

Sussex Law School

HUMAN RIGHTS LAW CLINIC

INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

Sussex Law School's *Human Rights Law Clinic* is a programme providing graduate students in the LLM in International Human Rights Law with the opportunity to work with real clients, on real issues.

Who is eligible to participate as a student in the Clinic?

The Human Rights Law Clinic is an optional module in the LLM International Human Rights Law at the University of Sussex. It is only available to students who are enrolled in that degree or the LLM (Generic), who have elected to take the International Human Rights Law stream, and who have successfully completed the core module on International Human Rights Law.

What type of projects will be available?

The type of client projects depends on the clients that engage with the Clinic each year. Generally speaking, project briefings may be on any thematic or country-specific issue concerning the application or implementation of international or regional human rights law, framed within the context of a legal question(s).

To get a sense of what to expect, have a look at past papers produced by the Human Rights Law Clinic here: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/schrr/clinic/papers>

Why be a student in the Clinic?

The Clinic provides students with the chance to build on law and theory through the preparation of pro bono legal opinions for real clients. This offers the opportunity to gain practical insights and to undertake research, and formulate advice and recommendations, on contemporary human rights challenges. Students work on specific legal questions related to international human rights law coming from clients, such as intergovernmental organisations, non-governmental organisations and lawyers working in human rights. The Clinic is convened by a human rights academic with experience of engaging with practitioners, NGOs and inter-governmental organisations and all students will be supervised by an academic member of faculty with a specialism in human rights. By working in pairs or 3s students gain experience of group work and through regular work in progress meetings with the entire cohort, students to learn from, and provide input to, each other's work.

How does the Clinic operate?

Depending on the complexity and nature of the legal opinions sought, students work in pairs or 3s to produce memoranda for their clients, following a process of consultation with clients, close supervision, oversight and review by the Clinic's convenor, seminar discussions on work in progress, and

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presentations to clients of draft memoranda. Students should be aware that the Clinic involves considerable work in the early stages of the Spring Term.

By way of overview:

- Based on student preferences, client projects are allocated by the Clinic convenor at the beginning of the Clinic. All efforts are made to ensure that students are able to undertake one of their first preferences, but this cannot be guaranteed. Students will also be placed in small 'teams'.
- A series of short meetings between each client and Clinic student teams is convened during week 2 of the Spring Term to discuss the project and the development of 'issues papers'.
- Issues papers are developed in consultation with the academic supervisor, explaining the aims of the research to be undertaken, describing the methodology and any relevant limitations, and setting out the key issues to be addressed and structure to be adopted in the memoranda. Draft issues papers are presented to other students in week 3 and, once finalized, shared with each client for feedback.
- The bulk of research and drafting is undertaken in weeks 4 to 7 of the Spring Term. This takes place alongside meetings with the academic supervisor and a presentation of work in progress to other students. Where necessary, this may also involve liaising with the client to clarify certain issues. By mid-week 9, each team of students submits a full first draft of their memorandum to their academic supervisor.
- The first draft memoranda are reviewed and commented on by academic supervisors at the end of week 9, following which students prepare revised drafts that are then shared with each client for feedback. These revised drafts will be due for submission mid-week 10.
- The Clinic concludes with oral presentations by each student of the revised memoranda to the clients, each of whom will be given the opportunity to comment and ask questions and/or make suggestions for matters to be considered in the finalization of the memoranda prior to their submission for assessment.

Please note that the Clinic does not operate as a placement programme. Clinic students undertake their work at the University of Sussex under the supervision of the Clinic convenor and an academic supervisor.

Student testimonies

Here is what some of our past Clinic students said about the Human Rights Law Clinic:

"As an aspiring barrister, the Clinic gave me a fantastic opportunity to research cutting edge legal developments, draft a memorandum and present my findings to legal professionals. These essential skills for a budding lawyer could be developed within the Clinic's curriculum."

"The Human Rights Law Clinic provided me with a unique opportunity to see how human rights works in the real world. It challenged and fortified my legal analysis skills. Participation in the Clinic will enrich, fulfill and solidify your knowledge of the law."

"I thoroughly enjoyed the Clinic and found it very fulfilling to undertake a piece of research that really matters. I have used it on job applications to say that I've compiled a report for an intergovernmental organization, and hope this will put me in good stead to find a job with a charity or NGO."

"The Clinic gave a refreshing take on human rights law as we got to see a practical side of the field. Working on an actual issue and writing a memorandum provides one with both an understanding of the particular issue, and how to work on it with a more informed and professional attitude."

"The Human Rights Law Clinic was my favourite module of my LLM. It gave me a great opportunity to liaise with professional clients and respond to a challenging brief. A valuable experience!"

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"I found the Clinic to be a really great way of gaining first-hand experience with what it means to work in the 'real world' of human rights. As soon as I started applying for jobs in the field I realised how valuable it is to be able to demonstrate direct experience with a human rights organisation."

"The Human Rights Law Clinic was undoubtedly the most challenging module I took during my LLM course, but also the most rewarding. Having never worked for a client before, it was a great opportunity to gain experience, and I learnt a lot about managing expectations and writing for a purpose."

"The Human Rights Law Clinic has increased my confidence in working to a brief and interacting with clients to ensure my research is focused and of use to their aims. ... I am proud of what I have been able to achieve and would definitely do it again given the opportunity."

"Being part of the Sussex Human Rights Law Clinic has been a unique and valuable experience. Being able to carry out actual research that is contributing to pursuing accountability for human rights violations against the Rohingya has been highly rewarding. Working for the clinic has provided me with valuable tools for a future career in the practice of human rights defence. The experience has been the highlight of my legal education and I would recommend it to anyone considering the course."