



It's Time to Hire an Articling Student **What Next?**

A resource for Canadian legal employers

For any-sized law firm or office, hiring an articling student can be a significant investment. However, this is even more so when the employer is small and with limited resources. It takes time and money to identify, train, and onboard an articling student — let alone, train the student on the law and practice!

Fortunately, the benefits of hiring an articling student are plentiful.

1. You'll have another set of hands (and a smart, eager brain) to help serve your clients.
2. If you are thinking of growing your practice, taking on an articling student might result in the 'perfect new colleague' after that student is called to the bar.
3. The articling year is a great opportunity to 'try out' the student with no obligation to hire them back after the completion of articles.
4. It offers you the opportunity to pay it forward, and assist a law student in fulfilling the licensing obligations required to be called to the bar.
5. If you only need assistance for a short time, an articling student is a less expensive investment than a full-fledged lawyer, particularly for more basic and introductory work.

It's a win-win!

When and how to hire an articling student?

As you know, each Canadian province has a regulatory body that governs the legal profession, including the licensing of new lawyers.¹ Some of these regulatory bodies also govern when and how an articling student can be hired.

For example, Ontario's hiring guidelines specify application deadlines, "black out" periods during which no recruitment can take place, the day on which an employer can contact a student to book an interview, when an interview can be held, when an offer can be made, and more. Each provincial law society, or local bar association, may have its own hiring guidelines, so familiarize yourself with your local guidelines to ensure you know what to expect from students, and what they are expecting from you. Generally speaking, regulated hiring timelines are quite "early" and often occur at least one (1) year prior to the student's earliest possible articling start date. [Consult your nearest law school career development office for advice on local hiring guidelines and recruitment cycles.](#)



If you wish to hire an articling student, you must follow the applicable hiring guidelines for your province. [The important exception is where you intend to hire a student AFTER the regulated hiring period or have permission from the regulatory body to hire outside the hiring guidelines.](#) Generally, if you wish to hire an articling student after the regulated hiring period, there are no specific guidelines governing how and when the hiring process may take place (aside from the employment laws of the province).

This handout will help you navigate the hiring process [after](#) the regulated hiring period.

How to identify a pool of candidates?

There are several ways to connect with potential articling students.

The first step is to create a job posting. A detailed job posting that describes what you are looking for is your best tool for soliciting a focused pool of applications if you do not wish to be overwhelmed with numerous, generic applications. An ideal job posting will include a description of:

- The job, duties, and responsibilities
- The employer, practice areas, size of firm/type of organization, your "culture"
- What you are looking for in an articling student — skills, qualities, and previous experiences
- Start and end date
- Salary (optional, but helpful to include if it's competitive)
- Application procedure:
 - To whom to apply and how (Email? An online application portal like www.vilawportal.com?)
 - Documents to include
 - Deadline

[Your local law school's career development office can help draft your job posting.](#)

Application documents you will almost always want to receive from a candidate will include:

- A cover letter
- A résumé
- Law school transcripts

The more documents you request, the smaller your applicant pool will be.

Application documents which are generally optional, but which you may want to require as part of your job posting will include:

- Undergraduate transcripts (and graduate transcripts, if applicable)
- Reference letters or a list of references
- A writing sample

Reference letters can be a useful tool for gleaning additional (though generally positive) information about the candidate that is not readily apparent from their cover letter or résumé. A list of references will allow you to conduct reference checks — though generally only for top, shortlisted candidates — where you can ask questions of substance, and really probe into the candidate's work.

If you wish to see a sample of the candidate's legal writing skills prior to their interview, you may wish to request a short (1 to 2 page) writing sample that relates to your practice area, or which responds to an uncomplicated legal question of your choice. Alternatively, if you wish to test the candidate's ability to think and write on the spot, you can ask shortlisted candidates to write a short (1 page) response to an uncomplicated legal question during the interview process.

Once the job description is finalized, the career development office will promote your position to current students and law school alumni, generally for free. The career development office can also send it to the other Canadian law school career development offices, for advertising. For reasons of fairness, privacy, and diversity, law school career development offices cannot recommend specific law students for job opportunities.

If your office has a website, post your job posting there so applicants who may not have access to a Canadian law school career development office can see what opportunities are available.

Beyond the law schools, you may also wish to advertise your articling positions through:

- NALP Canadian Directory of Legal Employers (see more information in box below)
- Your provincial law society
- Your local bar association
- Your provincial branch of the Canadian Bar Association

Finally, tell colleagues outside of your office you are looking for an articling student. Your former law school classmates, professors, clients, colleagues, and non-law contacts may have professional or personal connections with law students interested in your position.

How to conduct interviews and select a successful candidate?

Once you have received and reviewed applications, you will want to conduct interviews. Small offices tend to interview five (5) to ten (10) candidates for every position available, although it is certainly up to you to interview more or fewer. If you are unsure of how to structure your interview process, [consult your nearest law school career development office for best practices for interviewing](#).

Alternatively, you may wish to conduct an initial screening interview by phone or video-conference, which saves time and allows you to screen candidates who are attending law school in another province. We recommend that at least part of your interview process take place in your office and that the candidates meet several of your colleagues.

You may wish to conduct reference checks of your top candidates, prior to making a job offer. Reference checks will vary from employer to employer, but it's pretty typical for a reference checker to ask about the

quality of the candidate's work, their strengths and weaknesses, the reason they left their job, and whether the employer would hire them back if they could. You may also ask more detailed questions, such as how well the candidate takes feedback, how they got along with co-workers, their reliability, and about specific examples of skills that are important to your office (i.e., initiative, problem-solving, and customer service skills).

Though time-consuming, verbal reference checks can offer more insight than written recommendation letters. You can ask questions of the referee, probe around, hear the referee's tone, hear where they hesitate before answering, and hear what happens when you dig into potential problem areas. A thorough reference check will give insight into how to manage the successful candidate and can help you distinguish between shortlisted candidates when deciding to whom to make a job offer.



What to pay an articling student?

The principal objective of articling is for the student to obtain quality, practical work experience as they complete the final steps towards being licensed as a lawyer. That said, salary and the intangible benefits of articling are also important.

To get an understanding of what is a reasonable amount of compensation for an articling student in your province, or city, and in your particular practice of law, consult your nearest law school career development office. There is wide variation among small firm salaries and benefits depending on type of practice and region.

Vacation and other types of leaves are regulated by the respective provincial employment standards legislation. In addition, some provincial regulators indicate how much vacation time an articling student may take during the articling term. In Ontario, for example, the maximum number of vacation days is 10.

You will also want to decide whether you will pay the fees and tuition related to the student's licensing process and call to the bar. Each province has its own fees leading to the call to the bar, including different licensing exams and courses. Some employers pay these fees as part of the articling compensation. Some do so only if the student will be returning as a lawyer following articles (that is, if the student is "hired back"). Some do not cover these fees at all. Given that the regulatory cost of completing articles and being called to the bar can be several thousands of dollars, it's best to make this decision up front so everyone knows what to expect.

Making an offer

If you are hiring during the regulated hiring period, when and how an offer can be made and accepted is set out in the respective provincial guidelines. Both you and the student must follow those guidelines. Otherwise, making an offer is no different than any other offer of employment. If a written employment agreement will follow prior to the start of work, be sure you and the student already understand the key terms such as start date, salary, benefits, vacation, etc. Then ensure the written agreement matches up with the terms agreed to previously.

Articling documentation

Because articling is a regulated step on the road to becoming a licensed lawyer, each province has its own set of protocols for who is eligible to be an articling principal, licensing courses and exams, and documents that need to be filed at the beginning and conclusion of articles. Usually, these protocols and documents are set out on the respective regulatory bodies' websites. **However, when in doubt, contact the regulator directly or consult your nearest law school career development office for guidance.** ■

Endnote

¹ For a complete list of Canada's Law Societies, see <http://flsc.ca/about-us/our-members-canadas-law-societies/>.

Advertise to student applicants via the NALP Canadian Directory of Legal Employers (CDLE)!



The NALP Canadian Directory of Legal Employers (CDLE) provides a user-friendly online resource that allows all Canadian law students to easily access up-to-date information about employers across the country. It is promoted to law students by the Career Services/Development Offices at all Canadian law schools as the most important source for information on legal employers and is intended to provide the primary resource for the publication of information on summer and articling recruitment in each jurisdiction.

This searchable online database, developed by NALP in consultation with a group of law school and legal employer representatives, provides candidates with quick and easy access to employer information, summer and articling programs, and associate jobs across the country.

The CDLE is freely accessible to every law student and job seeker in Canada. Employers pay an annual listing fee on a sliding scale according to the number of lawyers in the organization (government and non-profit offices, and law firms with fewer than 10 lawyers, list for free).

Visit www.nalpcanada.com to get started.

For more information

Contact the career development office at your nearest law school.

University of Alberta

www.ualberta.ca/law/students/career-services

University of Calgary

www.law.ucalgary.ca/lawcareers

Dalhousie University

www.dal.ca/faculty/law/programs/jd-admissions/career-development.html

Lakehead University

www.lakeheadu.ca/academics/departments/law/practice_placements

University of Manitoba

law.robsonhall.com/career-development-office-2/

McGill University

www.mcgill.ca/cdo/

Université de Montréal

droit.umontreal.ca/ressources-et-services/centre-de-developpement-professionnel/

University of New Brunswick

www.unb.ca/fredericton/law/current-students/career-services.html

Osgoode Hall Law School

www.osgoode.yorku.ca/career-development

University of Ottawa

commonlaw.uottawa.ca/en/students/career-and-professional-development-office

Peter A. Allard School of Law, University of British Columbia

www.allard.ubc.ca/career-services

Queen's University

law.queensu.ca/jd-studies/career-development

University of Saskatchewan

law.usask.ca/law-career-office/index.php

Thompson Rivers University

www.tru.ca/law/students/career-services.html

University of Toronto

www.law.utoronto.ca/student-life/career-development-office

University of Victoria

www.uvic.ca/law/jd/lawcareersoffice/index.php

Western University

law.uwo.ca/current_students/careers/index.html

University of Windsor

www.uwindsor.ca/law/careers/



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