

WAITING TO CLERK: COUNSELING ALUMNI CLERKSHIP APPLICANTS

Increasingly clerkship advisors are being contacted by graduates who are pursuing clerkship opportunities. The charts below address the different categories of graduates and some key consideration to have in mind when providing support to them.

Considerations for New Grads

New Grads are those graduates who have been out of school for roughly 0-2 years.

Category	Notes
Advising	• May need to provide baseline information as they often have not fully educated themselves about the clerkship process yet • Important to understand the scope of their search (especially as to court type and geography) and their reason for clerking • Be prepared to talk about how clerking may impact their career progression • NOTE: these graduates often overlook state court clerkship opportunities
Timing	• Explain how the federal hiring plan guidelines may impact them (even though they are not formally restricted by the plan) • Discuss which opportunities have rolling application timelines and which have fixed application periods • Encourage them to watch for new judicial nominations and appointments in their target markets and to be ready to apply
Application Materials	• Discuss when and how to use older writing samples • Address how to secure recommendation letters, in particular how to reconnect with faculty members and the potential value in securing a letter from their current employer • Talk about resume content and the order of sections
Employer Considerations	• Understand long-term career goals, including their job plans for immediately post-clerkship • Address when and how to disclose search to current employer

Considerations for Experienced Grads

Experienced Grads are those graduates who have been out of school for 2+ years.

Category	Notes
Advising	• Frequently prompted to apply because of a specific opportunity • Interactions may feel more transactional as they are looking for guidance on proper etiquette and for technical support • Important to understand the scope of the search (court type and geography) as well as the reason for clerking
Timing	• Manage their expectations about how long it may take to assemble their materials and be ready to apply • Explain how the federal hiring plan guidelines may impact them (even though they are not formally restricted by the plan) • Discuss which opportunities have rolling application timelines and which have fixed application periods
Application Materials	• Encourage them to use a post-law school writing sample, even if that means they have to invest time to create a new one • Address how to secure recommendation letters, highlighting the value in having a variety of perspectives represented • Talk about resume content and the order of sections • Help them to draft a cover letter that clearly addresses why they want to clerk now and how it fits into their career plans
Employer Considerations	• Discuss how securing a later career clerkship might be viewed as less valuable by their current employer • Understand long-term career goals, including their job plans for immediately post-clerkship • Talk about securing a reference from current employer • Address when and how to disclose search to current employer

Considerations for Planning Ahead Grads

Planning Ahead Grads are those graduates who have planned to defer their clerkship searches. Typically, they are seeking, or have sought, initial guidance as 2L or 3L students and are planning to work on the actual application process after they graduate.

Category	Notes
Advising	• Hopefully initial conversation is/was as a student • If still a student, establish a regular check in plan and have a planning meeting just before they apply • If still a student, encourage them to be actively networking in advance of their expected application period • If now a graduate, make sure to provide current landscape as their assumptions may be outdated or no longer accurate • If now a graduate, take some time to confirm their career goals, and, if their goals have changed, reassess their overall strategy to ensure that it still aligns with their goals
Timing	• Emphasize that application timelines sometimes change and address how they can stay up-to-date as they wait to apply • Discuss which opportunities have rolling application timelines and which have fixed application periods • Encourage them to watch for new judicial nominations and appointments in their target markets and to be ready to apply
Application Materials	• If still a student: • Assess the potential weaknesses in their application packet and develop a plan to enhance those areas of concern • Encourage them to consider identifying one or two potential writing samples now • Have them develop a plan to stay in touch with their potential faculty recommenders • If now a graduate: • Talk about resume content and order of sections • Discuss their chosen writing sample and their selection of recommenders to ensure they are still the best options
Employer Considerations	• Address when and how to disclose search to current employer • Understand long-term career goals, including their job plans for immediately post-clerkship • Talk about securing a reference from current employer

Considerations for Gap Year Grads

Gap Year Grads, while not always alumni applicants in the truest sense, are those graduates who have already secured at least one “gap-year” clerkship. They usually need support as they navigate the process of preparing for their clerkship and as they attempt to fill their gap year(s) with fulfilling legal experiences. This category of graduates may also include candidates who secure multiple, non-consecutive clerkships. These graduates often need the most support in navigating non-clerkship considerations.

Category	Notes
Advising	• Usually possess a solid understanding of the application process • Often need very specific guidance about how to secure “gap-year” employment • May need to counsel them on not pursuing another clerkship • Want to be sensitive to securing the “right” experiences in order to preserving eligibility for public sector opportunities
Timing	• Help them to identify which opportunities may help them fill their gap-year and when they need to apply • Encourage them to watch for new judicial nominations and appointments in their target markets and to be ready to apply
Application Materials	• Discuss how to present the clerkship that has already been secured on their resume and in their cover letters • Encourage them to do an assessment of their overall packet to ensure that they are still including the best possible elements
Employer Considerations	• Disclose early and be clear about clerkship commitment • Be prepared to ask the “gap-year” employer to adjust in light of clerkship, especially if helps to lessen or eliminate a break in employment between the two positions



**NALP 2022
ANNUAL
EDUCATION
CONFERENCE**

New Orleans, Louisiana April 5–8

Waiting to Clerk: Counseling Alumni Clerkship Applicants

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Agenda

- **Introductions**
- **Types of Alumni Applicants**
- **Key Considerations**
- **Take Aways**
- **Questions**

New Grads:
0-2 years out

**Experienced
Grads:**
2+ years out

Types of Candidates

**Planning Ahead
Students:**
**Targeting later
term clerkships**

**Gap Year
Students:**
**Secured clerkship
for 1-2 years out**

What is Motivating Them?

Geography

Career
Change

Professional
Advancement

Referral

Stronger
Credentials

Second
Chance

What Do They Know? (or Need to Know!)

Assess their market knowledge and procedural understanding

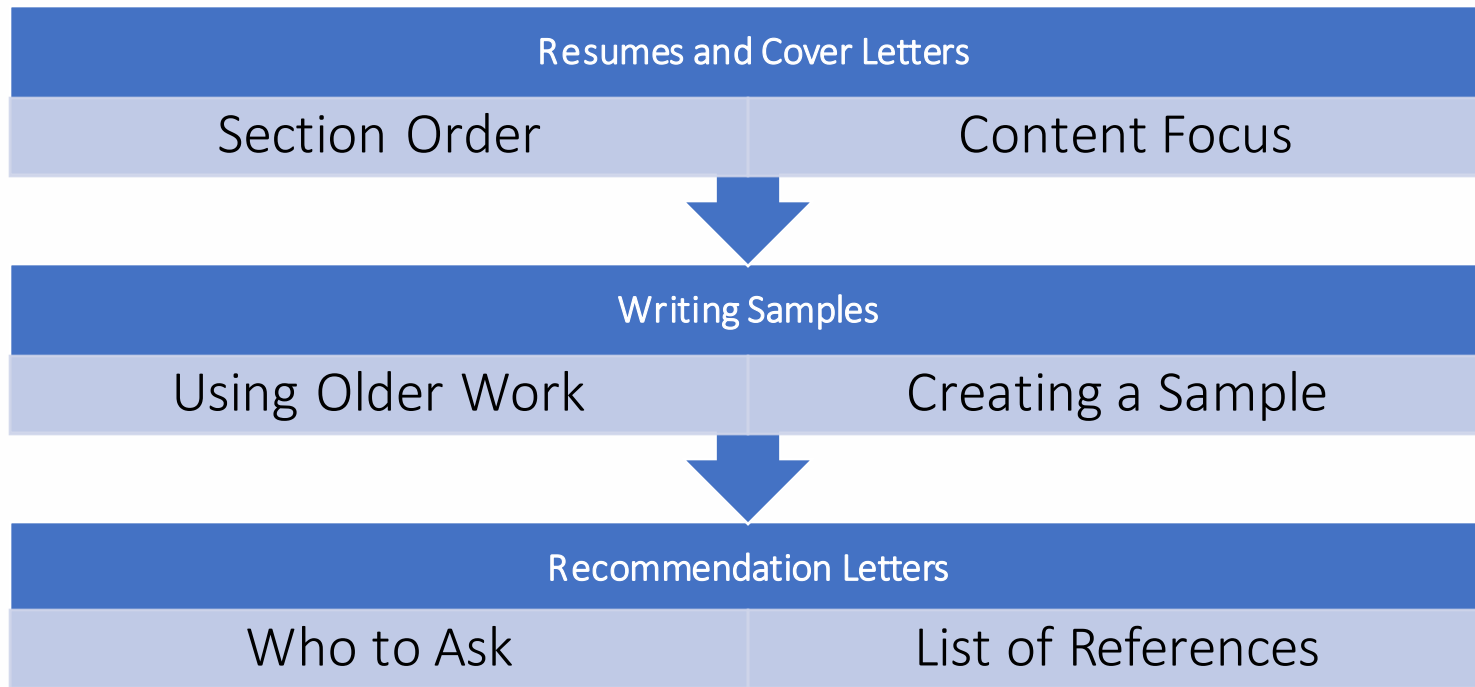
Be prepared to discuss professional goals holistically

0-2 Years	2+ Years	Planning Ahead	Gap Years
Need basic info, especially as to options and timing Discuss career impact	May be focused on a specific opportunity Know the post- clerkship career plan	May have outdated assumptions Confirm goals have not changed	Want to talk about managing gap time May search for a 2nd clerkship

What's Their Timeline?

- **Ask them about their expectations**
 - Know when they want to clerk
 - Understand when they want to apply
- **Be prepared to educate them**
 - Deliver factual details in a clear, direct manner
 - Remember you are the expert
- **Manage their expectations in a positive way**
 - Limited time and annual application windows exist
 - Immediate opportunities are not always available

Reviewing Their Application Materials



Providing Support to Them

Services

- Personal advising
- Material reviews
- Support for letters of recommendation
- Practice interviews

Resources

- Short nuts & bolts style documents
- Access to postings
- Periodic newsletter
- Judicial information database, including former clerk list

Programming

- On demand and hybrid events
- Mock interviews
- Preparing to clerk workshops

Working with Other Employers

- **Know the employer's clerkship policies**
 - Big Law: opportunities, bonuses, and progression
 - Government and fellowships: time commitments and retaining eligibility
- **Communicate clear information in a timely fashion**
 - Hoping to return: share early and have a plan
 - Just leaving: be thoughtful about timing and stay positive
 - In a time-limited role: discuss how your timing needs
 - Have multiple non-consecutive clerkships: understand it's complicated
- **Plan ahead for long-term career goals**

Take Aways

Reaching Grads

- Use your website effectively to advertise clerkship services
- Collaborate with other offices who support grads
- Monitor OSCAR or letter of recommendation activity

Managing Time

- Set boundaries on services (and accept that interactions may be more direct and transactional)
- Scale out your resources and programming
- Reach out to NALP colleagues

Questions?

Thank you for joining us! We can be reached at:

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