

SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE NECESSARY FOR JUDICIAL CLERKSHIP CANDIDATES

What does it take to get a position as a law clerk? While there are no hard and fast rules about what qualifications you must have in order to be a successful applicant, below are some tips to help you map out your path to a clerkship.

- **Externships.** Work for a judge through a McGeorge field placement. This is an invaluable experience and will help you when you apply for clerkships. McGeorge has state and federal judicial externship opportunities, including the U.S. District Court, Eastern District, the U.S. Court of Appeals, the Ninth Circuit, the California Supreme Court, the California Court of Appeal, and superior courts.
- **Grades.** You don't necessarily have to be in the top 3% of your class, but having a strong GPA will increase your clerkship opportunities, especially with federal court clerkships, which tend to be more competitive than state court clerkships.
- **Law Review.** Again, you don't need to have been on your school's law review to be a judicial clerkship candidate, but having this or other solid writing experience will be looked upon well by judges.
- **Research Experience.** Having been a research assistant for a professor, or having other legal research experience through externships and/or summer jobs will be impressive for a judge, who will be looking for a candidate with superb research and writing skills.
- **Be Strategic!** All federal clerkships are competitive. That said, some are more competitive than others. Generally speaking, the Supreme Court and most Courts of Appeals clerkships are extremely competitive. The most competitive Court of Appeals circuits are the Second, the Ninth and the D.C. circuits. District court clerkships are also very competitive, less so in rural areas than major metropolitan areas. Less competitive yet are those clerkships in areas far from law schools (e.g., Alaska or Nebraska). Senior judges and magistrate judges often receive far fewer applications than other judges. Courts with limited jurisdictions, such as bankruptcy courts, are also often less competitive. The same analysis goes for state court clerkships, which are generally less competitive than federal clerkships. Talk with a career advisor or a faculty clerkship advisor for guidance when you start to select your judges.
- **Courses.** There are no clear answers to the question, "What classes should I take in preparation for a clerkship?" We do have some suggestions, however. Judges will most likely want to see that you have taken Constitutional Law I and II and Criminal Procedure. Evidence will help you when you become a clerk, especially in a trial court. Many federal court judges look for applicants who have taken Federal Courts, and some judges, especially in D.C., may look for Administrative Law on your resume.
- **Law School Competitions Teams.** Moot court and other similar competitive activities will show a judge that you are involved and that you have had courtroom exposure.