



Frequently Asked Questions

Following are some questions that law students frequently ask about life and work at Patterson Law.

What's it like to work at Patterson Law?

Patterson Law is a very dynamic and rewarding place to work. Students work closely with lawyers who have a passion for everything they do, including the law. Students quickly become members of the team, working on some of the most challenging and interesting matters at the firm. You will be treated with respect, allowed to make mistakes, and encouraged to explore and develop your own professional and personal goals.

What are your main areas of practice?

Patterson Law offers clients the full range of legal resources. We are particularly recognized and sought-after for our depth and expertise in commercial transactions, tax law and insurance litigation.

Our Corporate/Commercial practice provides students with exposure to most areas of business law, including general corporate/commercial, tax, corporate finance, financial services, real estate, estate planning and environmental law.

Similarly, students will gain experience in most areas of our litigation practice, such as commercial litigation, employment and labour law, insurance and professional liability, product liability, health law, construction and class actions.

How many lawyers work at Patterson Law?

We have a combined total of 43 lawyers, with 20 lawyers based in our Truro office, 20 in Halifax and 3 in New Glasgow.

How many hours will I be expected to work?

We do not set a billable hours target for students. While we expect our students to record their time and to carry

a workload similar to that of our associates, the emphasis of our student program is on learning and skills development. We look at recorded hours for students to determine if they are getting enough work and are learning how to properly manage files.

Associates have a target of 1,600 billable hours per year and 300 non-billable hours per year. Every associate is also assigned a financial target.

What benefits are articling students entitled to?

Students qualify for the employee benefits plan, which incorporates general health care coverage, prescription drug and disability insurance. Articling students also are eligible for two weeks of holidays at a time mutually agreeable to the student and the firm.

What does Patterson Law pay articulated students?

Our salaries are revised every year and are competitive in our local market.

What do you look for in students you hire?

We are looking for intelligent and interesting people who will bring something special to our diverse group of lawyers and who are a good "fit" for our firm. We are looking for candidates who have high standards and who have demonstrated a commitment to excellence, whether academically or through other activities and interests. Basically, we are looking for intelligent, well rounded people who have the potential to become excellent lawyers.

Can I do my articling in a specific area of law?

You will work with many different lawyers in many practice areas, but we will consider your specific interests and provide an opportunity to develop areas of personal legal interest to you.

How many articling students do you hire?

We typically hire 2-4 articling students each year.

What documents should I include in my application?

You should include your resume, a cover letter, and a copy of law school and post-secondary transcripts.

What happens during the interview?

On-campus interviews are typically 20 minutes long to allow us to meet as many candidates as possible. Students invited for second round interviews are invited to the firm where they will meet with members of the Recruiting Committee for about an hour. They will ask questions that allow them to get to know you better, and give you the opportunity to tell about your professional abilities, personal qualities and interests. You will also be given a tour of our office.

During the interview you should feel free to ask any questions which are important to you. We understand that choosing a law firm can be a difficult and stressful process. We also understand the need to balance work and life, and want to ensure you are as comfortable with us as we are with you.

Do I have to work as a summer student before articling?

No, but a summer job with the firm allows you to get acquainted with the firm and makes the articling experience easier. As many of our students are asked to return as articulated clerks, summering with us is the best opportunity to acquire an articling position.

What factors figure into the hire-back decision?

The decision to offer a student an associate position at the end of the articling year is based on the student's performance during the articling year and the growth required by Patterson Law. We regularly hire our articling students as associates.

What sort of office and resources will I have?

Students are provided with private offices, digital dictation and laptop computers. We maintain a high level of technology and provide all of our students with training in and access to numerous electronic research tools, specialized legal software, our permanent library collection and precedents from the firm's various practice groups.

Our computer network is maintained by full-time IT staff. Every firm member has their own personal computer or laptop, which are upgraded regularly. All users enjoy the use of MS Outlook for email, MS Explorer for internet access, MS Word for word processing, Lighthouse, our full integrated legal accounting, time and billing software, and Bighand digital dictation.

We utilize specialized software products to assist various groups in their practice of law. Members of our litigation group enjoy the use of Summation Litigation Database, which provides document organization and management functions. Our corporate department employs Emergent corporate database software, which allows us to manage data and generate documents/reports for the corporations that we act for. We also utilize automation software to assist our real estate group in document generation for real estate transactions. All of our document production is integrated with Hummingbird DM, a document management system providing easy access and sharing throughout the firm.

Our Voice-Over-IP electronic messaging system allows our lawyers and students to access their phone messages, emails and faxes through their inbox in Outlook.

Feel free to contact a member of our Student Committee with questions regarding our firm or programs.

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