepresented clients or causes. Public interest law firms straddle the line between the private and public sectors.

### **What do you mean when you discuss private sector employers? And what is Biglaw?**

Private sector employers are those businesses that are privately owned and for profit. In the legal industry, this includes solo practitioners, small and mid-sized firms, large firms, in-house counsel positions within corporations, banks, consulting firms, etc.

When we use the term “Biglaw,” we are referring to large, national, high-revenue firms that serve large corporate clients. Biglaw firms typically recruit earlier and with more regularity - generally hiring through the OCI (on-campus interviews) process for a 2L summer associate position with the intention of then giving a permanent post-graduate offer. Biglaw employers also tend to pay relatively high salaries: many follow what is known as the [Cravath salary scale](#).

### **What is a judicial internship? And what is a judicial clerkship?**

A judicial internship is, generally, an unpaid position where law students assist in all of the major activities happening in a judge’s chambers -- mainly legal research and writing related to resolving parties’ motions, as well as conducting hearings in court where parties appear for various reasons. They are available both in the summer or during the academic year. These internships can provide a preview of the clerkship experience; and many students believe their internships helped them obtain full-time clerkships both through the experience gained and connections made with their judge and the law clerks. Interning with a judge, however, is not at all required to later clerk with that judge or any other judge. Many district and appellate court judges throughout the country hire summer interns.

A judicial clerkship is a salaried, post-J.D. position (typically lasting one or two years) with federal, state, local, or administrative law judges. In helping the judge decide what to do in the cases before the judge, a clerk experiences the legal system from the perspective of the court, and gains insight into what makes a good lawyer, a persuasive brief, and an effective oral argument.

For more information on both judicial internships and clerkships, consult Georgetown’s [Judicial Clerkship Manual](#).

## **What opportunities are there for me to learn more about different practice areas and practice settings during my 1L year of law school?**

There are numerous ways to explore the many different paths available to law grads - students can utilize [online resources](#), attend programs sponsored by the JD Careers Team, as well as Georgetown student organizations, Centers and Institutes, Bar Associations and free CLE events, and connect with alums and other attorneys for information meetings.

The JD Careers Team will be hosting a number of specialized programs for 1Ls this year to educate you on the variety of practice areas available to Georgetown law students.

- If you haven't already signed up for them, be sure to register for the weekly **What Can I Do With a Law Degree** series that takes place every Friday at 12:15pm. **Mark your calendars and RSVP** for the Ipractice area sessions that interest you. All sessions will be held from 12:15 PM - 1:15 PM.
  - [Food/Drug](#) on Friday, October 2nd
  - [Government Contracts](#) on Friday, October 9th
  - [Civil Litigation](#) on Friday, October 16th
  - [Labor & Employment](#) on Friday, October 23rd
  - [Privacy](#) on Friday, October 30th
  - [Securities](#) on Friday, November 6th
  - [Antitrust](#) on Friday, November 13th
  - **The Public Sector Practice Area Zoom Series** is an opportunity to go beyond the basics and explore specific practice areas that are well represented in government and nonprofit agencies. Practice areas will include civil rights, criminal prosecution and defense, immigration, health, poverty law, criminal justice reform, children's right/juvenile rights, environmental, human rights, and more. Speakers will include alums, faculty and/or upper-level students. Dates and times tbd.
  - **Private Sector Practice Area Recordings** - Over the course of the fall, OCS will record and release conversations with attorneys practicing in several of the practice areas that were not covered in the weekly Friday series (e.g., Tax, Real Estate, IP Litigation, Appellate and Banking law). When the recordings are available, we will update Career Clips, but please keep an eye out!
- **In the spring, OCS will also be hosting its annual Corporate Symposium**, which is a series of events that bring together a number of practicing attorneys to discuss the intricacies of corporate and transactional law. Previous sessions included topics ranging from mergers and acquisitions and private equity fund formation to project finance and fintech and venture capital. Stay tuned to Career Clips for more information on the Corporate Symposium and other practice area programming.
- Check Career Clips, the JD Careers Program and Events [Calendar](#) and the OSL Weekly Broadcast for additional career programs and networking opportunities.

## **What types of summer employment are available to me as a first-year law student?**

There are a wide variety of job opportunities available to Georgetown law students. Often, Georgetown students will work in legal roles for their first summer, as post-grad legal employers generally expect students to receive legal experience during their first and second summers. Students might receive job offers from small, medium, or large law firms; nonprofit and government employers; Senate or House offices on Capitol Hill; judges; or large corporations. But some students may be interested in pursuing non-legal work opportunities in business, consulting and banking. Others work as RA's for Georgetown faculty or pursue international internships with both private and public entities. Check out the JD Careers Where 1Ls Worked ([2019](#) / [2020](#)) resource for more information.

## **Okay, there are a lot of options. But where should I work? How does that line up with 2L summer?**

There's no one-size-fits-all answer to where you should work. That decision is motivated by various factors, including your background; areas you want to learn about; and personal preferences around location, compensation, training, and other factors.

The decision is also impacted by the market for 1L legal services. Typically many 1L summer positions are available in the public sector, as those employers are permitted to take on unpaid student workers (Georgetown provides guaranteed funding to students with unpaid or low paid summer positions). In the private sector, where labor laws typically require that students are paid, employers may have a more difficult time justifying the cost of taking on summer interns who may not have significant experience to justify the compensation they'd receive. Accordingly, the market for 1L Biglaw positions is far smaller than the 2L market. When Biglaw does hire it tends to be in the following ways: diversity pipelines; intellectual property (IP) candidates with hard science backgrounds; referrals of close friends, family, or past employees; and/or students with very strong 1L Fall grades.

That said, we encourage you to think about having your summer position promote: 1) engagement and education in a practice area that may be of interest to you (a commitment to a certain practice area can be important to many public sector employers, but sometimes to private sector employers as well); 2) greater fluency in a legal skill that you may want to enhance, for example

research/writing, client interaction, contract drafting, etc; and/or 3) a deeper connection to a geographic market you may want to work in down the road.

**Should I target specific types of 1L jobs if I want to work at a large firm next summer?**

There is no required 1L summer job to be eligible to work for a large law firm your second summer. Large firms will consider applicants who worked for government agencies, in-house legal departments, public interest organizations, judges, clinics and professors. Of course, law firms also value firm experience during your 1L summer, but it is not an expectation to have worked in the private sector as a 1L.

You should consider the above factors when applying to summer jobs, including honing your practice area interests, showing a commitment to a certain geographic region, or building up specialized skills. If you want to focus on your legal research and writing, then maybe a judicial internship or other litigation-focused position would be a good fit. Are you interested in trying out transactional law? Consider working at a corporation or one of the [transactional opportunities outside of the private sector](#).

There is rarely a direct causal relationship between your 1L position and 2L Biglaw hiring; instead, think about how your 1L summer overlaps with the work you think you might want to do at a large firm. And remember that Biglaw looks at a range of factors in addition to 1L work experience: 1) academic performance; 2) work experience, understand broadly; 3) commercial intelligence (knowledge of their practices and how you can contribute); 4) engagement with the firm; 5) diversity; and 6) interview performance.

Your OCS and OPICS advisors are also here to help you navigate the many opportunities available to you to you during your 1L summer.

**Do I have to know what I want to do after graduation right now? Is it possible to try multiple practice areas or internships before deciding my ultimate practice setting?**

You do not need to know exactly what you want to practice right now. You will have many opportunities to explore the universe of legal practice areas and employer settings during law school. Often, your 1L summer internship does not determine the ultimate practice area or setting in which you will start your post-graduate career. You should take full advantage of Georgetown's extensive

curriculum, careers programming, experiential opportunities, including clinics, practicums, and externships to gain an understanding of the best work settings for you.

**I don't have any post-college work experience. Will that be a problem in finding a legal job?**

No! Many students who come straight from undergrad receive excellent offers from both private and public sector employers. Of course, having post-grad work experience might help you navigate your job search, but it is by no means a requirement. See our Self Assessment FAQ for more information.