

2021-2022



2L SURVIVAL GUIDE

MLSA COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

ROBSON HALL, FACULTY OF LAW
University of Manitoba

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A NOTE FROM THE TEAM

You've finished your first year of law school. Great job! You got through exams and maybe figured out what an estoppel is. You're now entering 2L, the year that many students consider to be the most difficult. You have more freedom to choose your courses, but also have to start planning for the articling recruit taking place at the end of the winter semester.

2L is the time to be strategic and consider your goals for after graduation. This guide is meant to help you consider what classes to take, how to manage your limited time, and how you can start prepping for your articling recruit.

This guide will also highlight some strategies to help take care of your mental health. 2L contains a ton of pressure and hard work; making burnout and anxiety common among law students. It's important that you make time to give yourself a well-deserved break.

We hope this guide helps answer some of your pressing questions as you pass the halfway mark at Robson Hall!

- [MLSA 2021-2022](#)



2L: WHAT NOW?

Your second year at Robson Hall is when you get to focus on your unique interests and really start to shape your legal career.

2L is widely considered the most stressful of your law school years. You're juggling a demanding course load, volunteering or work expectations, and starting to prepare for the articling recruit. It's a lot!

While you're already familiar with the law school setting after 1L, **there are still a bunch of 'firsts' that happen in 2L.** This is the year where you can try out for moots, participate in Negotiation exercises, and begin to hone your legal advocacy skills. Finally, at the end of the year, you'll submit your applications and interview for an articling position during the articling recruit.

The key to successfully navigating 2L is to stay organized (harder said than done, we know!) and manage your time effectively. Be realistic about your workload when you take on projects. Make sure you give yourself enough time to study for classes, fulfill your work or volunteer commitments, and have some down time for yourself.



2L: Picking Your Courses

1. WHAT'S REQUIRED?

You don't have complete freedom when picking your classes in 2L! There are 5 required courses that you need to take in order to pass the year and graduate. You are also required to take **at least** 1 Written course of your choice. The required classes are:

- **Administrative Law** (LAW-3530)
- **Intro to Advocacy** (LAW-2650 - pass/fail)
- **Corporations I** (LAW-2690)
- **Evidence** (LAW-2602)
- **Intro to Negotiations** (LAW-2680 - pass/fail)
- **1 Written course** of your choice (see course timetable for options)

2. WHAT'S RECOMMENDED?

Though not required courses, there are 4 classes that students are strongly recommended to take in 2L. These are:

- **Civil Procedure** (LAW-2672)
- **Family Law** (LAW-2640)
- **Income Tax & Policy** (LAW-2700)
- **Trusts** (LAW-2490)

You don't necessarily have to take all 4 in 2L, but you may want to choose some based on your interests and where you plan to apply for articling.

3. WHAT ELECTIVES DO YOU NEED?

So, you figured out how to schedule your required courses and picked a couple of the recommended ones. The final step is to consider what courses you may need for your particular interest area, or to be considered for certain jobs. Make sure you do your own personal research, but some examples are:

- **Criminal: Charter Issues in Criminal Law** (LAW-3590) is needed to take Intensive Crim in 3L. Employers often look for Charter Crim if applying for crim articling positions.
- **Business:** While your electives will be based on what area of business law you're interested in, **Income Tax** (LAW-2700) and **Civil Procedure** (LAW-2672) are helpful essentials.
- **Medium/Small Firm:** If you want to be at a smaller firm, you'll want to be well-rounded for your practice. Consider courses like **Family** (LAW-2640), **Income Tax** (LAW-2700), and **Wills and Succession** (LAW-2400).

ACADEMICS: A RECAP

A refresher on how to make it through your classes.

By 2L, you probably have a solid grasp on how law courses and exams work. But, that doesn't mean your worries about legal content, studying, and exams have disappeared. To help with managing your course work, **we've gathered some strategies that can help with your courses during 2L.**

What are some studying strategies?

- **Read strategically.**
 - Sometimes the relevant part of a case is only a paragraph, or even a sentence. Check the class topic on the syllabus, and utilize the term search function on CanLii or Westlaw. You'll save yourself a ton of time!
- **Take good notes.**
 - This will help keep the course content organized in your mind, and easier to understand when you review. Colour coding your notes also helps break them up into more manageable chunks when you start studying.
- **Take your time going through lectures if they are recorded.**
 - If you don't understand a concept, rewind and listen until it *mostly* makes sense. Trust us, you'll be happy you took the time when exam season rolls around.

What are some exam prep strategies?

- **Create your own class outlines.**
 - This helps you review, make connections between concepts, and have a concise set of notes for the exam.
- **Read the most important cases again (or for the 1st time!).**
 - The main cases in the course are usually great for summarizing the major legal concepts in a clear way, and can help you review quickly.
- **Give yourself enough time to study.**
 - Factor in the time it will take to study for multiple exams and write papers. Remember, both will take significantly longer to do than in undergrad.

ACADEMICS: WHAT'S NEW

With 1L now under your belt, you probably have a better idea of what to expect from your law courses and exams. 2L provides the opportunity to **fine-tune your approach to studying** based on how successful it was in 1L. Use your prior experience to pinpoint where you need to improve; whether that's in organization, note-taking, or exam writing.

What should you think about when choosing classes?

When creating your schedule for 2L, remember to keep final exams and class papers in mind. If you can, try to balance your finals schedule somewhat evenly between exams and papers. It can be extremely difficult to juggle more than 3 exams, or more than 2 final papers at the end of the term.

In 2L, you get to choose some of your classes based on your own interests. **Remember to keep the upcoming articling recruit in mind when choosing electives.** If you want to article in criminal law, you should choose courses that are justice related. If you want to go the corporate route, you should pick classes related to tax, securities, and corporations. If you want to be at a smaller firm, you should be well-rounded and choose courses related to tax, family, and wills. **Make sure your class choices reflect where you want to be articling.**



What are clinical classes?

While your courses in 1L revolve exclusively around case law and theory, in 2L you'll be introduced to clinical classes. **Negotiations** lets you practice your skills individually and in pairs, with the top groups moving onto the Negotiation Competition in 3L. **Advocacy** allows you to develop your opening, closing, direct and cross-examination skills; all of which are critical for advocating in court. The top students in this class are selected to participate in the Solomon Greenberg Moot in 3L.

MOOTING

For those who love a good argument.

Good news, once you start 2L you can officially try out for moot competitions! **Moots are simulated court/arbitration/negotiation competitions that help law students develop their legal and oral advocacy skills.**

Moots can also be used towards your class credit hours. Many of the moots are specialized into specific legal practice areas (e.g. tax, crim, family), meaning there's one for almost every interest!

To compete in a moot, **you are required to try out** in early September and then rank your preferred moots. If you're selected for a team, the moot will replace one of your classes in the Winter term.

Other moot competitions are selected based on your in-class performance, including:

- The Solomon Greenberg (based on Advocacy)
- Robson Hall Negotiation Competition (based on Negotiations)

For a listing of all the different moots and their topic areas, please see <https://law.robsonhall.com/programs/jd/clinical-learning/mooting-program/>. If you'd like more info on trying out, or some mooting advice, contact the MLSA's Clinical Experience Committee!



TIME MANAGEMENT

Even more necessary than coffee.

One of the most difficult parts of your 2L year is managing your time. There are multiple draws on your time; including school work, volunteering, professional work (like writing cover letters or applying for jobs), and trying to maintain a social life. It can be seriously stressful trying to manage all these different areas. Time management is one of the most critical skills you have to master in 2L, and it will pay off in your legal career as well. **Here are a few tips to effectively manage your time, and avoid burnout:**

- **Be careful not to take on too much.**
 - While it may be tempting to build your resume with a large amount of volunteering projects, remember you still have to balance school, work, and some time for yourself throughout the year. It's better to do fewer things very well, rather than doing a lot of projects at a subpar level!
- **Prioritize your work and commitments.**
 - In 2L, sometimes it feels like you have 3-4 full time jobs. Work on projects in order of seriousness and due date. Make sure critical tasks like exams and job applications get the appropriate amount of time they need as well.
- **Use reminders.**
 - Pre-set reminders on your calendar to keep track of and remind yourself of class due dates, job application deadlines, or when to start studying. It can be very helpful to input all your dates at the start of the semester as well. Your future self will thank you!
- **Create daily to-do lists.**
 - Highlight your priorities for the day and what needs to get done. This can help break down large, overwhelming tasks into doable pieces. This can also push you get over procrastination.
- **Utilize Excel spreadsheets.**
 - These can be used for keeping track of the articling or summer job application deadlines, course work, and more. It helps to have all your dates and info laid out in one spot where you can access it quickly; rather than searching through handouts and emails.
- **Make time for yourself.**
 - Go for a walk, listen to music, do something that helps you relax. This is necessary to avoid serious burnout. Don't feel guilty about taking a much-deserved break!

MENTAL HEALTH

An often overlooked part of being a law student.

2L (and law school in general) is an extremely demanding time for most students. The stress from your course load, trying to find a summer job and an articling position, volunteering expectations, and maintaining your personal life can take a serious negative toll on your mental health. **The competitive law school environment can also exacerbate these pressures, and make you feel as if you are the only person struggling.** We can assure you that's not the case. Anxiety, depression, insomnia, and isolation are common issues for both law students and lawyers in the field.

We've put together some strategies to help you manage and improve your mental health during the challenging 2L year. Our hope is that by openly discussing the mental health challenges faced by law students, we will be better equipped to deal with these issues and improve the experiences of all Robson Hall students.

For even more resources, check out our upcoming Mental Health Resource Book located on the MLSA website, or reach out to the RH Mental Health Group. **Please remember, these resources are not a substitute for professional help.** If you're experiencing feelings of helplessness or self-harm, call a crisis line or make an appointment to speak with a counselor.



MENTAL HEALTH

Making your mental health a priority is a struggle for the vast majority of law students. With the serious time constraints and expectations placed on you in 2L, it can feel hard to justify taking a break from your work to focus on your wellbeing. Remember though, taking the time to value your mental health will pay dividends for you overall. **We've compiled a range of strategies to help you combat stress, feel healthier, and get through a challenging year.**

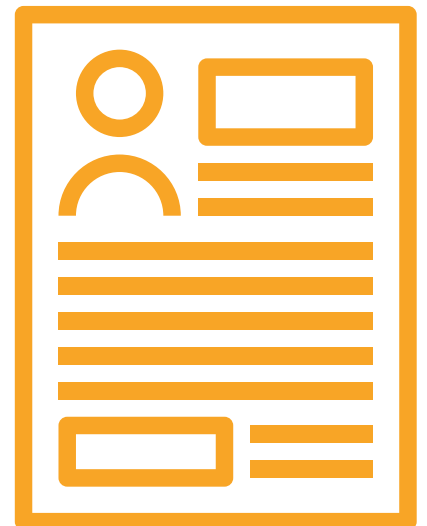
- **Don't feel pressured to take on more than you can handle.**
 - While it's easy to get caught up in building your resume or trying to match what other students are doing, don't be afraid to put a limit on your extracurricular activities. Be realistic about how much time you can actually give, and choose the opportunities that stand out to you the most.
- **Take a break.**
 - Sometimes you just need a break from your law courses and activities. Taking some time for yourself to do something you enjoy can help you stay grounded and focused. Don't feel guilty about taking a break, or the occasional day off.
- **Squeeze in some physical activity.**
 - Whether it's playing a sport, heading to the gym, or just going for a walk; some exercise can help you refresh and clear your thoughts.
- **Get and/or stay organized.**
 - We know it's easier said than done! However, keeping track of important dates, staying on top of readings, and making solid notes will help relieve some of your stress throughout the year.
- **Talk to people who are not in law.**
 - Your friends and family outside of law school can help give you some much needed perspective, and remind you that there is more to life than studying and work obligations.
- **Get some sleep.**
 - All-nighters are a common occurrence in law school. Make sure you get some sleep and stay in a routine (most of the time anyway). Trust us, things won't seem so bad after you've slept for a few hours.
- **Talk to a counsellor.**
 - If you're experiencing feelings of isolation, helplessness, or self-harm; it's time to seek the support of a professional. The Student Counselling Centre on campus can help put you into contact with a counsellor who can meet your needs as a law student. **However, if you feel at risk for harming yourself, call:**
 - Klinik Crisis Line: 204-786-8686 (can also call to be directed to different resources)
 - Mobile Crisis Service: 204-940-1781
 - Manitoba Suicide Prevention and Support Line: 1-877-435-7170

PROFESSIONAL KNOW-HOW

The key to getting your dream articling job.

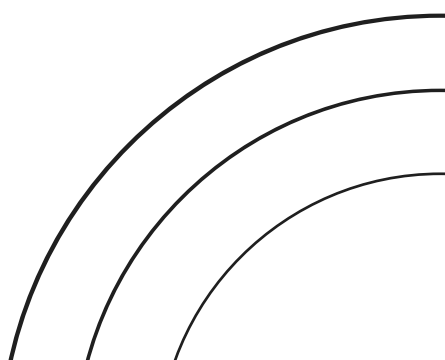
In 2L, a large chunk of your time will be devoted to preparing for the summer job and articling recruits. This not only includes building up your legal experience with volunteering projects, but also revising your resume, writing cover letters, finding references, and keeping track of application due dates. Trying to find a job quickly becomes one itself! While this section isn't meant to cover everything there is to know about applying for jobs, **we've highlighted some of the most relevant pointers.**

- **Keep track of dates for the summer job and articling recruit.**
 - A lot of important dates can get thrown at you quickly, so make sure you're setting reminders for yourself as they come in, or tracking them in a document.
- **Update your resume and double-check for errors.**
 - Add new accomplishments and activities to your resume as you join them so you don't forget anything. Always ensure there are no grammar, spelling, or formatting errors on your resume before applying to any job.
- **Give yourself enough time to create cover letters.**
 - Crafting unique letters for each application can take more time than you think. You also want to have time to read them over for errors (*do not* use the wrong name). Don't leave them till the night before!



Networking: Do's and Don'ts

2L is the year that requires the most networking as you prepare for the upcoming articling recruit. Though you're probably a pro by now, **here's a quick refresher on the do's and don'ts.**

- **Do show off your personality.** While making a good impression is important, you also want the lawyers to get to know *you*. Don't change your personality just because you're networking.
 - **Do check the dress code beforehand.** You'll feel very awkward being the only person under- or over-dressed. If not specified, assume the dress code is business professional.
 - **Do talk about topics that are non-law related.** Lawyers at events have probably heard the same questions about their practice or articling program 100 times. Talk about something that can spark a genuine interest and connection.
 - **Don't drink too much.** While an open bar is tempting (especially if you're nervous!), being drunk isn't a good look.
 - **Don't hog the conversation.** We're sure your next point was fascinating, but let other people have a chance to talk too!
 - **Don't try out a new look the day of an event.** Wear something you trust and feel confident in. It's not the day to break in new shoes or try a different hairstyle.
 - **Don't worry too much.** Networking is stressful, but don't overthink it. It's just one part of finding a job!
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THE ARTICLING RECRUIT

Otherwise known as law student free agency.

What is the articling recruit?

For most students, 2L is defined by the articling recruit that takes place at the end of the year. **The articling recruit is where you apply, interview, and ultimately receive an offer to article at one of the available legal firms or agencies.** The process is highly structured, with different stages and deadlines throughout the recruit. The articling recruit is the culmination of your hard work at law school, where you will use all your developed professional skills. It is completely normal to feel stressed out and nervous about the recruit. **To help ease your nerves and to provide some clarity, we've broken down the structure of the recruit and what each stage entails.**

When does the recruit happen?

The majority of Robson Hall students participate in the Manitoba recruit that takes place from May-June each year. The firms, agencies, or businesses participating in the recruit will be posted on the Robson Hall Job Board a couple months prior to the start of the recruit. **Articling applications for all employers will mostly be due on the same day.**

Many students also apply to later recruits in Alberta, Ontario and BC; with most occurring at the end of June-early July. The employers participating in those recruits will also be posted to the Job Board.

Where to Apply?

There are many different places to article after law school. Though a lot of the conversation centres around big corporate firms, there's many other options as well! **Some options you'll want to think about applying to are:**

- **A big firm**
 - 'The Big 5'
- **A mid-size firm**
 - Myers LLP
 - D'arcy & Deacon
- **A small/boutique firm**
 - Hill Sokalski Walsh
 - Marr Finlayson Pollock
- **A rural firm**
 - Smith Neufeld Jodoin LLP
- **In-house counsel**
 - MB Hydro, MPI
- **A non-profit**
 - Legal Help Centre
- **A government agency/branch**
 - MB Prosecutions Service
 - Legal Aid MB
 - Public Interest Law Centre
 - Department of Justice/Public Prosecution Service of Canada
 - Legal Services Branch

ARTICLING APPLICATIONS

Showing the hiring committee how great you are.

Articling applications are the first major step in the recruitment process. While each firm or agency has its own requirements for its articling application, the usual pieces are your resume, a cover letter, and your law school transcript. While we can't cover everything there is to know here, **here's the info that you need to know to craft your articling applications.**

- **Make sure your resume has no errors.**
 - This is a key part of your articling applications. Double and triple check your resume to ensure there are no biographical errors or grammar mistakes. You can also contact the MLSA Professional Development Committee Co-Chairs if you'd like advice, or want fresh eyes to read your over resume!
- **Write cover letters that are addressed properly, and are tailored to each employer.**
 - Always do a read-through before you submit a cover letter, and make sure the name and address of the employer are correct. Your cover letter should also be specific to the place you are applying to. Even if your experiences and skills are the same, frame them in a way that is tailored for each application.
- **Order transcripts in advance.**
 - Getting your law or undergrad transcripts can take longer than expected. Save yourself the last minute panic and order them at least a month in advance.
- **Ensure your references are willing to be listed for you.**
 - Don't submit someone as a reference if you haven't checked if they are willing to be one! Even if they've previously agreed, it doesn't hurt to ask them again. If they still agree, then at least they got the heads up that they'll be receiving some calls.

THE ARTICLING RECRUIT

How should I approach applications?

When deciding on which places to apply to, **our recommendation is to consider your interests, and then cast a wide net for yourself.** This approach will ensure you are considered for a broad assortment of positions, and can provide you with options in case your top choice doesn't pan out.

Because each employer requires you to provide different pieces in their articling application (e.g. some will want your transcript, others may not), **it can be helpful to create an Excel spreadsheet or document listing each place and what the application asks for.** That way, you can easily reference what you need to submit, and not get confused between places. Finally, remember to keep the application date in mind. **Set reminders in advance, this isn't a deadline you want to forget!**

What is 'interview call day'?

This is the day when interested employers will call you to schedule an articling interview. **All requests for an interview must be made on this day, usually between 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.** Interviews also have to be scheduled within the pre-determined 'interview week' dates. As calls start to come in, **make sure you have your calendar or notes handy** so you can write down dates, times, and locations for your interviews. **Also have your email in front of you,** as some places will send interview requests that way. Finally, **make sure you give yourself enough time between interviews when scheduling** so you don't have to worry about being late for the next one! Interview call day is normally scheduled for 2 weeks after application deadlines.



THE ARTICLING RECRUIT

What is 'interview week'?

Interview week normally happens 2 weeks after the interview call day. **This is the week where you will meet with all interested employers for articling interviews.** This week can get particularly hectic, so make sure you have a plan for each day of interviews. Do some research on the employer beforehand, review your application resume and cover letter, and plan out your outfit. Also, keep in mind that **you may be asked to do callback interviews later in the week.** It can be helpful to keep your schedule clear for the last couple of days of the week to leave room for callbacks. For more tips on interviewing, see page 19 of this guide.

What is 'offer day'?

The articling offer day is when employers can officially make you an offer to article with them. Offer day takes place immediately after the interview week concludes, and normally starts at 2 p.m. If you receive an offer on this day, you have until 10 a.m. the next day to accept or reject it. **However, remember to be considerate to your fellow classmates and the employers.** If you know you won't accept an offer, communicate that promptly so the employer can offer the position to someone else, and another student can stop feeling stressed!

What happens after?

If you've accepted an articling offer, congrats! One of the big pressures from law school has been taken off your shoulders. **If you didn't receive an offer, don't panic.** There are still recruits happening in other provinces, and more articling positions become available throughout the 3L year. Continue to keep an eye out for positions, and contact Robson's Career Development Office. They can help you come up with a plan moving forward.

INTERVIEWS

Get ready to talk about yourself *a lot*.

A critical part of the articling recruit is the interviews. **While grades and your resume get your foot in the door, interviews are where decisions about offers really get made.** Quite simply, this is where employers decide if they want to work with you. However, interviews are also excellent opportunities for you to see who you get along with, and clarify where *you* want to work. **See our tips below for how to effectively interview, and get the position you want!**

- **Dress business professional, even if it's online.**
 - The dress code for interviews is always business professional, even if they are taking place over Zoom. Remember, the day of your interview isn't the time to try out a new look, go with something trustworthy and that makes you feel confident.
- **Don't assume the interviewer remembers every part of your resume or cover letter.**
 - Chances are the person interviewing you has seen a lot of applications. When answering questions, make sure you clearly reference your work, volunteering, and academic experiences. Don't leave it to the interviewer to remember.
- **Be clear about why you make sense for the position.**
 - This isn't the time to be modest about yourself or your accomplishments. Highlight the skills, experiences, and interests you have, and how you would apply them to the position. Tell the interviewer why you're the best choice for them.
- **Talk about your background like you're telling a story.**
 - This helps frame your resume into something more personal and entertaining to the interviewer. The ending of the 'story' should be that you want to work with that employer, along with explaining the reasons why you're ready for that position.
- **Demonstrate your own personality.**
 - Though you still want to maintain professionalism, showing off your unique personality and being friendly can help an interviewer remember you, and demonstrates that you would be a good fit at that workplace. Even if your personality doesn't mesh well with that of the interviewer, that can help you determine it's not the right workplace for you.
- **Ask questions.**
 - This is your chance to get any of your questions for an employer answered. The answers you get can also help you determine how you want to rank your options. Ask questions about your future with that employer after articling ends, what the work obligations are, and anything else important to you.

