



A Guide to developing and demonstrating expertise in international human rights advocacy during law school

INTRODUCTION – Renu Mandhane, director, IHRP

This guide aims to provide J.D. students with a roadmap they can follow to develop and demonstrate interest and expertise in international human rights advocacy throughout their years in the J.D. program at the Faculty. I developed it with input from the CDO, professors, adjuncts, and alumni working in the field.

While the guide offers a number of different choices and options to pursue this area of expertise, it is neither meant to be a stress-inducing checklist to be followed slavishly, nor is it meant to be exhaustive.

At the back of this guide, there is a chart intended to assist you in planning your commitments while in law school. This chart will allow you to create a personalized roadmap to spend your time productively, while easing pressure to “do it all right away”. The exercise of mapping will allow you to recognize that there is a natural progression of experiences and that you don’t need to pursue all opportunities in your first semester of law school! We have also included a sample plan to help you get started creating your own.

Your Four Goals: Knowledge, Skills, Values, Networks

There are four main goals students interested in a career in this field should bear in mind throughout their J.D. studies; students should aim to develop, demonstrate, and/or cultivate relevant:

- (1) substantive knowledge and critical analysis;
- (2) practical skills (i.e. legal, advocacy, etc.);
- (3) professional and ethical values; and
- (4) mentors, professional networks, and understanding of career trajectories and post-graduation prospects.

Prioritization

Most employers in this field expect recent graduates to have **substantive knowledge in a range of areas, demonstrated interest and critical analysis in the field of human rights, research and writing skills, and a passion for social justice**. These are the central goals that should be your focus while at the Faculty.

The lists below include more activities than any one student could hope to manage. To assist you with prioritizing, we have indicated the most important activities upon which to focus with asterisks. Moreover, many of the activities appear under more than one heading to highlight that they will provide the opportunity to meet more than one of the goals highlighted above.

GOAL # 1: KNOWLEDGE

Your first and primary goal should be to develop and demonstrate substantive knowledge and critical analysis relevant to international human rights advocacy. Without substantive knowledge and critical thinking, you will be unable to effectively achieve the other goals outlined below.

Develop substantive knowledge and critical analysis in relevant foundational legal principles including, but not limited to:

- *mandatory first year curriculum (Administrative, Constitutional, Contracts, Criminal, Property, Torts)
- *upper-year foundational courses (e.g. Evidence, Business Organizations, Labour, Tax)
- *public international law (Public International Law; International Human Rights Law; International Criminal Law; International Humanitarian Law)
- Civil and Comparative Law
- specialized knowledge in relevant areas (Aboriginal, gender, environment, labour, corporate governance, criminal, constitutional law etc.)

Develop substantive knowledge and critical analysis in related disciplines including, but not limited to:

- international relations/global affairs
- political theory
- critical theory
- history
- economics
- environmental studies

Develop awareness of Canadian and international current events

- *read the front section of at least one newspaper daily (or the online equivalent)
- sign up for email listservs and blogs that provide daily updates on legal and news developments (e.g.: *Opinio Juris*, *UN News*, *New York Times*)
- “Like” news sources via Facebook/Twitter for instant updates multiple times a day (e.g. *Globe & Mail*, *New York Times*, *Al Jazeera*, etc.)
- attend IHRP events and other related events (e.g. Human Rights Watch Film Festival, Munk Debates, etc.) that provide cutting-edge analysis on current legal issues

Some of the best ways to demonstrate your knowledge and critical analysis are through:

- course selection and successful completion of for-credit courses
- reference letters from tenure-track professors teaching in relevant areas
- enrollment in the directed research program (which allows you to write on a topic of personal interest that could potentially lead to publication, while developing a mentorship relationship with a faculty member)
- publication of a critical or substantive article, op-ed, letter to the editor, blog post, interview, or piece in *Rights Review*

- participation in the IHRP summer internship program or obtaining similar social-justice advocacy experience, preferably in the Global South, or with an international NGO or court
- Other ways to demonstrate your knowledge and critical analysis are through:
 - volunteering or obtaining employment as a research assistant for a professor (again, this is a great way to develop a mentorship relationship with a faculty member)
 - enrollment in joint-degree programs, especially if your interests lie in the areas of politics or policy (such as J.D./M.G.A.)
 - enrollment in (or auditing) relevant courses at other faculties (e.g. political science, criminology, women's studies, Munk School, public policy, etc.)
 - consider specialized courses/semester programs at Osgoode (for example, the Intensive program in Indigenous Land, resources and Governments)
 - enrollment or volunteering as editor for a journal (especially the *Journal of International Law and International Relations*, the international law section of the *University of Toronto Faculty of Law Review*, *Indigenous Law Journal*, *Journal of Law & Equality*)
 - publication of, receipt of prize for, or presentation of a paper at a conference in related area
 - publication of case comment or book review in a related area (journals are preferred)

GOAL # 2: SKILLS

In your upper years of law school and through your summer employment, you can begin to develop and demonstrate skills relevant to international human rights advocacy. The skills required by human rights advocates are necessarily broader than those required by a conventional litigator but, thankfully, you will not be expected to have mastered these skills until well into your career.

Develop practical skills relevant to international human rights advocacy, including but not limited to:

- *legal research and analysis
- *persuasive writing and drafting for both legal and non-legal audiences (memos, facta, advocacy reports, op-eds)
- editing
- evidence-gathering (interviewing, fact-finding, primary source data analysis)
- effective oral communication and advocacy
- organization and management of advocacy work
- problem solving and strategizing

Develop non-legal skills relevant to international human rights advocacy, including but not limited to:

- *language (French, Spanish, Arabic, Mandarin, etc.)
- *cultural competency (especially in the Global South, and with marginalized populations within Canada)

- media engagement
- political engagement
- fundraising/budgeting
- organizational management
- stakeholder management

Some of the best ways to demonstrate your skills are through:

- successful completion of the Faculty's first year Legal Research and Writing program which provides the opportunity to hone your research and drafting skills early on
- enrollment in Trial Advocacy, Advanced Legal Research and Writing, Criminal Procedure, Advanced Criminal Procedure/Civil Procedure, Evidence, Advanced Criminal Evidence etc.
- producing various forms of legal writing (academic, practice-oriented, opinion-piece) by the end of the summer after second year law school. This writing could be publication of a critical or substantive article, legal memorandum for a clinical course, op-ed, blog post, letter to the editor, or piece in *Rights Review*.
- enrollment in the IHRP clinic for-credit (consider enrolling in the Asper Centre clinic for Canadian constitutional litigation experience)
- volunteering/enrolling in DLS (or an external specialty clinic for-credit) (these are some of the only opportunities to get live-client and litigation experience at the Faculty)
- participation in the Faculty's mandatory moot or competitive moot (Jessup, Wilson etc.)
- law-related summer employment that develops the skills noted above and that is, preferably but not necessarily, in the social justice or human rights field
 - IHRP internships are great!
 - law firms (generally, jobs at litigation-focused firms - civil, criminal, family - tend to provide more transferrable skills)
 - DLS summer clinic position
- Other ways to demonstrate your skills are through:
 - presentation of paper at a conference
 - volunteering for an IHRP working group
 - participation in the client counseling competition
 - enrollment in a language class or use an IHRP internship experience to brush-up on your language skills
 - travel in the Global South
 - participation in an exchange, especially where you can develop a second language
 - volunteering to sit on the board of a small non-profit organization (which is a great way to develop organizational management skills)
 - successfully applying for a grant for a small project, to attend a conference, or for an IHRP internship

GOAL # 3: VALUES

Success in the field of human rights advocacy requires the highest professional and ethical values. These are skills that take years to acquire. However, you can signal early on that you are committed to cultivating these values.

Develop professional and ethical values relevant to international human rights law advocacy including but not limited to:

- ethical practice (rules of professional responsibility, legal ethics, cultural competency)
- social justice/public service
- respect and empathy
- initiative and independent learning

Some of the best ways to demonstrate your values are through:

- serious engagement with professionalism and ethical issues raised in mandatory first year courses
- sustained commitment to at least one public interest program at the Faculty (e.g. IHRP, Asper, PBSC, LAWS) and/or volunteering for a non-profit organization in the community or internationally
- developing a narrative or personal angle that helps others understand your passion for the issues (i.e. a cogent and persuasive answer to the question of “Why you are interested in these issues?”)
- student leadership roles within the Faculty’s programs (working group leaders, magazine editors, student coordinators, etc.)

GOAL # 4: NETWORKS

Careers in human rights advocacy are scarce and it often takes an unpaid internship experience or introduction from “someone in the know” to get your foot in the door. You are lucky however since the Faculty has a tremendous network of alumni and friends who have experience and profile in this area.

Develop mentor relationships, professional networks, and understand career trajectories and post-graduation prospects:

- *attend related CDO events and careers fairs and come with questions and a willingness to actively engage
- *participate in the Faculty’s formal mentorship program, and/or the IHRP clinic mentorship program (new for 2012-2013)
- *develop informal professor and staff mentors by seeking their advice on coursework, papers, directed research, IHRP working group or clinic projects, etc.
- *actively cultivate lawyer mentors through your volunteer work in the community, the Faculty’s various legal clinics (including those that partner with external NGOs and lawyers), , and/or summer employment
- stay in touch with your mentors by regularly seeking their advice and updating them on your progress

- offer to interview an interesting speaker about his or her career for posting/publication within the Faculty
- research Toronto lawyers (especially Faculty alum) who have interesting careers and ask to take them out for coffee to learn more about what they do and how they got their position (people love talking about themselves!)
- join Linked In or other career networking sites and promptly add professional contacts while you are still fresh in their minds



**INTERNATIONAL
HUMAN RIGHTS
PROGRAM**

Mapping your time at law school to develop and demonstrate expertise in international human rights advocacy

		KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	VALUES	NETWORKS
1L - FALL	For-Credit	1L curriculum →	1L LRW program →	1L Professionalism Day and Bridge Week, Legal Process, etc. →	Develop mentorship relationship with small group professor through engagement in office hours to discuss issues raised in class and receive feedback on written work
	Co-Curricular	Attend IHRP and related events →			Introduce yourself to IHRP Director to assist with development of internship proposal
		Volunteer for IHRP Working Group in an area that interests you →	Develop LRW skills through volunteering for IHRP working group →	Develop values (and demonstrate your commitment) through volunteer experiences →	Seek out opportunities to engage with lawyers and activists through IHRP working group

		KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	VALUES	NETWORKS
1L - FALL (cont.)	Co-Curricular (cont.)	Volunteer as “Associate Editor” with <i>University of Toronto Faculty of Law Review</i> . →	Develop editing skills through volunteering with <i>UTFLR</i>		
	Extra-curricular	Read newspaper daily, sign up for listservs/blogs			
					Attend Human Rights Watch Film Festival to meet and mingle with human rights activists, scholars, and lawyers
					Sign up for formal mentorship program
					Attend CDO events and career fairs
1L - SPRING	For-Credit	1L curriculum →	1L LRW program		
	Co-Curricular	Attend IHRP event(s), & conduct interview for <i>Rights Review</i> →			Through interview, develop contact with speaker and their organization
		Volunteer for IHRP Working Group →	Develop LRW skills through volunteering for IHRP working group →	Develop values through volunteer experiences →	Seek out opportunities to engage with lawyers and activists through IHRP working group
	Extra-curricular	Read newspaper daily, read listservs/ blogs			

		KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	VALUES	NETWORKS
1L - SPRING (CONT.)	Extra-curricular (cont.)				Attend community events to meet and mingle with human rights activists, scholars, and lawyers
					Meet with mentor on a regular basis
					Attend CDO events and career fairs; meet with CDO to develop cover letter and CV
1L - SUMMER	Employment	IHRP Summer Internship in Global South in area of substantive interest →	Refine LRW skills; begin to cultivate advocacy skills; cross-cultural communication; language →	Develop values through internship experiences →	Develop mentorship relationship with internship host organization Conduct informational interviews with other NGOs in the city.
	Extra-curricular		Language Classes		
2L - FALL	For-Credit	Enroll in Public International Law; International Human Rights Law			
		Enroll in seminar and write an academic research paper →			Develop mentorship relationship with seminar professor through feedback on drafts etc.
			Enroll in Advanced LRW and develop memo writing skills		

		KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	VALUES	NETWORKS
2L - FALL (cont.)	For-Credit (cont.)	Try out for a competitive moot in a related substantive area →	Developing LRW, and written and oral advocacy skills through competitive moot →		Develop mentorship relationship with competitive moot supervisor.
	Co-Curricular	Attend IHRP and related events →			Informally introduce yourself to speakers whenever possible; schedule follow up informational interviews
		Lead an IHRP working group in area of substantive interest →	Develop LRW skills through IHRP working group →	Develop leadership and organizational management skills through IHRP working group →	Develop mentorship relationship with supervisor for IHRP working group
			Develop engaging writing style through article on internship for <i>Rights Review</i> →	Highlight interesting ethical/professionalism issues (while maintaining confidentiality) →	Send your article to your internship host organization – stay in touch!
	Extra-Curricular	Read newspaper daily, sign up for listservs/blogs			
					Attend CDO events and career fairs; community events

		KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	VALUES	NETWORKS
2L - SPRING	For-Credit	Business Organizations; Evidence; Comparative Constitutional Law			
			Trial Advocacy		
		Enroll in Criminal Law division of DLS to develop deeper understanding of civil and political rights protection in Canada →	Enroll in DLS for-credit to develop client counseling, oral and written advocacy skills →	Develop values through DLS training and client- work →	Develop mentorship relationship with DLS lawyer
2L - SPRING (cont.)	Co-Curricular	<i>Rights Review</i> article on issue of interest/expertise →	Develop advocacy, plain language writing style		
		Continue to lead an IHRP working group in area of substantive interest →	Develop LRW skills through IHRP working group →	Develop leadership and organizational management skills through IHRP working group →	Develop mentorship relationship with supervisor for IHRP working group
	Extra-Curricular	Read newspaper daily, sign up for listservs/blogs →	Write letter to editor of major national newspaper; or blog post		
				Development of “personal narrative” on interest in human rights advocacy →	Seek guidance from mentor(s) on “personal narrative”
					Attend CDO events and career fairs; community events

		KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	VALUES	NETWORKS
2L - SUMMER	Employment	Advocacy-related summer position at a large firm →	Write a memo as part of summer employment →	Engage seriously with professionalism issues that arise and speak about these with mentors Ask to be involved in any interesting pro bono work in which the firm is participating →	Develop mentorship relationship with summer employment lawyer
	Extra-curricular		Intermediate level language classes		
		Read newspaper daily, sign up for listservs/blogs			
3L - FALL	For-credit	Enroll in Tax; Aboriginal; International Criminal Law	Enrollment in Advanced Criminal Procedure		
		Directed Research in related area →	Further refine academic research and writing skills and self-directed learning skills (including time management) →		Develop mentorship relationship with Directed Research supervisor

		KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	VALUES	NETWORKS
3L-FALL (CONT.)	For-credit (cont.)	Enroll in IHRP Clinic and deepen knowledge in subject area of clinic project →	Develop LRW, advocacy, organization, and problem solving skills Write op-ed for major newspaper or blog on issues engaged by your clinic project →	Seriously engage with professionalism and ethical issues raised in IHRP clinic course and project →	Develop mentorship relationship with NGO partner on clinic project; and Director of IHRP
	Co-Curricular	Apply to be an editor for <i>Rights Review</i> →	Develop LRW, management, and organization skills		
	Extra-Curricular	Read newspaper daily, sign up for listservs/blogs			
			Develop informal language conversation coffee group		
					Attend CDO events and career fairs; community events
					Regular engagement with mentors
3L - SPRING	For-Credit	Enrollment in International Humanitarian Law; Labour; Civil Law			
		Submit Directed Research for publication in student academic journal			

		KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	VALUES	NETWORKS
3L - SPRING (CONT.)	For-Credit (cont.)	Enroll in IHRP Practicum →	Develop LRW, advocacy, organization, and problem solving skills →	Seriously engage with professionalism and ethical issues raised in IHRP clinic course and project →	Develop mentorship relationship with NGO partner on clinic project; and Director of IHRP →
	Co-Curricular	Apply to be an editor for <i>Rights Review</i> →	Develop LRW, management, and organization skills		
	Extra-Curricular	Read newspaper daily, sign up for listservs/blogs			
			Informal language conversation coffee group		
					Attend CDO events and career fairs; community events
					Regular engagement with mentors

		KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	VALUES	NETWORKS
1L - FALL	For-Credit				
	Co-Curricular				
	Extra-Curricular				
1L - SPRING	For-Credit				
	Co-Curricular				
	Extra-Curricular				
1L - SUMMER	Employment				
	Extra-Curricular				
2L - FALL	For-Credit				
	Co-Curricular				
	Extra-Curricular				
2L - SPRING	For-Credit				
	Co-Curricular				
	Extra-Curricular				
2L - SUMMER	Employment				
	Extra-Curricular				
3L - FALL	For-Credit				
	Co-Curricular				
	Extra-Curricular				
3L - SPRING	For-Credit				
	Co-Curricular				
	Extra-Curricular				