



PRO BONO STUDENTS CANADA



CREATING A PROJECT

1. Pro Bono Students Canada (PBSC).....	1
2. Legal Information.....	1
3. Lawyer Mentor	2
4. Role of the Organization.....	2
5. Role of the Student.....	2
6. PBSC Coordinators.....	3
7. Developing the Project	3
8. Meeting with the Students	4
9. During the School Year	4
10. Timeline.....	5

1. Pro Bono Students Canada (PBSC)

Pro Bono Students Canada is a public interest organization which has grown to become a national network of law schools, law students, organizations and lawyers, all working together to provide free legal information to underrepresented communities in Canada. PBSC’s goals for organizations are to provide non-profit organizations with highly skilled volunteers, to increase access to justice, and to improve community resources. Its goals for students are to instill a core value for pro bono work in students which will be carried into the profession, to provide hands-on legal experience, and to enable the students to learn more about alternative career choices.

Organizations benefit by participation in PBSC in many ways. You will receive volunteer hours by students from Western Law for a project of your design and supervision. We will provide assistance in developing an effective project. You will also be helping a law student learn the importance of public service in the community.

2. Legal Information

The project must be law-related in order to qualify as a pro bono project. The students will be providing legal information, rather than legal advice. The difference between legal information and legal advice is that legal information gives a general sense of the state of the law, while legal advice applies the law to the facts of the particular case. People rely on legal advice to make decisions about specific legal problems or issues. The goal of the students in this project will be to give you a concise and accurate picture of all of the legal aspects surrounding the issue, not to tell you what you should do.

3. Lawyer Mentor

Each project must be supervised by a lawyer. The lawyer ensures that the project is accurate, thorough, and that it is legal information rather than advice. Lawyer mentors must be insured members of the Law Society in Ontario. They will meet with the students when the placement begins, review the work periodically, be available to answer legal questions, conduct a final review and approve the final product, and provide PBSC with a final evaluation in March. The total time commitment is five to ten hours.

If you do not have a lawyer on staff, consider looking on your board of directors or outside your organization. Some possibilities may be old colleagues, brother/sister organizations, community contacts, or friends. We will assist you in finding a lawyer if you cannot.

4. Role of the Organization

Every organization must have a “student appropriate” project (i.e., law-related and involving legal information rather than advice), designate a project supervisor (the students’ main contact with your organization), and provide a lawyer mentor. Organization contacts must be available to respond to students’ questions and to keep the students informed of any relevant changes at the organization.

Please also see sections 7 and 8 for additional details and recommendations

To participate in the 2009/2010 PBSC Program, these forms must be completed and returned to PBSC: (1) Organization Profile, (2) Project Intake Form, and (3) Release and Disclaimer of Liability.

5. Role of the Student

Students are expected to spend roughly three hours per week on their PBSC project. Projects that require more time will be assigned more students, but the norm is for groups to consist of two-three first year law students with one upper-year law student acting as team leader.

Students are matched to a project based on their interests and background. You may request particular qualities/skills in your volunteer students and we will try to match you with appropriate students.

Each student signs a contract saying they will complete the project and work with the organization effectively. Each student is trained in time management, research skills, and professionalism including ethics and sensitivity. Each group is supervised by a team leader, the lawyer-mentor, and the PBSC coordinators.

The group will be responsible for periodic progress updates to be sent to the organization, lawyer, and PBSC coordinators. Please see the timeline (Section 9) for dates.

6. PBSC Coordinators

The PBSC Western program is run by two coordinators who are students at Western Law. The PBSC coordinators for the 2012-2013 program are Maeve Byrne and Jacqueline Cole. The coordinators oversee all of the projects, including recruiting organizations and students, training students, and tracking the progress of the projects.

If you have any concerns or problems, please do not hesitate to contact Maeve or Jacqueline.

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PBSC Western Website: www.law.uwo.ca/ProBono/

7. Developing the Project

The project will be conveyed to the students primarily using two forms – the Project Intake Form and the Organization Profile Form. Be as specific as possible; do not be afraid of including too much information. The students will not be overwhelmed by extra pages, etc. – they will benefit from the added information. Outline goals of the project, outcomes, and target audience. Outline the steps to be taken and the approximate timeframe until completion.

*** Please note that projects are subject to approval by our faculty advisor.

8. Meeting with the Coordinators

Coordinators may ask questions regarding:

- The workings of your organization (structure, funding, etc.)
- Details about the contents of applicable documents (particularly if you are requesting a review of a document, identifying specific examples of things you believe may need updating or reviewing will help the students)
- The relationship between your organization and organizations/individuals/etc. with whom relevant contracts or other agreements exist
- The project's primary audience (e.g., will this project be primarily for your use, for clients, the community at large, will it be used in presentations to another organization or the government)

Documents to prepare for the meeting:

- Any contracts, by-laws, etc. you may want the students to reference or review
- Any information (e.g., training information, pamphlets for the public) that gives the students an idea of what your organization does, etc.
- *Please have copies for each student, or provide them with an electronic copy*

Giving the students a tour of your office and/or introducing them to staff and other members of the organization is a great opportunity to make a meaningful connection with your students.

9. During the School Year

To have the best placement, give as much background as you can relating to this project and to your organization. Ensure you meet with the students and teach them about your organization. Know what you want your end result to be and convey this to your students. Maintain communication with your students throughout the year.

The best projects are the ones where the students become involved. Make the students a part of your organization; invite them to meetings, events, fundraisers. Organizations with sufficient space and/or resources have found it helpful to invite the students to work on the project at their office. This option will not work for every project – the students might require resources only available at the law library, the organization may not have a space for the students, and some students commute from outside of London or have a very tight schedule. However, if you think this will work for your organization and be helpful for the project, mention it to the students, because many would enjoy working so closely with your organization.

Maintaining constant communication is extremely important, especially as there will be times (e.g. December, when students take a hiatus from their projects to concentrate on exams) when communication is difficult or impossible. Please do not hesitate to contact the coordinators if there are any problems.

10. Timeline

Mid September 2012	Student training session – students will receive their projects at this time
Beginning of October 2012	Meetings between organization and students
First Week of October 2012	Progress reports due from students to organizations, lawyer mentor and PBSC coordinators
First Week of November 2012	Progress reports due from students to organizations, lawyer mentor and PBSC coordinators
December 2012	Students' break for exams and holidays
First Week of January 2012	Progress reports due from students to organizations, lawyer mentor and PBSC coordinators
Second Week of March 2012	Final projects due to organizations

*** Please note that fixed dates during each week indicated will be set shortly.