

**Best practice standards  
for a safe and appropriate culture and environment for law students  
employed in law firms**

Agreed by the Deans of Law of the New Zealand Law Schools

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1. The Law Deans expect that law students are always treated appropriately, including not being subjected to harassment (including bullying, harassment and sexual harassment), and that law firms will provide support for law students who encounter such difficulties in summer clerkships , internships and work experience placements.
  2. Law firms are expected:
    - (a) To have strong policies to prevent and deal with harassment (including bullying, harassment and sexual harassment), inappropriate use of alcohol (including at staff functions) and inappropriate relationships in the workplace (including where there are power imbalances such as when one of the parties is a student).
    - (b) To inform and train partners and staff on these policies and relevant procedures.

Examples of good practice include developing bullying and harassment prevention seminars and training, implementing Sexual Abuse Prevention Network training for all staff, appointing harassment officers/ contact people and holding meetings to discuss the issues. It is important that training and other measures taken are meaningful and effective and promote reflection and discussion.
    - (c) To inform summer clerks and interns about these policies and relevant procedures.

Examples of good practice include allowing a reasonable amount of time to discuss these issues in the induction programme, and holding workshops for summer clerks, interns and law students on work experience (hereafter called 'law students') about how to deal with and report harassment and bullying. There are significant advantages to workshoping these issues with law students so they actively think about what is and is not acceptable. Anonymised examples can be given and law students can be asked to consider what they would do if they became aware that another law student was being harassed or bullied.
    - (d) To inform law students about the support available from their law schools and to inform law schools of students holding summer clerkships, internships and work experience positions.

Law Deans should be contacted each year for a statement of the support available and who can be contacted at the Law School if a law student experiences harassment or inappropriate behaviour in a law firm. Law firms should include this with the induction documentation they provide to law students and should draw attention to this during the induction programme.

At the same time law firms should each year advise each law school of the names of its students holding summer clerkships, internships or engaged in work experience.
    - (e) To have strong complaint and support mechanisms, both within the law firm and outside of and independent from the law firm.

Examples of good practice include being proactive in asking law students about how their time in the firm has been and the type of work they have been given, having employee assistance programmes, and other external and independent complaints and support people, and regularly evaluating their effectiveness.
  3. The law firms will be asked to commit to these best practice standards and to provide a brief report to the Law Deans at the start of each new academic year on how they are meeting these.
  4. The Law Deans will regularly survey students who have undertaken summer clerkships, internships and work experience and will discuss the results with the law firms.
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