



LAW SOCIETY
Newfoundland & Labrador

Articling Guidebook for Principals and Students

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An Introduction to Articling

Articling is a foundational stage of the bar admission process and plays a central role in preparing future lawyers for competent, ethical, and independent practice. It is a period of structured, supervised experiential learning during which a law graduate transitions from academic study to the practical realities of legal work. Although law school provides the theoretical and doctrinal underpinnings of the profession, the articling process enables students to apply that knowledge in real practice environments, cultivate judgment, and internalize the professional responsibilities that are fundamental to competent legal practice.

At its core, articling is designed to ensure that every prospective lawyer gains exposure to the day-to-day demands of practice. This includes understanding client relationships, managing files, navigating procedural requirements, exercising legal reasoning in real time, and developing the habits of professionalism that define the culture and standards of the profession. It is through this immersive experience - supported by consistent guidance, supervision, and feedback - that a student begins to understand the pace, pressures, and expectations of practice in ways that cannot be replicated in an academic setting.

In addition to practical skill development, articling is a formative period for professional identity building. Students learn to navigate uncertainty, exercise discretion, seek guidance appropriately, manage competing demands, and work within the professional and ethical boundaries expected of members of the Law Society. They begin to appreciate the weight of their signature, the implications of their advice, and the trust placed in them by clients, colleagues, courts, and the public. Meaningful mentorship during this time substantially shapes a student's approach to practice and contributes to long-term professional success.

While the Law Society establishes the regulatory framework, competency expectations, and formal assessments through the Bar Admission Course, the learning value of the articling term is shaped primarily by the environment created by the principal. A well-structured and well-supervised articling experience ensures that students receive appropriate instruction, adequate exposure to a range of practice activities, and the support needed to develop sound professional judgment. Conversely, insufficient supervision or a lack of engagement can hinder a student's development and undermine their readiness for independent practice.

The following sections of this guide outline the responsibilities of principals, provide an overview of the bar admission program, describe the role of the Competency Framework for Entry to Practice, and explain how a student's progress is to be monitored and evaluated throughout the articling term. They also identify important dates, filing requirements, and other key administrative expectations.

The Role of the Principal in the Bar Admission Process

Principals play a vital role in shaping the future of the legal profession. As a principal, you are not only supervising the day-to-day work of an articling student, but also serving as a mentor, role model, and gatekeeper to the profession. The articling term is a transitional period during which law graduates develop the practical skills, judgment, and ethical awareness necessary to become competent and responsible members of the legal community. Your guidance and support during this time are essential.

The principal-student relationship is the cornerstone of the bar admission process. While the Law Society provides regulatory oversight, education, and assessment tools, it is through meaningful, hands-on experience under your supervision that students are best prepared for entry to practice. This relationship is especially important to students as they navigate the shift from law student to legal professional, often relying on their principal for mentorship, support, and feedback during this critical period of professional identity formation.

As a principal, you are also best positioned to evaluate a student's suitability and readiness to engage in the practice of law. You observe their development over time, assess their competence in real-world settings, and help instill the values and responsibilities expected of members of the profession. The Articles of Clerkship expressly require a principal to use their best means and endeavours to enable the student to qualify for enrolment as a barrister of the Law Society and a solicitor of the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador, provided the student complies with the Law Society Act, the Law Society Rules, and the Code of Professional Conduct. Before a student may be called, the principal will be asked to certify to the Law Society that the student has demonstrated the skills and character necessary for admission as a member. In fulfilling these responsibilities, principals contribute directly to the integrity of the profession and the protection of the public interest.

This guide is intended to assist you in understanding your responsibilities, navigating the administrative aspects of the articling process, and supporting the development of your student in a structured and meaningful way.

Becoming a Principal

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible to act as a principal, a member of the Law Society must meet the requirements set out in Rule 6.07(1). Specifically, a member may supervise up to three students at one time, provided that:

- they are a resident of Newfoundland and Labrador;
- they have been continuously engaged in the full-time practice of law in Newfoundland and Labrador for the previous five years;
- they are not subject to any disciplinary actions, practice conditions, or other restrictions that, in the opinion of the Education Committee, may impair their ability or fitness to act as a principal; and
- there is no other reason that, in the opinion of the Education Committee, may impair or bring into question their ability or fitness to act as a principal.

Members who do not meet all these requirements may still apply to the Education Committee for approval to act as a principal. The Committee has the discretion to grant or refuse such applications under Rule 6.07(2).

Application Process

When an individual applies for admission as a student, they must identify their proposed principal. The proposed principal is required to complete a Consent and Eligibility Form, which includes questions about their standing with the Law Society and any matters that may reflect on their good character or fitness to supervise a student.

As part of the review process, the Law Society will make internal inquiries with relevant departments to determine whether any concerns exist regarding the proposed principal. If concerns are identified, the matter may be referred to the Education Committee under Rule 6.07(3), which provides the Committee with the authority to:

- conduct, or authorize another person to conduct, an investigation into the member's fitness to act as a principal;
- require the member to appear before the Committee to respond to questions; and/or
- order the production of documents, records, or files deemed reasonably necessary.

Following such an inquiry, the Education Committee may:

- approve the member to act as a principal;
- approve the member subject to conditions, restrictions, or requirements; or
- refuse permission for the member to act as a principal.

It is important to note that the onus is on the member to demonstrate that they are suitable to act as a principal, per Rule 6.07(5).

Bar Admission Program Overview

The bar admission program consists of two integrated components: the articling term and the Bar Admission Course ("**BAC**"). Together, they provide students with the practical experience, knowledge, and skills necessary for entry into the legal profession.

Term and Service of Articles

Per Rule 6.08, a student must work in the practice of their principal, pursuant to the terms of their Articles of Clerkship, for a minimum of 52 weeks. This period includes attendance at the Bar Admission Course (BAC) and up to 20 working days of permitted leave.

Under Rule 6.01(1), the articling term must commence on either January 30th or June 1st. If a student cannot begin on or before these dates, they must use a portion of their permitted leave. Late starts are not permitted. This structure ensures consistency of experience among students and reduces the risk of delay in being called to the bar, as ceremony dates are fixed in advance and may not accommodate late completion of articles.

Rule 6.08(2) requires that the articling term be continuous, except for up to 20 working days of leave approved by the principal (notice to the Law Society is not required) and any additional leave of absence granted by the Education Committee pursuant to Rule 6.08(3). Leave granted by the Committee does not count toward the articling term.

Short absences for medical appointments or similar matters may be managed at the discretion of the principal. However, if a student is away for more than half a day, this serves as the threshold at which leave should be recorded. In those circumstances, the student should allocate a half day of their permitted leave.

Rule 6.08(8) provides the framework for calculating the articling term. A week consists of five working days, with no additional credit for working beyond that, and a working day consists of seven hours of scheduled work, with no extra credit for working longer hours.

Part-time Articles

Part-time articles allow student, with the agreement of their principal, to complete some or all of the articling term on a reduced daily schedule. While the competencies and overall expectations of articling remain the same, the structure of the term may be adapted through an approved part-time arrangement. Students who wish to pursue this option must request approval in advance and provide the information required under Rule 6.06(4), including confirmation of the principal's support and details of the proposed working arrangement.

Practice of the Principal

Rule 6.08(1) requires that the student work within the practice of their principal. It is expected that the student will work primarily at the principal's place of business and under the principal's direct supervision. While occasional remote work or assignments at another location may occur - particularly given evolving workplace practices - these should remain the exception rather than the norm. The objective is to ensure that students are meaningfully integrated into the principal's practice and able to benefit from in-person mentorship, observation, and feedback.

If a principal or student is uncertain whether a proposed arrangement aligns with the Law Society's expectations, they are encouraged to seek guidance from the Education Committee.

Bar Admission Course

All students are required to attend the BAC and successfully complete all examinations to qualify for admission as a member of the Law Society (Rule 6.11(1)).

Students must achieve at least 60 percent on each of the three examinations and a cumulative average of at least 65 percent to satisfy the examination requirements (Rule 6.11(6)).

The BAC is currently delivered in two parts. Some sessions are held during the summer months, and students are encouraged to attend these sessions in person, although a virtual option is available where in-person attendance is not possible. The remainder of the course typically begins on the first Monday of October and runs for six weeks. This portion is delivered in person at the Law Society building in St. John's, and in-person attendance is mandatory. Students will be advised of the start date in the letter confirming their admission.

Assignment / Termination of Articles

There may be occasions where a student's Articles of Clerkship need to be reassigned to a new principal or where the articling relationship is terminated before the completion of the articling term. The following outlines the procedures and expectations in both scenarios.

Assignment of Articles

Articles of Clerkship may be assigned to another member of the Law Society by filing a completed Assignment of Articles in the required form (Rule 6.07(6)). Approval must be obtained from either the Director of Admissions and Education or the Education Committee, and the proposed new principal must meet the eligibility criteria outlined in Rule 6.07.

As part of the assignment process, the current (outgoing) principal is required to submit a Declaration of Previous Principal. This declaration confirms:

- the portion of the articling term completed under the principal and the number of days of leave taken;
- that the student was engaged in no other employment except as disclosed; and
- subject to any concerns noted in the declaration, the student is a person of good character and reputation who faithfully, honestly, and diligently carried out their duties as a Student-at-Law.

The declaration also provides space for the outgoing principal to note any concerns relating to the student's performance, professionalism, competence, conduct, attendance, or any other matter relevant to their ongoing articling experience. This information is intended both to assist the new principal in supervising the student and to support the Law Society in fulfilling its regulatory responsibilities.

It is critically important that principals do not sign this declaration unless the information provided is accurate and can be given in good faith. The form plays an essential role in protecting the integrity of the profession, and the Law Society has encountered serious challenges in situations where declarations were completed without proper reflection or merely to shift responsibility.

Termination of Articles

Rule 6.08(9) sets out the steps that must be taken when an articling relationship is terminated before the end of the articling term. In these circumstances, both the student and the principal must provide written notice of the termination to the Director of Admissions and Education within one week, specifying the effective date and the reason for the termination. The principal must also submit a report to the Education Committee outlining the nature of the work completed by the student and the professional experience gained up to the date of termination. The student remains responsible for securing a new articling placement, and the Education Committee will determine what portion, if any, of the time already served will be credited toward completion of the articling term.

Early communication with the Law Society is strongly encouraged, particularly where the termination involves concerns about a student's conduct or competence. These situations can have significant implications for both parties. For principals, there may be potential exposure to a wrongful dismissal claim or a complaint to the Law Society. For students, the loss of an articling position may delay or jeopardize their path to admission. Prompt engagement with the Law Society helps ensure that appropriate steps are taken and that all parties are treated fairly.

Experience / Instruction / Evaluation

The articling term is a critical period of experiential learning, where students begin applying their legal education in a real-world setting under the supervision of a principal. The Competency Framework for Entry to Practice should guide both the principal and student in identifying appropriate experiences and instructional opportunities to support the development of the knowledge, skills, and professional behaviours required for entry-level legal practice.

The framework outlines the core competencies expected of newly called lawyers in Newfoundland and Labrador. These competencies reflect what is necessary to practise law ethically, competently, and in the public interest, across a broad range of legal environments - including private practice, public service, legal aid, in-house roles, and sole practice. While not every student will be able to demonstrate every competency through direct experience, students should have meaningful exposure to the concepts and be capable of applying them in practice following their call to the bar.

Level of Competence Required

Students are not expected to master all competencies by the end of their articling term. Rather, they should demonstrate entry-level competence - that is, the ability to carry out professional tasks with care, judgment, and awareness of ethical and legal obligations, at a standard consistent with the expectations of a newly called lawyer.

The key question for principals is:

"Is this student ready to begin practising law independently, with the level of competence and professional judgment required of a new call - including those who may be practising as a sole practitioner, where in-house support or direct supervision may not be available?"

While many new lawyers work under continued mentorship, some will enter sole or small firm practice shortly after call. The articling term must therefore prepare students to take on the responsibilities of practice with confidence, professionalism, and awareness of their ethical and legal limits. If a student has not had the opportunity to demonstrate a given competency, both the principal and student should be satisfied that the student understands its importance and can apply it responsibly when the need arises.

Ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation

Regular engagement and feedback between the principal and the student are essential throughout the articling term. The Education Plan, the early-term interview conducted by the Law Society, and the Mid-Term Report - are intended to support these ongoing conversations and help ensure that the articling experience remains structured, educational, and aligned with the Competency Framework for Entry to Practice.

The Education Plan requires the principal and student to identify anticipated learning opportunities, consider how the competencies will be developed, and discuss any areas where additional support may be required. Principals are also encouraged to designate a mentor who can provide the student with a confidential source of guidance and support. As set out in the Education Plan, the mentorship relationship is less formal than the articling relationship and carries no supervisory or reporting obligations. The principal is not permitted to delegate any of their supervisory, instructional, or compliance responsibilities to the mentor, all of which remain solely with the principal.

The early-term interview, conducted between the student and a member of the Education Committee, provides an additional checkpoint to confirm that the student is receiving appropriate supervision, feedback, and opportunities for competency development. The Mid-Term Report offers a structured opportunity for the principal and student to reflect on the

student's progress, identify strengths and areas for improvement, and make any necessary adjustments for the remainder of the articling term.

Consistent communication is critical to ensure that progress is being made across the competency areas, that gaps in experience or instruction are addressed early, and that questions or concerns are resolved in a timely manner. Principals and students are encouraged to address challenges proactively. Issues relating to performance, progress, or readiness for practice should be discussed openly and, where appropriate, reflected in the Mid-Term Report.

Principals are reminded that under the Articles of Clerkship, they agree to use their best means and endeavours to enable the student to qualify for call to the bar, provided the student complies with the Law Society Act, the Law Society Rules, and the Code of Professional Conduct. Where needed, the Education Committee may offer guidance or support and, in some cases, assist in resolving concerns to ensure that the articling term remains meaningful and aligned with the competency requirements.

External Rotations at Other Firms/Organizations

In some cases, the nature of the principal's legal practice may limit the student's exposure to certain areas of law or professional activities. This is particularly common with respect to specific elements of Competency Domain 7 (Litigation and Transactional Skills) and Competency Domain 9 (Knowledge of the Law), which may not naturally arise in all practice environments.

Where a principal is unable to provide instruction or experience in one or more required competency areas, they are expected to take proactive steps to ensure the student receives that instruction or experience elsewhere. This may involve arranging for the student to complete an external rotation with another lawyer, firm, or organization.

These types of arrangements do not require a formal assignment of the Articles of Clerkship. The student remains under the overall supervision of their principal, who retains responsibility for ensuring that the articling term is structured to provide a well-rounded learning experience aligned with the Competency Framework for Entry to Practice.

It is imperative that principals plan ahead to determine whether their practice will allow the student to gain adequate exposure to all required competency areas. The Education Plan asks principals to consider whether an external rotation may be necessary to address anticipated gaps and to identify any areas where supplemental experience may be required. This assessment should continue throughout the term, as principals are asked in both the Mid-Term Report and the Final Report to provide updates on the student's progress and any steps taken to ensure appropriate exposure to the competencies. Where deficiencies are identified, arrangements for supplemental experience should be made in a timely manner to avoid gaps at the end of the term.

Students and principals are encouraged to consult with the Education Committee if they are unsure whether a rotation is necessary or how it should be structured.

Student Appearances in Courts and Tribunals

Students-at-law are permitted to appear before certain courts and administrative tribunals during their articling term; however, these appearances are strictly regulated under Rule 6.10 of the Law Society Rules. Principals must ensure that any student appearance complies with this rule.

Permitted Appearances

Under Rule 6.10(2), students may only appear on matters that are expressly permitted. These typically include certain proceedings in Provincial Court and appearances before administrative tribunals. It is essential that both the principal and student review Rule 6.10 carefully to confirm that any planned appearance falls within the permitted scope. Unauthorized appearances may have regulatory consequences for both the student and the supervising lawyer.

Supervision Requirements

Before a student may make any permitted court or tribunal appearance under Rule 6.10, the principal - or another supervising lawyer designated under Rule 6.09(3) - must ensure that the student is:

1. competent to make the appearance;
2. supervised to the extent necessary in the circumstances; and
3. properly prepared before making the appearance.

For the first 12 weeks of the articling term, a student must be accompanied by their principal or another approved supervising lawyer when making any permitted appearance.

After a student has completed 12 weeks of their articling term, Rule 6.10(3) permits them to appear without a supervising lawyer in attendance, provided the principal is satisfied that the student meets the requirements above and is competent and prepared to proceed independently.

Client Consent

Before appearing on behalf of a client, a student must obtain the client's written consent using the appropriate Law Society form, as required by Rule 6.10(4). The completed consent must be filed with the Director of Admissions and Education and provided to the presiding judge or decision-maker of the court or tribunal in which the appearance is being made.

Students articling with the Department of Justice and Public Safety are only required to obtain client consent once, but they must use the correct form depending on whether they are working in the Civil Division or the Crown Attorney's Office.

Discrimination, Harassment, and a Respectful Articling Environment

Principals play a critical role in ensuring that the articling experience is conducted in a professional, respectful, and inclusive environment. In accordance with the Code of Professional Conduct, a Principal shall take reasonable and proactive steps to ensure that the articling placement is not marred by discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, or reprisal.

General Obligation of Principals

A Principal must not engage in, condone, permit, or be willfully blind to conduct that constitutes discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, or reprisal. This obligation applies not only to the Principal's own conduct, but also to the workplace culture, practices, and interactions to which the articling student is exposed. The duty extends beyond conduct occurring strictly within the office or during the provision of legal services and includes work-related social functions, electronic communications, and other professional settings.

Principals are expected to foster a workplace that respects the dignity and worth of all persons and that complies with applicable human rights and workplace health and safety legislation.

Discrimination

Discrimination includes any distinction, whether intentional or unintentional, based on actual or perceived personal characteristics protected by law, that imposes disadvantage or withholds opportunities. Principals should be mindful that discrimination may be systemic or arise through adverse effects of facially neutral policies, practices, or expectations.

In the articling context, this may include, without limitation:

- assigning work or learning opportunities in a manner that disadvantages a student based on a protected characteristic;
- failing to provide reasonable accommodation to the point of undue hardship;
- applying policies or expectations that have a disproportionate or adverse impact on an articling student; and
- tolerating derogatory language, jokes, or comments in the workplace.

Principals should be particularly attentive to the unique experiences of Indigenous articling students and others who may be disproportionately affected by systemic discrimination or implicit bias.

Harassment and Sexual Harassment

Harassment includes conduct, whether a single incident or a pattern of behaviour, that a reasonable person would expect to cause humiliation, offence, or intimidation. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature and may arise where there is a power imbalance, including between a Principal and an articling student.

Examples relevant to articling may include bullying, abuse of authority, degrading comments, unwelcome sexualized remarks, or inappropriate physical or electronic communications. The intent of the person engaging in the conduct is not determinative.

Reprisal

Principals must not engage in reprisals against an articling student or any other person because that person has raised concerns, made or contemplated making a complaint, participated in an investigation, or sought information about their rights. Reprisal includes any conduct that penalizes, intimidates, or disadvantages a person for exercising these rights.

Practical Expectations of Principals

To meet these obligations, Principals should:

- model professional, respectful behaviour at all times;
- take concerns raised by articling students seriously and respond promptly and appropriately;
- ensure that articling students are aware of their right to raise concerns without fear of reprisal;
- intervene where inappropriate conduct is observed or reported; and
- seek guidance from the Law Society where uncertainty exists regarding obligations or appropriate responses.

Failure to meet these expectations may have implications for a Principal's eligibility to act as a Principal and may engage the Law Society's regulatory responsibilities under the Code of Professional Conduct.

Important Dates and Filing Requirements

The bar admission program operates on a fixed schedule with key deadlines throughout the year. Principals should be familiar with these dates to ensure students meet all regulatory requirements.

Articling Term

- Start Date: January 30 or June 1. Although students may begin employment with their principal before these dates, credit toward the articling term will only accrue as of the designated start date. Late starts are not permitted; any delay will be treated as part of the student's permitted leave.
- Duration: 52 weeks, including BAC attendance and permitted leave.
- Application Deadlines for Admission as a Student-at-Law:
 - Second Monday in May (for June start)
 - Second Monday in December (for January start)

Bar Admission Course (BAC)

- Accommodation Requests:
 - Must be submitted by August 1st for students requiring academic accommodations during the BAC.
- Fall In-Person BAC Schedule:
 - Begins: First Monday of October
 - Ends: Friday of the 6th week

Completion of Articles

An Application for Enrolment as a Member must be filed with the Law Society at least 10 days before the relevant Call to the Bar ceremony (Rule 6.14(2)). The Certificate of Principal should be submitted after the Final Report and must also be received by the Law Society before this 10-day deadline.

Call to the Bar

The Call to the Bar is the formal ceremony at which a Student-at-Law becomes a Member of the Law Society. It is both a significant personal milestone and a public affirmation of the new lawyer's readiness to uphold the ethical, legal, and professional responsibilities of practice.

Ceremony Schedule

The Law Society holds two Call to the Bar ceremonies each year, one in February and one in June. Ceremony dates vary slightly year to year and are set by the Director of Admissions and Education in collaboration with the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador. Students and principals will be notified of the scheduled dates in advance.

Role of the Principal

Principals are encouraged to attend the Call to the Bar ceremony in support of their student. This moment represents the culmination of the principal-student relationship and the student's formal entry into the legal profession.

Appendix A: Required Forms and Key Dates

| Form / Requirement | Deadline / Timing | Notes |
|--|--|--|
| Application for Admission as a Student-at-Law | Second Monday of May / Second Monday of December | Due in May for June start; December for January start |
| Education Plan | Filed before commencement of the articling term | Identifies anticipated learning opportunities and potential competency gaps |
| Early-Term Interview | Approximately 13 weeks after commencement | Scheduled between the student and a member of the Education Committee |
| Mid-Term Report | No earlier than the Friday of Week 27 and no later than the Friday of Week 28 | Formal assessment of progress across the competency areas |
| Final Report | No earlier than the Friday of Week 48 and no later than the Friday of Week 49 | Confirms overall progress and remaining steps |
| Application for Enrolment as a Member | At least 10 days prior to the scheduled Call to the Bar ceremony | All reporting must be complete and articling term finished |
| Certificate of Principal | After Final Report and before deadline for Application for Enrolment as a Member | Must be filed before the Application for Enrolment is processed |
| Accommodation Request Form (BAC) | August 1 | For students seeking accommodations in the Bar Admission Course |
| Client Consent Form (Court/Tribunal Appearances) | Prior to any appearance on behalf of a client | Filed with the Director and provided to the judge or decision- maker |
| Assignment of Articles (if applicable) | As needed | Requires approval of the Director or Education Committee |
| Declaration of Previous Principal (if applicable) | Upon assignment of articles | Confirms portion of term completed, days of leave taken, other employment, and any concerns |