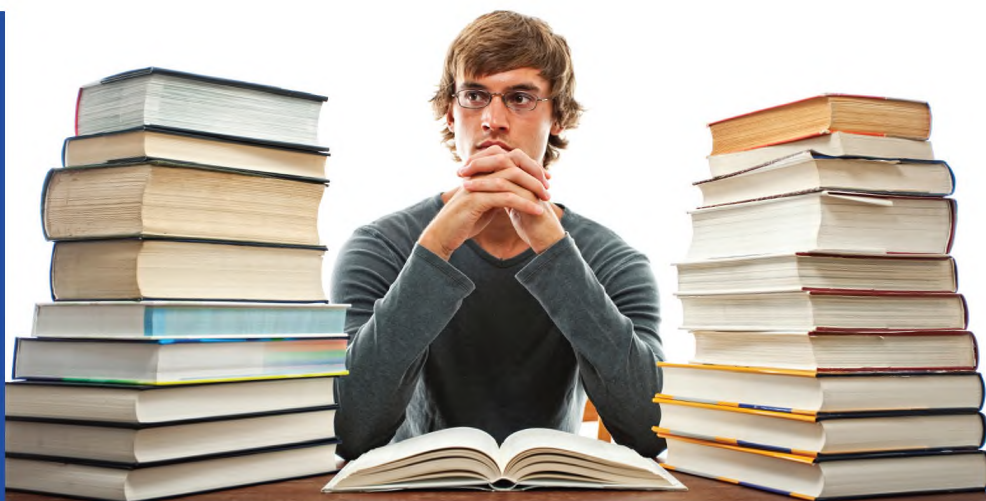


THERE ARE
WAYS TO TAKE
CHARGE OF YOUR
FUTURE EVEN IF
YOU'RE STILL IN
LAW SCHOOL.

ISTOCKPHOTO



Look to your own goals

When you're in law school you get offered a plethora of advice, from which subjects to pick to where to get a beer after a hellish constitutional law lecture. Your university, in particular, will provide helpful career advice that can be invaluable in helping you plan a legal career. Although studying law can be daunting, and any extra brain space is often spent watching *Law & Order*, it is a good idea to take charge of your career as early as possible.

Grades

Obviously your grades will be important to future employers. Particularly in the JD, it is common to experience a drop in grades when beginning your law degree. Hours are longer, assessment is more intense, and the competition much more driven. However, don't despair if your grades take a dip in first year. Once students develop their legal writing it will often become much easier to critically engage with the material at a more sophisticated level. Talk to your professors

to see how you can improve and hopefully you will find your groove.

Building your CV

Although many first year law students won't have any firm experience, employers look favourably on volunteer work at community legal centres, internships, and part-time jobs. Even jobs that aren't necessarily law related will help you draw upon attributes such as loyalty, team work and time management. Part-time conveyance work at a real estate agent may benefit those wanting to specialise in property law. Consider jobs that broadly relate to your desired field.

Networking

Networking may seem like a dirty word with negative connotations of air kissing or gold digging. However, the concept remains relevant and crucial for lawyers in every field. Often law schools will offer networking opportunities for alumni and current students. In such informal settings

simply chatting with lawyers in different fields can create and maintain invaluable relationships. Particularly for young lawyers, a friendly face can go a long way.

The right path

Although it may seem like there is a right path for every lawyer, it is important to realise that there are many hidden entries, back doors or scenic routes to your desired career. Try not to despair if you don't get a clerkship at your first preference; you will eventually find another path that may lead to an unexpected passion. Remaining flexible and realistic about your prospects will help you cope with a fork in the road.

At times studying law seems like running a marathon alongside hordes of other competitors all fighting to get to the big firm finish. Remember to take a breather to assess which path is best for you and what steps you need to take to achieve your own goals. •

CLARE MOSS is a JD student at the University of Melbourne.

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For more information contact Jackie Mansie,
(03) 9269 0193 or nlp@vla.vic.gov.au



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