

# Dear new AC,

## **Congratulations on your appointment and welcome to the brotherhood. This letter should be used as a guide only and does not constitute legal advice.**

*'Articles of Clerkship' is a mystifying term. As the name might indicate, people will assume that you are obliged to write articles for a year. This is misleading.*

*On the contrary, you will be put in situations where (a) you are forced to punch above your weight, (b) you are made to feel like a twit, and (c) you must bluff your way with a client. Your mates outside the legal quagmire will probably be oblivious to your working conditions. You will be asked whether you have invested in "guilty" and "not guilty" cufflinks.*

*You will be expected to shout beers and you will receive odd legal queries from long-lost relatives or the cousin of your dog's previous owner. If you hear "fencing dispute", feign dizziness and hang up the phone. This applies even if you are dealing with a client of the firm.*

*It goes without saying that there are some golden rules about surviving in a law firm. First and foremost, be very wary about asking someone other than a partner for work. You might as well have a sign on your back that says "post problem files here".*

*If, by chance, you arrive at work early or leave the office late, find an excuse to email a partner. That late night email will make an impression at the top of the inbox the next morning. On the topic of hours, it's widely considered "bad form" to leave the office before the support staff.*

*For litigators, if you are ever stumped by an "opponent" or judge at a directions hearing or call-over, simply utter the words "I need to get instructions" (on how to be a better lawyer) and all will be forgiven. If your opponent refers to you as "my friend" to the judge, cut them down by saying "I'm not your friend". You may receive a dressing down from the judge, but you will no doubt gain some (to quote Cartman) authoratire.*

*On topic, there will always be more experienced solicitors on the other side who will attempt to intimidate the naïve AC. I recall having a 15-minute debate with a solicitor who assured me that a solicitor's undertaking was a very serious thing and, as such, it was inappropriate for me to ask for him to put it in writing.*

*ACs who are bestowed the task of performing "outside work" will be given the opportunity to observe the mysterious cultures that exist throughout the legal administrative fraternity. One will be left mesmerised by the brutal force and unrivalled speed with which the court registrars stamp all and any documents for filing. When it comes to property settlements, unknowing ACs will forever be out of the loop, as it seems that the full-time conveyancing clerks party together on weekends. As for the LTO, well, let's just say there's definitely something in the water.*

*When it comes to job satisfaction, most ACs will agree to having "hit the wall" at about the six-month mark. It's no coincidence that the novelty of having a full-time job wears off roughly the same time as the reality of long hours and low wages kicks in. But keep the faith – before you know it, you'll be admitted by three judges and the new rung of ACs will queue up to take your place at the bottom of the food chain.*

*There is one final, very important piece of advice: there is a difference between an admission certificate and a practising certificate. The latter you must apply for, annually – do not attempt to do anything remotely legal until you have done so.*

*Anonymous*

