

cdo handbook

brief

The Carolina Law Career Development Office produces an annual print and digital Career Development Handbook to assist law students in their job search through law school and beyond. The 160-page, coil-bound handbook—proprietary to the CDO—contains self-assessments, a thorough list of legal practice areas, resume and cover letter tips with samples, a detailed hiring application calendar, interview tips, and more.

For this project, the CDO wanted a complete redesign of the contents to make it even easier to use and a better tool for our students.

goals

- Create more white space and breathing room on each page.
- Remove any stock photos.
- Organize information so it's easier to find what you need.
- Update the look while keeping within the law school's Branding Guidelines.

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process

To solve the lack of white space, I employed a three column layout. Instead of your eyes having to cross the entire width of the page to read a paragraph, you're able to scan for the information you'd like to find, and extra, less-pertinent information is in the side margin.

APPELLATE PRACTICE

Appellate practice involves handling appeals from rulings of a lower court or adjudicatory body to an appellate court/court of appeals. Appeals can originate from almost any practice area or area of law, civil or criminal. Appellate work involves a significant amount of legal research and writing, principally in the form of briefs to the court, but it can also involve oral advocacy if the judges want to hear the lawyers present their arguments in court. Attorneys who enjoy this work find it intellectually stimulating and also find the opportunity to create "new law" very rewarding.

Some attorneys handle appeals as part of their practice, appealing cases on behalf of their clients where they believe the lower court committed an error or errors that warrant reversal. Others work exclusively on appeals, whether in the appellate practice section of a large firm or in a government job (e.g., the North Carolina Appellate Defender's Office, which handles criminal appeals on behalf of convicted defendants).

Although many attorneys handle some appeals, only a limited number devote their practice exclusively to appellate work. Most appellate attorneys have significant trial experience and have been exposed to a wide variety of practice areas. It might be helpful to intern with an appellate court judge to learn whether appellate law is an area of practice that might be of interest to you.

NECESSARY SKILLS:

- Legal research & writing in the form of briefs to the court.
- Oral advocacy

CDO TIP:

Most appellate attorneys have significant trial experience and have been exposed to a wide variety of practice areas.

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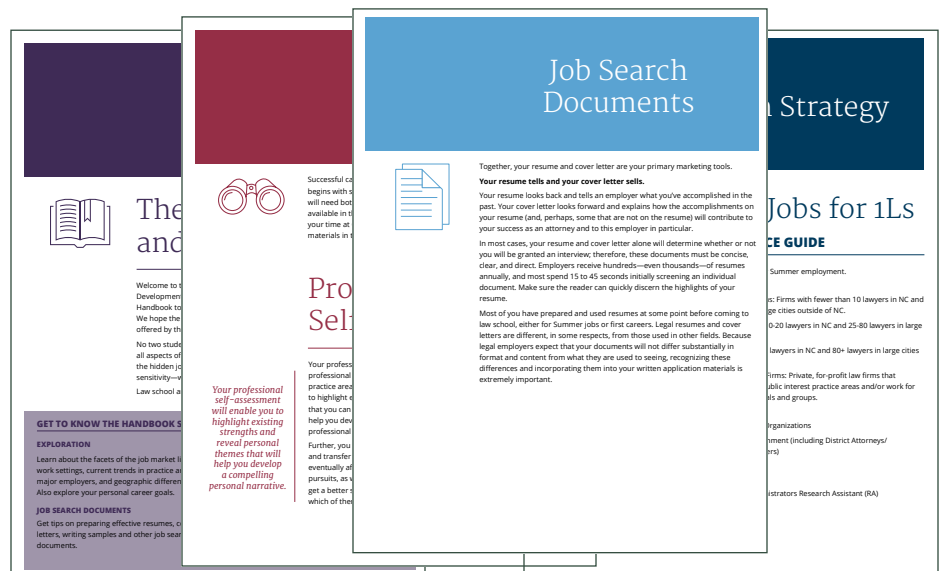
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I illustrated over 25 icons to replace the stock photos placed at the beginning of certain subsections. Instead, each section and subsection has its own icon relating to the subject matter and mimicking the style of the law school's existing icons.

I established a uniform section title, subsection

title, subtitle, and information hierarchy so each page was easy to scan and find the information you might need. Each subsection now starts on its own page, and fits neatly within its own spreads.

Creating more established hierarchy helped update the look. To keep within branding guidelines, each section was assigned one of the official law school branding's colors. The titles, subtitles, margin notes, and graphics all adopted this color so each section is cohesive and uniform.



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PROFESSIONAL SKILLS INVENTORY

Law school is not only set up to teach you about the law, but to provide you opportunities to develop skills required to practice effectively. You possess a number of skills and talents that have helped you succeed thus far. Many of these skills are transferable to the practice of law. As you begin to take stock of your professional skills, err on the side of including a skill on your list rather than excluding it for initially perceived irrelevance.

You may find that some skills are easier for you to pick up or sharpen than others, and when asked "What are your greatest strengths?" some of these skills may come to mind. However, things you are good at are not always the things you enjoy and vice versa. When thinking about the skills you have or want, it may be wise to reframe "strengths" as actions that make you feel strong, happy, or invigorated, and "weaknesses" as tasks that make you feel weak, drained, or unenthusiastic. These strengths are the skills you should focus on when reading job descriptions, learning about potential positions, and planning career moves.

We have provided a list of skills for you to rank according to your current prowess and your motivation to use them. A rank of 5 will be the highest and 1 will be the lowest. First, rank each skill based on your interest and enjoyment when utilizing it. Then, to acknowledge your current strengths and to identify where you want to improve, rank those skills by your ability. Notice which skills rank highly in both categories and determine which ones you are willing to spend time building upon. Focus on using or growing your top-rated skills as you move forward with your legal education and professional life.

As you work through the list, you may notice that none of these skills are purely legal in nature. The skills you learn in law school and need in order to be an effective lawyer are applicable in many other settings, professional and personal. We often refer to these as "transferable skills." Transferable skills will and should be highlighted in your future resumes, cover letters, and interviews. You may also notice them popping up as you explore professional opportunities. In fact, when you look at a job or internship description, beyond requiring or preferring a particular degree or level of experience, almost every other quality sought will be a transferable skill. Use this to your advantage by picking out a few words and phrases that resonate with you in each job description's "qualifications" or "responsibilities" section, and speak to those directly in your documents. Also prepare to talk about them in an interview, using tangible examples.

Some of the skills mentioned below may come so easily to you that they feel more like aspects of your personality than true "skills." However, you would be surprised how some of the skills you possess may seem quite out of reach for others. Though perhaps surprising, the following are all transferable skills that can be improved or capitalized upon in your professional life. Think about which ones you have, which you don't, and which you want to become more skilled in:

- Responding appropriately to and/or providing feedback
- Perceiving nonverbal messages
- Anticipating problems before they occur
- Setting clear goals and objectives
- Formulating questions
- Developing rapport
- Approaching new situations and challenges with confidence
- Empathizing
- Being patient
- Managing conflict
- Conducting meetings
- Identifying people who can contribute to solutions of problems or tasks

Transferable skills should be highlighted in your future resumes, cover letters, and interviews.

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Skills Checklist

PROFESSIONAL SKILL	ENJOYMENT (✓ 1-5, 5 being highest)					ABILITY (✓ 1-5, 5 being highest)				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Active Listening										
Advocacy										
Analysis and Logical Reasoning										
Attention to Detail										
Business Acumen										
Client Service										
Conceptualization										
Consultation										
Counseling/Advising										
Financial Literacy/Management										
Idea Implementation										
Innovation										
Interpersonal Communication										
Leadership										
Lobbying										
Making Decisions										
Motivating Others										
Negotiation										
Networking										
Objectivity										
Observation/Perception										
Organizing										
Persuasion										
Planning										
Problem Solving										
Processing Data										
Project Management										
Public Speaking										
Quantitative Reasoning										
Research										
Strategic Thinking										
Supervision/Personnel Management										
Synthesizing Information										
Teaching/Training										
Teamwork										
Time Management										
Troubleshooting										
Using Technology										
Visioning/Brainstorming										
Writing										

EXPLORATION 15

Legal Practice Areas and Settings

As you progress through law school, you will begin to consider your choices among a wide variety of practice areas and settings. This section aims to provide assistance as you explore various legal career directions and options. We have briefly described a number of the most common legal practice areas and a variety of practice settings. This list is by no means exhaustive; there are additional resources in the Career Development Office and online that can provide further detail about the variety of practice areas, settings, and career options open to you.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW

Administrative law encompasses laws and legal principles governing the administration and regulation of government agencies. Many administrative agencies are delegated the authority to "legislate" (through rulemaking), "adjudicate" (through administrative hearings), and "execute" administrative goals (through agency enforcement personnel). Agencies must act within parameters established by federal or state constitutions to ensure administrative law procedures comply with the requirements of due process. These and other limits have been codified into statutes such as the Federal Administrative Procedure Act and state analogs. Administrative lawyers observe, evaluate, assess, and oppose the implementation of certain statutory provisions adopted by Congress or the state or local legislative body.

Common practice areas include environmental law, immigration, transportation law, taxation, state and local law, regulatory policy, election law, international law, and trade. Administrative lawyers often work for the government (including as political aides, assistants, or appointees), as well as for private firms and corporations, including lobbying roles.

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Appellate work involves a significant amount of legal research and writing, principally in the form of briefs to the court, but it can also involve oral advocacy if the judges want to hear the lawyers present their arguments in court. Attorneys who enjoy this work find it intellectually stimulating and also find the opportunity to create "new law" very rewarding.

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BANKING LAW

Banking lawyers provide legal services to the financial services industry. They represent lenders, participants, agents, and borrowers in financial transactions, which can be complex and may include multistate or international interests as well as secured and unsecured creditors.

Banking lawyers may also be involved in recapitalization, tender offer, and restructuring troubled financings as well as refinancing, restructuring troubled financings, and planning bankruptcy buyouts. Banking lawyers, particularly those working with commercial financial institutions, must be familiar with the stringent regulatory requirements to which their institutions are subject.

Financial services is a major industry in North Carolina, especially in the Charlotte area. The need for attorneys in this area of practice is likely higher here than in most other regions of the country with the exception of the New York area. Students interested in this area of practice might want to try out for the Banking Journal. It should be noted that the need for banking attorneys can diminish during times of economic recession/crisis.

BANKRUPTCY LAW

Bankruptcy is largely governed by federal law, with a system of federal bankruptcy courts to hear and resolve cases. Pursuant to federal bankruptcy law, persons and businesses whose assets are insufficient to pay their accumulated debts ("debtors") can place their financial affairs under the control of the bankruptcy court. This occurs when the debtor files a voluntary petition for bankruptcy with the bankruptcy court or when the debtor's creditors file a petition to force the debtor into involuntary bankruptcy.

Bankruptcy lawyers practice in both large and small firms, often specializing in this practice area. Some bankruptcy lawyers are appointed to work as trustees in addition to representing either debtors or creditors in their respective cases. Bankruptcy judges also hire bankruptcy clerks, and a number of Carolina Law alumni have clerked or are currently clerking for bankruptcy judges. Lawyers who practice bankruptcy law find the practice an excellent blend of litigation and transactional work, as well as state and federal law. The bankruptcy bar tends to be a smaller and more specialized group of attorneys interested in working toward a reasonable outcome given the financial circumstances of the parties involved. The need for bankruptcy attorneys is cyclical. It increases during times of economic recession/turmoil and decreases during times of economic stability.

CIVIL LITIGATION

Civil litigators represent individuals (or a class of individuals) or corporations in non-criminal disputes where one party is accused of wrongdoing. The party claiming the wrong seeks money damages or other civil relief rather than criminal sanctions.

Civil litigators are found in every practice setting from sole practitioners to the largest law firms. Lawyers who practice civil litigation represent parties in trials, hearings, arbitrations, and mediations before federal, state, and local courts; administrative agencies; and even foreign tribunals. Many cases, however, are settled before trial, and litigators spend much of their time on pretrial matters including case investigation, preparation, and discovery.

Civil litigation encompasses a broad range of disputes. Civil litigators often specialize in one or two specific practice areas. Examples of common areas of civil litigation include medical negligence, employment law, products liability, real estate law, family law, intellectual property law, environmental law, and education law. Commercial litigation is a form of civil litigation and includes antitrust, securities, and financial services litigation.

CIVIL RIGHTS/LIBERTIES LAW

Civil rights law deals with the rights and liberties of the American people. Civil rights attorneys work to defend against discrimination, police misconduct, prison abuse, and any deprivation of a constitutional right. They also work to secure the rights of minorities, LGBT individuals, immigrants, refugees, the disabled, and other such groups.

One of the benefits to being a civil rights attorney is getting to work with a diverse clientele on a wide variety of cases. One day you might be helping a client regarding racial workplace discrimination, and on another, defending the reproductive rights of women. When helping their diverse clientele, civil rights attorneys often have to wear many hats — litigator, advocate, lobbyist, advisor, etc.

Most civil rights attorneys work in nonprofits, small firms, or for the government. However, some larger law firms have recently created civil rights divisions. Although larger firms are more economically constrained in the clients they can take, most big firms handle some pro bono cases.

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EXPLORATION EXERCISE 2:

Professional Skills Inventory



Law school is not only set up to teach you about the law, but to provide you opportunities to develop skills required to practice effectively. You possess a number of skills and talents that have helped you succeed thus far. As you begin to take stock of your professional skills, err on the side of including a skill on your list rather than excluding it.

Transferable skills are those that you learn in law school but are applicable in many other settings, professional and personal. These skills will and should be highlighted in your future resumes, cover letters, and interviews. Seek them out in job descriptions and speak to them directly in your application documents.

Some skills may feel more like aspects of your personality than true "skills," however, some of these skills might be surprisingly transferable in your professional life. Some examples include:

- Appropriate reception to feedback
- Perceiving nonverbal messages
- Anticipating problems
- Setting clear goals and objectives
- Formulating questions
- Developing rapport
- Approaching new situations with confidence
- Empathizing
- Being patient
- Managing conflict
- Conducting meetings
- Identifying people who can contribute to solutions
- Being punctual
- Working effectively under pressure
- Accepting responsibility
- Giving praise and credit to others
- Developing and sticking to a budget

YOUR TURN: We have provided a list of skills for you to rank according to your current prowess and your motivation to use them. First, rank each skill based on your interest and enjoyment when utilizing it. Then, rank those skills by your ability. Compare and contrast which skills score high in both categories.

REFLECTION: Think about which skills you are already confident in, which you plan to work on during your time as a law student, and which you could and would want to talk about effectively in writing and interviews when pursuing employment opportunities.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS	ENJOYMENT					ABILITY				
	Low					High				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Active Listening										
Advocacy										
Analysis & Logical Reasoning										
Attention to Detail										
Business Acumen										
Client Service										
Conceptualization										
Counseling/Advising										
Financial Literacy/Management										
Idea Implementation										
Innovation										
Interpersonal Communication										
Leadership										
Lobbying										
Making Decisions										
Motivating Others										
Negotiation										
Networking										
Objectivity										
Observation/Perception										
Organizing										
Persuasion										
Planning										
Problem Solving										
Processing Data										
Project Management										
Public Speaking										
Quantitative Reasoning										
Research										
Strategic Thinking										
Supervision/Personnel Management										
Synthesizing Information										
Teaching/Training										
Teamwork										
Time Management										
Troubleshooting										
Using Technology										
Visioning/Brainstorming										
Writing										



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COMMON PRACTICE AREAS: environmental law, immigration, transportation law, taxation, state and local law, regulatory policy, election law, international law, and trade, government roles (e.g. political aids, assistants, or appointees).

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WHERE THEY WORK: large and small firms, specializing in bankruptcy; appointed as trustees; represent debtors or creditors; bankruptcy clerks.

The bankruptcy bar tends to be a smaller and more specialized group of attorneys interested in working toward a reasonable outcome given the financial circumstances of the parties involved.

CIVIL LITIGATION

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COMMON PRACTICE AREAS: medical negligence, employment law, financial services, products liability, real estate law, family law, intellectual property law, environmental law, and education law.

CDO TIP:

Financial Services is a major industry in NC, especially in the Charlotte area.

INTERESTED IN THIS PRACTICE AREA?

You might want to try out for the Banking Journal.

CDO TIP:

During economic recession, the need for Banking Law tends to decrease and Bankruptcy law tends to increase.

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COMMERCIAL LITIGATION:

A form of civil litigation. Includes antitrust, securities, and financial services litigation.