



WESTERN CHAPTER OF PRO BONO STUDENTS CANADA  
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### **Important Information for PBSC Lawyer Supervisors**

Thank you for agreeing to be a lawyer supervisor for a PBSC project! PBSC recognizes that your time is extremely valuable, and we appreciate your willingness to work with us to increase access to justice in our community. This tip sheet is meant to provide you with important information about our placements and policies, and your role as a lawyer supervisor.

- **Agreement Form:** Attached to this memo is a Lawyer Agreement Form PBSC asks all lawyers supervisors to sign before commencing supervision of a project. The Form ensures all lawyers are aware of their responsibilities as a PBSC lawyer supervisor, and commit to spending the time and effort necessary to provide a valuable learning opportunity to our students.
- **Training:** All PBSC volunteers must attend a general PBSC training in September that provides an overview of our program and reviews topics such as professionalism & ethics and legal information versus legal advice. First-year students and upper-year students working on legal research projects must also undertake PBSC legal research training. Some projects also require specialized, subject-matter-specific training. We welcome your input regarding additional training you believe would add value to the placement.
- **Timeline:** PBSC students volunteer approximately 3-5 hours per week, five months of the year: October, November, January, February and March, for a total of 60-100 hours. Students are not expected to work during exam periods or reading week. All projects need to wrap up by the last week of classes of the winter term. Given this compressed timeline, it is critical that lawyer supervisors provide their feedback promptly, to ensure students will have time to make revisions and move the project along to completion within this brief, five-month window.
- **Workplan:** Many PBSC projects require workplans, a helpful tool for students and lawyer supervisors. Mapping out the timelines and deliverables ensures the workload is well-thought out and evenly distributed, that students have benchmarks to meet, and that lawyer supervisors can carve out time in their busy schedules to review assigned work and offer feedback. If you are volunteering on a project that requires the student to develop a workplan, please assist your student in ensuring that it is realistic and appropriate, with a workload that is distributed evenly throughout the academic year. Please do your best to observe the timeline and keep the project moving along at a brisk pace.
- **Working With Your Student:** All PBSC students are trained to conduct themselves with professionalism, and understand that they must answer phone calls and emails promptly, be responsive to requests made by the organization, be punctual, and complete all tasks within the agreed-upon timeframe. In turn, we ask lawyer supervisors to make certain commitments to our students. Generally speaking, we ask you to be responsive and to maintain regular contact with your student(s). Specifically, this includes meeting with the student(s) at least once during each academic term and at the end of the project; holding all meetings in person, except for projects that are being supervised remotely or where it is not possible for any other reason to meet in person, in which case the lawyer supervisor and volunteer(s) should communicate over the phone; to be available periodically during the course of the project as reasonably required to answer questions of a legal nature, to provide guidance relevant to the project, and to review and provide feedback on the work product of the PBSC volunteer(s); and to complete in a timely fashion a final evaluation of the student(s)



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In a typical PBSC project, you should expect to hear from your student(s) in late September or early October, and we would ask you to plan a meeting in early October and to provide guidance with respect to the development of a workplan (where required), review and approve the workplan by mid-October, review the students' work in November and provide regular feedback as needed throughout the rest of the year.

- **Legal Advice:** PBSC policy prohibits students from offering legal advice. As a general rule, students can provide information on the state of the law and on legal procedures, but cannot answer questions that relate to the particular facts of a client's situation. That being said, we recognize that the line between legal information and advice is not always clear. We also allow that there will be times when our students are in essence serving as a conduit for advice that is being provided by the lawyer supervisor. If you encounter a situation where you are not sure if this line is being crossed, please immediately reach out to your local PBSC chapter.
- **Monitoring:** PBSC aims to ensure that all its projects are running smoothly, and conducts a formal monitoring process once each semester, in which someone from PBSC speaks with every student, organization supervisor, and lawyer supervisor to ensure to identify and address any issues that come up. Your local PBSC Program Coordinator or another member of the PBSC team will contact you by phone once in November and once in March as part of this process. In order to make this monitoring process effective, it is vital that the monitoring calls take place within the planned time frame. Accordingly, we ask you to promptly return emails attempting to schedule a monitoring call. These calls typically take less than 10 minutes, and it is vitally important that we know whether things are going smoothly on your project. We also ask that not wait until the monitoring process and notify the PBSC National Office with any concerns which come to your attention regarding the student or the project. You can email us at [admin@probonostudents.ca](mailto:admin@probonostudents.ca).
- **Continuing Professional Development:** Every Law Society in Canada has a policy regarding the Continuing Professional Development of lawyers. In some provinces CPD is mandatory and in others it is merely recommended. In some cases supervision of a PBSC placement can count as CPD. While PBSC makes every effort to keep up with the policies of every Law Society, please refer to your province's policy to determine whether your work with our organization counts as part of your CPD.
- **Feedback:** PBSC relies on your feedback to strengthen our program, and report to our funders. In mid-March we will send you a satisfaction survey to fill out. Please be sure to take a moment to complete the survey and provide us with your impressions of our program – we welcome both positive feedback and constructive criticism.

Thank you again for volunteering with PBSC and for taking on this important role! Our goal is to try to make this a positive experience for everyone, as we all work to increase access to justice and train the next generation of pro bono lawyers. We hope this information about our program is helpful and please do not hesitate to reach out with any comments or suggestions.