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**GOOD PRACTICES IN THE LAW CLINICS
GUIDEBOOK**

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INTRODUCTION

According to the definition contained in the PWN Polish Language Dictionary¹, the term **good practices** refers to **methods of conduct considered effective and worthy of imitation in a given field**. The term is most often used in a professional, educational, social or organisational context and refers to proven methods of operation that lead to desired results and are recommended as models². Therefore, good practices in the work of a law clinic are a set of proven, ethical and effective activities that should characterise the functioning of a student legal clinic - so as to combine high-quality assistance to clients with the educational and social goals of the clinic.

In practice, in light of the Standards for University Legal Clinics³, this concept includes, among other things:

- 1. Reliability and quality of assistance provided:** the clinic is committed to providing **reliable and trustworthy legal services**, and students handling cases do so under **the constant educational and substantive supervision of academic teachers or practitioners**. Thanks to this, each case is discussed regularly, and student legal assistance complies with professional standards.
- 2. Responsible number of cases:** the clinic sets a **maximum number of cases per student** to ensure that each case receives adequate attention and to avoid work overload — thus, the quality of the clinic's work is not compromised by quantity.
- 3. Free of charge and accessible:** advice is provided **free of charge to those who cannot afford to pay for legal assistance**, which is the foundation of the clinic's

¹ <https://sjp.pwn.pl/> (accessed on 31 December 2025).

² Cf.: B. Kozicka, E. Pierzchała: *Good practices in administration. Meetings of praxeology and ideas in the internal sphere and in the environment of administration*, https://repozytorium.uni.wroc.pl/Content/141493/PDF/11_04_B_Kozicka_E_Pierzchala_Dobre_praktyki_w_dzialaniu_administracji_Spotkania_prakseologii_i_idei%20w_sferze_wewnetrznej_i_w_otoczeniu_administracji.pdf (accessed on 31 December 2025).

³ Consolidated text adopted by the Council of the University Legal Advice Centres Foundation pursuant to Resolution No. 9/2014 of 8 March 2014, <https://www.fupp.org.pl/kliniki-prawa/standardy> (accessed on 31 December 2025).

activities as a form of **social responsibility and legal support for those most in need.**

4. **Confidentiality and data protection:** The clinic ensures **the confidentiality of customer service** and the appropriate security of documents, which is crucial for the trust of those using legal services.
5. **Clear rules for working with clients:** Before accepting a case, the client is **informed about the clinic's operating principles and the form of assistance provided**, including the role of the student as the person handling the case under supervision, which increases the transparency and security of the entire process.

Good practices in law clinics are therefore **a standard that encompasses both legal assistance to the community and the teaching process for students**, combining social, educational and ethical goals. Moreover, good practices in the functioning of law clinics should be seen not only as a set of technical organisational solutions, but as **a comprehensive model of operation** that serves to achieve social, educational and ethical goals. They constitute a standard of conduct that sets the framework for the responsible and professional provision of free legal aid by students undergoing academic training under the substantive supervision of academic staff. In practice, this means that law clinics not only contribute to increasing access to legal aid for people in difficult life situations, but also play a key educational role – shaping students' legal analysis and writing skills, and above all, their professional responsibility, empathy and understanding of the role of a lawyer in society.

The good practices noted above can be considered on several complementary levels:

- A. *in the **supervisor-student** relationship*
- B. *in the **student-client** relationship*
- C. *in **student-student** relations*
- D. *in the relationship **between the Law Clinic and its environment***
- E. *in the relationship **between the Law Clinic and the University***

The above relationships – and the related mechanisms of operation and responsibility – constitute a coherent frame of reference within which it is possible to develop both a legal culture and the ethical awareness of future lawyers. At the same time, they set out a logical order for further considerations regarding the functioning of law clinics in a model with high teaching and social standards. In addition, the relationships indicated above, as well as the principles governing them, will determine the further axis of consideration.



GOOD PRACTICES IN THE SUPERVISOR-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP

- **Ensuring a high standard of legal work**

In the teaching and substantive relationship between the supervisor and the student, particular importance is attached to maintaining a high level of legal opinions. This includes both substantive supervision (correctness of interpretation and argumentation) and formal supervision (structure, style, legal language) by the clinic supervisor.

The supervisor of a pair of students is responsible for checking the substantive correctness of the opinion, its formal correctness (grammar, spelling) and whether it has been written in a way that is understandable to the client. The supervisor should communicate their comments to the authors of the opinion during meetings arranged with students during the supervisor's office hours. Sending the supervisor's comments on the opinion electronically (by e-mail) does not allow the supervisor to ensure that the comments are understandable to the students.

The supervisor should indicate the parts of the opinion that need improvement and explain what that improvement should consist of. They should not show students a ready-made template of a correct opinion, as it is important that students feel that they are the authors of the opinion and feel responsible for its form and content.

It is important for the supervisor to ensure that the quality of the opinion that students submit to the client meets the requirements of correctness.

- **Shaping an attitude consistent with the ethos of the legal profession**

An integral part of the teaching process in the clinic is to make students aware that acting in a manner that disregards or circumvents the law is unacceptable, both ethically and practically. The clinic serves to shape attitudes consistent with the principle of legality and professional ethics.

The supervisor should ensure that the legal solution to the client's problem indicated in the opinion prepared by the students does not circumvent the law.

- **Regularity in the organisation of clinical seminars**

A good organisational standard is to ensure regular seminar meetings with the supervisor and students, at least three times during the academic year. Therefore, an important element of the clinical method of legal education are seminars at which students present to their colleagues in the same section the cases on which they have prepared legal opinions. Such seminars are an opportunity to broaden knowledge and discuss the legal aspects of the cases being handled, as well as to analyse the cases in depth and reflect on the practical and ethical aspects of clinical practice. The frequency of such seminars should depend on the number of cases handled by students, so that each pair discusses no more than 2-3 cases at the seminar.

- **Availability of the supervisor and support for students in the course of their clinical work**

As part of supporting the teaching process and providing ongoing assistance to students, the supervisor of the Law Clinic sets additional regular consultation hours. The aim of this practice is to enable students to obtain individual consultations and discuss substantive, organisational and ethical issues related to the cases they are handling.

- **Time discipline and communication efficiency**

An important aspect of student-supervisor cooperation is punctuality. Since students are required to prepare opinions (and possibly draft pleadings) within a reasonable time frame (not exceeding two weeks), supervisors should be all the more careful to arrange meetings with pairs of students without delay to discuss the draft opinions and pleadings they have sent.



GOOD PRACTICES IN STUDENT-CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS

- **Assistance for the poor, equalising access to legal aid**

The idea of law clinics combines an educational and a social function. On the one hand, it is intended to be a place of learning for students, and on the other, it is intended to equalise opportunities in access to legal aid in society, so that no one is deprived of basic legal aid due to their financial status. The clients of law clinics are people in need – mostly pensioners and students. Before a client receives legal aid, they must submit a statement that they are unable to bear the costs of paid legal aid. When examining the client's financial situation, the clinic takes into account not only the value but also the liquidity of their assets. It is permissible to provide legal aid to a person whose assets are not liquid, even though the value of the assets is significant. Illiquidity occurs if at least one of the following conditions is met:

- a. the sale of items included in the client's assets would cause particularly significant existential difficulties for them or their loved ones (e.g. the flat in which the client lives; items necessary for the performance of their profession);
- b. legal assistance is needed immediately and the client demonstrates that the item cannot be sold within that time frame; and the client has no other assets.

- **The principle of confidentiality and protection of information obtained from the client**

A person who seeks help from a solicitor usually decides to entrust them with important assets: their property (sometimes of considerable value), their good name, and other personal assets. Therefore, one of the important principles governing the practice of providing legal advice by students in a law clinic is the principle of confidentiality. This principle is based on the assumption that the proper provision of assistance by a solicitor requires the client to trust them. Whether such a relationship is established depends largely on the solicitor's attitude, in particular whether they are able to keep confidential the information obtained in connection with the provision of legal advice. In the case of a professional solicitor or barrister, the requirement to keep such information confidential

is a fundamental principle of professional ethics, expressed not only in codes of conduct but also in the laws governing the practice of these professions. Under Polish law, a breach of this obligation by a professional solicitor constitutes an offence under Article 266 § 1 of the Criminal Code⁴ and may therefore result in the solicitor being held criminally liable. The law allows for a few exceptions to this obligation, while at the same time giving the lawyer the possibility to refuse to answer questions concerning information covered by professional secrecy when the lawyer is questioned as a witness in court or administrative proceedings.

Furthermore, legal provisions imposing an obligation to keep confidential information obtained in the course of providing legal assistance to a client do not apply to students providing legal assistance within the framework of a law clinic. Procedural provisions giving the right to refuse to answer questions asked of witnesses when those questions concern matters covered by confidentiality also do not apply to them. Despite the lack of legal provisions obliging students providing legal assistance in a law clinic to keep confidential information obtained in the course of performing this task, there is no doubt that such an obligation also rests with students. Its justification is the same as the justification for the deontological principle of confidentiality applicable in the legal profession. If a person coming to a law clinic for advice does not have a guarantee that the information they provide to students will be used solely for the purpose of providing adequate legal assistance and will not be disclosed for any other purpose, they would often decide not to seek such advice. The situation of students is complicated by the lack of legal provisions allowing them to refuse to testify about matters covered by confidentiality if law clinic students are summoned (by a court, prosecutor, police or other authorities) to testify as witnesses. In the absence of such provisions, refusal to disclose confidential information may result in students being held criminally liable. Fortunately, such situations are practically non-existent in Poland, which demonstrates

⁴ Act of 6 June 1997 – Criminal Code, consolidated text: Journal of Laws of 2025, item 383.

the understanding shown by law enforcement authorities for the principles underlying the functioning of student legal clinics.

- **The principle of providing legal advice exclusively in writing**

The basic principle of the law clinic is to provide legal advice exclusively in writing. Students are not allowed to answer clients' questions orally, as they are not yet professional attorneys. All information provided by clients must be checked and approved by an academic teacher who supervises the students' work. On the one hand, this principle guarantees the quality of the legal assistance provided, and on the other hand, it ensures that students have a peaceful working environment and gives them time to thoroughly examine the issue at hand.

- **The principle of informing the client about the status of work on the case**

Students prepare a written legal opinion, so they need time to establish the facts of the case based on discussions with the client and documents. They then gather information on the applicable legal provisions and formulate answers to the questions asked by the client. Each opinion must be reviewed by an academic teacher who supervises the students. The above process of preparing an opinion takes about 2-3 weeks, but if the case is more complex, it can take up to a month. Students are required to provide the client with information on the status of work on the legal opinion. Two weeks after the first meeting with the client, students should call the client and inform them when they can expect to receive an opinion on their case. This practice prepares students to work as professional attorneys who are responsible for contacting clients. Respect for the client is demonstrated, among other things, by informing them about the progress of their case.

- **Presenting legal opinions in a manner understandable to the client**

One of the important tasks of law clinics is to explain complex legal regulations in an accessible way. When giving legal opinions, students are required to explain the client's legal situation to them in detail and in a way that they can understand. The use of professional legal terminology is unavoidable, but it should be accompanied by an explanation in simple language of the meaning of the terms used in law.

- **Image standards for Law Clinic students**

Before starting their internship at the law clinic, students undergo administrative training, during which they learn the rules of cooperation with the law clinic office and familiarise themselves with the basic rules of contact with clients. One of the important rules is to ensure appropriate attire. When meeting with clients, students should dress neatly, but not excessively richly, so as not to embarrass less affluent clients. In addition, overly formal attire should be avoided, as it may give clients the impression that they are receiving legal advice from a professional attorney rather than a student intern.

- **The rule of not accepting original documents**

As part of the accepted organisational standards of the law clinic, the rule of not accepting original documents from clients is a permanent element of the case handling procedure. Students work exclusively on the basis of photocopies or scans provided by the client, which serves to ensure the security of document circulation and to eliminate the risk of loss, damage or misplacement of originals. Clients are always informed of the need to retain source documents and to provide them only in copied form. This rule applies to all students and supervisors, regardless of the type of case being handled.

- **Supervision of law clinics by the Foundation of University Legal Clinics**

A good practice in the operation of law clinics is to have their activities supervised by an external institution. In Poland, this institution is the Foundation of University Legal Clinics, which was established to support the creation of university legal clinics throughout Poland, ensure the standards of legal assistance they provide, and financially support the activities of law clinics. The Foundation has developed standards for the operation of university legal clinics, which are used as a model by all law clinics in the country. Members of the Foundation's Management Board visit law clinics and check whether the standards developed by the Foundation are being followed. If a client is dissatisfied with the quality of service provided by a law clinic, they can inform the Foundation's management board. In addition, twice a year, at the end of each semester, law clinics from universities throughout Poland are required to send reports on their activities to the Foundation. Each year, based on the reports submitted, the national daily newspaper Rzeczpospolita conducts a ranking of university legal clinics.

Although the task of a law clinic is to provide legal assistance to those in need, there are **situations in which it is not only possible but even necessary to refuse such assistance**. There are various reasons for refusal: in some cases, it results from recognised principles of professional ethics in the legal profession, in others it is a consequence of the principles on which student legal clinics operate. These are, in particular, the following situations:

- a) **Conflict of interest.** This term covers a number of factual situations whose common denominator is that the solicitor, due to the particular situation in which they find themselves, may be suspected of not acting in the client's best interests when providing legal advice, but rather of protecting the interests of another person. Such situations arise, for example, when the case concerns a person who is currently a client of the solicitor in any matter, or when the solicitor has provided legal assistance to that person in the past in the same matter with which a new potential client is approaching the solicitor. The codes of ethics for solicitors and barristers prohibit the provision of legal assistance in such situations, as there may be a suspicion that the solicitor's loyalty to the "old" client will prove more important than their loyalty to the "new" client and, as a result, the advice given to the "new" client will be unreliable. The same reasons apply to refusing to provide legal advice at a law clinic if the clinic has previously provided legal advice to the other party to the dispute. Such situations should be identified by the staff of the law clinic's secretariat, but it may happen that it is only during the new client's conversation with the students that a conflict of interest becomes apparent.
- b) **The case concerns the property or non-property rights of the lawyer himself or his loved ones.** A lawyer is required to maintain a certain emotional distance from the case in which he provides legal assistance. Such distance is necessary to maintain the professional nature of the lawyer's activities. It is difficult to maintain such distance when the advice concerns an issue directly related to the rights of the solicitor himself or his immediate family.

In such a situation, the student should report this circumstance to the secretariat, so that the secretariat can assign the case to another pair of students.

- c) In accordance with the standards of student legal clinics, **no advice is given in the legal clinic on a case in which the client is receiving legal assistance from a professional lawyer**, regardless of whether the lawyer has been assigned to the client by the court as a representative acting ex officio or whether the client has concluded a contract with the lawyer for the provision of legal assistance.
- d) **The client's litigation situation requires an appeal to be lodged, as the deadline for lodging it is approaching.** The methodology for preparing legal opinions and draft pleadings at the law clinic does not allow for an appeal to be prepared within 2-3 days. Therefore, the clinic refuses to provide assistance in such situations.
- e) In accordance with the requirements contained in the standards for student legal clinics, **the law clinic does not provide legal assistance in cases in which the university where the clinic operates is a party.** There are two reasons for this restriction: firstly, to avoid a conflict of loyalty: towards the university where the students providing legal advice study and their supervisors are employed. A conflict of loyalty would be a difficult challenge for students and, secondly, it would raise suspicions about their lack of loyalty to the client.



GOOD PRACTICES IN STUDENT-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

- **The principle of teamwork in a partnership system**

As part of the law clinic, students are assigned to work on cases in teams of two. This model serves to develop teamwork skills, knowledge exchange and mutual substantive support. Working in pairs allows for ongoing consultation on the actions taken and strengthens the sense of responsibility for jointly prepared legal opinions and draft letters.

- **The principle of equal involvement**

The rule is that students assigned to a joint case perform their duties in an equal and proportional manner. It is unacceptable to shift all or a significant part of the duties to one person. Teaching supervisors are entitled to monitor the course of cooperation and, if necessary, to correct it. Good practices assume mutual respect, fair distribution of tasks and timely fulfilment of agreements.

- **The principle of a common model of cooperation**

At the initial stage, students are required to develop a common model of cooperation and rules of communication for the implementation of a specific case. They should agree on the division of responsibilities, a schedule of activities and channels for the ongoing exchange of information. This model should be transparent, based on mutual trust and partnership, and take into account the individual capabilities and commitments of each party.

- **The principle of increased teamwork safety**

Working in a team of two contributes to increased safety for students. The presence of a second team member reduces the risk of substantive errors, facilitates the verification of information, and enables mutual support in situations requiring difficult decisions. In addition, the presence of a second student increases comfort when interacting with clients and raises the standard of communication and case handling.



GOOD PRACTICES IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LAW CLINIC AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

- **The principle of not taking clients away from professionals**

When law clinics first began operating in Poland, professional associations of lawyers and legal advisers expressed concern that law clinics would reduce interest in the services of professional lawyers. Accepting declarations of indigence is the law clinics' response to the concerns raised by professional associations of solicitors and barristers – our clients are indigent and would not be able to afford paid legal assistance. The existence of clinics does not cause clients to give up the services of professionals, because we provide assistance to people who could not afford paid legal assistance.

- **Accessibility – diverse forms of providing advice**

One of the good practices of a law clinic is to ensure wide availability of legal assistance through various forms of contact with people seeking advice. Information is provided and cases are accepted not only in person, but also by letter and telephone. This solution allows us to reach people who, due to their place of residence, health, disability or difficult life situation, have limited opportunities to appear in person. The diversity of forms of contact promotes the principle of equal access to legal aid and increases the effectiveness of the clinic's operations, while maintaining the substantive and organisational standards of the advice provided.

- **Continuing the idea of Street Law – *I know my rights***

One of the key principles of the law clinic's activity is to continue the idea of the Street Law programme, also known as *I Know My Rights*. Educational activities in this area are based on the method of practical teaching of law, which consists in imparting knowledge in an accessible, understandable manner, tailored to the needs of specific groups of recipients – in particular secondary school students, people at risk of social exclusion and senior citizens. The classes are conducted by law students under the constant supervision of academic teachers, in accordance with appropriate substantive and didactic standards. Legal content is conveyed using activating methods such as mock

trials, case studies, debates and practical exercises. The co-creation of these classes by students not only develops their communication and teaching skills, but also strengthens the social dimension of university education.

- **Supporting the continuous development and updating of the programme / *Know My Rights***

The programme is systematically modernised in terms of both subject matter and teaching tools used, which serves to maintain its relevance and educational effectiveness. The topics of the classes are adapted to real and current legal issues faced by young people, such as cyberbullying, internet safety, legal responsibility of minors, consumer rights in the digital space, personal data protection and hate speech online. In order to ensure high quality and relevance of content, the programme is consulted with representatives of the field – teachers, judges, mediators, educational psychologists and pedagogues. In addition, steps are being taken to modernise teaching methods by introducing interactive, simulation and multimedia elements and using information and communication technologies in the classroom. This ensures that the programme remains attractive

and focused on the needs of today's audience.

- **Partnerships with schools and local institutions (e.g. the Municipal Consumer Ombudsman in Łódź) and, as part of running the mediation clinic, cooperation with the local community of mediators**

The principle determining the educational activities of the law clinic in the local community is to build lasting partnerships with schools and social institutions operating in the city and region. The clinic actively cooperates with general secondary schools and other educational institutions (including special schools) in order to popularise legal knowledge and strengthen civic awareness among young people. This relationship is based on ongoing dialogue with teachers, who identify the current educational needs of students and co-create planned activities. This cooperation takes various forms, from the organisation of mock trials and thematic workshops to field trips and educational events. This type of partnership not only contributes to the fulfilment of the University's social

mission, but also constitutes an important element of the practical education of law students.

- **Public dissemination of the activities of the law clinic and building social prestige**

One of the key principles of the law clinic's operation is transparency of its activities and building its recognition as an initiative of high social and academic importance. This is achieved by publicly sharing information about the results of educational and advisory projects, including the number of beneficiaries, workshop participants and institutions receiving support. The clinic actively conducts information and promotional activities using various communication channels – the Faculty of Law and Administration website, social media, as well as publications in the trade press and university materials. These activities are aimed not only at disseminating knowledge about the initiatives undertaken, but also at shaping the prestige of the law clinic as an academic pioneer in the field of legal education and pro-social activities. In this way, the clinic's identity as an important link in the relationship between the university and its social environment is being built.

- **The law clinic's activity on the national and international stage**

The law clinic's activity on the national and international stage is an important element of its functioning and development. It includes the regular participation of staff and students in academic conferences of a clinical and related nature, both at the national level (e.g. national conferences of Polish law clinics) and internationally.

In addition, the law clinic actively participates in the activities of networks associating clinical education centres, such as **the Global Alliance for Justice Education (GAJE)** – a global organisation, and **the European Network for Clinical Legal Education (ENCLE)** – a network coordinating cooperation between law clinics in Europe. Membership in these structures enables the exchange of good practices, improves the quality of clinical education, and builds the University's prestige on the international stage.



GOOD PRACTICES IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LAW CLINIC AND THE UNIVERSITY

- **The principle of integrating the activities of the law clinic with the study programme**

The inclusion of law clinic classes in the university curriculum is one of the key organisational principles of this form of practical legal education. Thanks to this, clinical activities are not treated as optional or additional activities, but as an integral part of the teaching process, supplementing theoretical knowledge with practical experience. By participating in clinical classes, students have the opportunity to develop their professional competences – they learn how to apply legal provisions in specific cases, acquire analytical skills, improve their skills in writing pleadings, and develop their communication and ethical competences. As part of their clinical activities, they complete internships and two subjects – seminars. The inclusion of the law clinic's activities in the study programme also translates into the high quality of the assistance provided by students – each case is analysed under the supervision of an experienced academic teacher, and student participation is subject to formal teaching requirements and assessment of learning outcomes. This principle promotes the professionalisation of legal education and builds a lasting relationship between legal theory and its practical application in the public interest.

- **Strengthening the University's social mission through educational activities**

The University's social mission is strengthened, among other things, through educational activities carried out within the framework of the law clinic. One of its important goals is to promote legal education, as part of the *I Know My Rights* programme, as an effective tool for counteracting legal exclusion and low legal awareness in society, which is based on the idea of the Street Law programme. In this context, counteracting the so-called legal knowledge deficit should be considered one of the fundamental and permanent elements of the Law Clinic's mission, closely linked to the social function of the University.

- **Inclusion of the *I Know My Rights* programme in the university's teaching system**

The principle that strengthens the role of clinical education in the teaching structure of the University is the inclusion of the *I Know My Rights* programme in the formal curriculum. Classes conducted as part of this programme take the form of a seminar, for which ECTS credits are awarded, confirming their full academic status. The inclusion of the programme in the course of study allows students to combine educational activities with practical preparation for their profession. Work on the project includes, among other things, developing teaching materials, conducting classes in schools and institutions, and participating in trial simulations, which develops students' professional and social competences. The *I Know My Rights* programme is fully consistent with the learning outcomes assumed for law and administration courses, and its implementation promotes a better understanding of legal provisions and their functioning in practice. As a result, clinical education becomes an integral and valuable part of academic education.

- **Covering the activities of the law clinic with civil liability insurance**

In the event of damage caused by wilful misconduct, it is necessary to cover the clinic's activities with civil liability insurance. It is the responsibility of the university where the clinic operates to ensure that the clinic is covered by an insurance policy. The insurer is the university, and the insured parties are the university, students and clinic staff. Intentional damage may occur if a client suffers damage as a result of a legal opinion based on outdated legal provisions.

- **The principle of ensuring ongoing administrative support for the law clinic**

For the efficient functioning of the law clinic, it is essential to ensure constant, professional administrative support in the form of a secretariat run by a full-time employee. The constant presence of a person responsible for coordinating organisational matters enables the smooth running of the process of accepting clients, keeping a register of cases, setting appointment dates and communication between students, academic supervisors and persons seeking legal assistance. This organisation of work contributes to improving the quality of services provided, ensures the continuity of the

clinic's operations outside teaching hours, and relieves academic staff of administrative duties, allowing them to focus on supervising the legal opinions prepared by students. The constant support of the secretariat also guarantees a higher standard of customer service and maintains organisational order in the work of clinical teams.

- **The principle of supplementing clinical classes with psychological preparation and workshops on drafting pleadings**

An integral part of preparing students for work in a law clinic should be providing them with appropriate teaching resources in the area of drafting pleadings and the basics of client contact, including sensitivity to the client's emotional and social situation. To this end, it is reasonable to include in the curriculum classes on the practical drafting of pleadings and classes on psychology (especially the psychology of communication and difficult situations). Such additions to the curriculum not only serve to improve the quality of the legal documents prepared by students, but also develop their soft skills, which are essential for socially engaged lawyers. It also better prepares students for responsible and empathetic contact with people who often find themselves in life crises



VARIA – UNIC PERSPECTIVE

Law clinics across universities within the UNIC alliance operate in markedly different institutional and operational models. This diversity is not a weakness - quite the opposite. It reflects the distinct legal cultures, curricular structures, local needs, and partnership ecosystems in which each clinic is embedded. As a result, UNIC clinics vary in their core mission (access to justice, skills training, civic engagement, policy impact), in the type of legal support they provide (advice, representation, legal information, mediation), and in the degree to which activities are integrated into formal curricula or organised as extracurricular, volunteer-based initiatives.

In some universities, law clinics are fully credit-bearing components of study programmes, tightly linked to seminar-based teaching, structured assessment, and defined learning outcomes. In others, clinics function primarily as practice-oriented platforms for volunteering and social engagement, often supported by external stakeholders and shaped by community-driven priorities. There are also hybrid models that combine both approaches: formal academic supervision and methodological training on the one hand, and flexible, needs-based project work on the other. Beyond organisational design, differences are also visible in intake procedures, team structures, supervision intensity, quality assurance mechanisms, ethical protocols, and the scope of collaboration with public institutions and non-governmental organisations.

These differences naturally lead to the development of distinct “good practices”. What works best in one setting is often a product of the clinic’s local environment: the available institutional infrastructure, the profile and capacity of academic staff, the regulatory framework for student involvement, and the nature of demand from the surrounding community. At the same time, the UNIC framework creates an invaluable opportunity: rather than pursuing a one-size-fits-all model, the alliance can treat this plurality as a shared laboratory for clinical and experiential legal education. By comparing approaches, exchanging tools, and learning from each other’s successes (and

constraints), UNIC universities can strengthen both the quality of teaching and the real-world impact of their clinics.

Against this background, **the following section presents selected examples of good practices identified within UNIC clinical initiatives.** The overview does not aspire to provide an exhaustive mapping of all clinical activities across the alliance. Instead, it highlights representative solutions and operational choices that may inspire further development, adaptation, and cross-university learning. The examples below are based on information shared by representatives of UNIC member universities and reflect practical experience gathered in different institutional contexts. They illustrate how varied clinic models can generate complementary strengths - ranging from robust training and supervision frameworks, through innovative forms of outreach and partnership-building, to creative methods of recognising student engagement and documenting learning outcomes.

Ultimately, the value of this collection lies precisely in its diversity: it shows that clinical education can be organised in multiple credible ways, and that excellence may take different forms depending on local conditions. What these practices share is a common orientation toward meaningful, socially engaged learning - where students are not only recipients of knowledge, but active contributors to the legal and civic ecosystem around them.

Selected good practices (snapshots)

Ruhr University Bochum - Refugee Law Clinic Bochum

- Structured “learning-by-doing” pathway with quality control: students complete compulsory training, then progress from observing consultations (“junior consultants”) to handling cases as “senior consultants,” supported by regular supervision meetings with an advisory board of volunteer practitioners and academics.
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- Clear, client-friendly case workflow: a transparent 4-step process (consultation → research/reflection → supervision → communicating results), helping ensure consistency, accountability, and student learning.

Ruhr University Bochum - Bochum International Humanitarian Law Clinic

- High-impact outputs for partner organisations: students work on deliverables such as draft submissions, expert opinions, treaty language, litigation preparation, or legal handbooks, i.e., products with a tangible “public value” dimension.
- International clinic-network model + exchange conference: participation in broader IHL clinic networks and an annual exchange conference format that strengthens methodology transfer.

University College Cork - Child Law Clinic

- Clinic model aligned with professional regulation: because direct client advice is restricted, the clinic provides research support to registered legal professionals and NGOs, while still enabling meaningful clinical learning and public-interest impact.
- Assessment design that supports reflective practice: the clinic is embedded as a credit-bearing module with assessed written work, participation, and a reflective journal-good for ensuring both rigor and skills development.

University College Cork - Family Law Clinic

- Public-facing knowledge infrastructure: maintaining an online family law information hub, paired with research dossiers prepared (pro bono) for local practitioners - useful as a scalable model of outreach and service.

University College Cork - IT Law Clinic (Law & Innovation Clinic)

- Clinic-to-startup support with professional review: students work in teams, receive weekly staff feedback, and the final draft responses are reviewed by a law firm before being sent - strong practice for quality assurance and professional standards.

- Interdisciplinary cohort design: mixing students of different qualification levels/experience in small groups helps peer-learning and distributes responsibility in a controlled way.

University of Deusto - Clínica Jurídica Loiola

- Partnership governance with social entities: an advisory committee including recurring partner organisations helps align clinic work with real community needs and ensures continuity beyond one-off projects.
- Flexible “full-course vs short-term project” architecture: the clinic runs both longer, intensive projects and short initiatives open to a wider student group - good practice for balancing depth with access and visibility.

University of Liège - Liège Human Rights Law Clinic

- One-project-per-year intensive model: a deliberately small cohort works as one team on a single, carefully selected project, typically with an NGO or pro bono law firm - useful when staffing/resources are limited but quality must remain high.
- Output ownership and external validation: clinic products are designed to be reviewed and “appropriated” by the partner organisation, reinforcing professional accountability and real-world relevance.

University of Lodz – Law Clinic (Faculty of Law)

- Pair-work model with close mentorship ratio: students work in pairs, and each supervisor mentors a small group - this supports feedback intensity, ethical oversight, and gradual skills-building.
- Generalist exposure across legal areas: instead of strict sections, the clinic model aims to ensure students encounter different branches of law, building versatile “practice readiness.”

University of Zagreb - Law Clinic (Faculty of Law)

- Thematic group structure + high throughput: the clinic is organised into multiple specialised groups (e.g., asylum/foreigners, discrimination, children’s rights, workers’ rights), enabling capacity and focus at scale.

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- Student administrator pathway: a defined student-administration structure (with training/handovers and compensation for administrators) professionalises clinic operations and builds leadership competences.

Rotterdam add-on: recognising clinic engagement through digital badges

A particularly interesting example comes from Erasmus University Rotterdam, where participation in clinical activities can be linked to digital recognition formats (micro-credentials) - notably through the Dutch [EduBadges](#) infrastructure provided by SURF. This approach is valuable not only as a “nice extra,” but because it translates clinical learning into portable, legible achievements (skills, roles, responsibilities) that students can communicate beyond the university environment.

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