Students with a very high level of academic ability and proficiency in legal research, who will complete their undergraduate law degree studies this year, are invited to apply for positions as judges’ clerks.

These positions will become available in the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal and the High Court of New Zealand early in 2022. The appointments will generally be for two-year terms. Those appointed will be expected to stay in the role for the entire two-year period (unless prior dispensation is granted in exceptional circumstances).

The positions in the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal are based in Wellington. The positions in the High Court are based in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. Candidates should state in their covering letter if they are unable to accept a position in any of those locations.

Positions as judges’ clerks in the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal principally involve working with a single judge, but there will be some work of a more general character undertaken for all the judges of those Courts. In the High Court, judges’ clerks generally work for two judges but some may work for a single judge. Some High Court clerks may be required to travel on circuit with their judges.

The role of judges’ clerk is to undertake legal research at the direction of the judge or judges to whom the clerk is allocated. Clerks write legal opinions and collate authorities on particular points. They provide comments to judges on their draft judgments and check those judgments for error before delivery. They also write summaries of recent decisions of the courts and provide analysis of issues arising in particular appeals or first instance hearings undertaken by the judges of the courts in which they work. They may also assist with the preparation of speeches and undertake some administrative tasks for their judges.

Many participants in the court system are vulnerable and many suffer the effects of intergenerational trauma. This can be distressing. Potential candidates should also be aware that some of the material clerks are required to work on may be graphic and confronting, especially in the criminal field. Support services are available to assist clerks in dealing with such material.

The present starting salary of judges’ clerks on appointment at all levels is $52,157 pa, progressing in six-monthly increments to $63,468 pa for the last six months of their second year.

Applicants should submit a short covering letter saying why the applicant would like the position, a copy of their academic transcript, a curriculum vitae, a sample of one piece of legal writing or research (3 pages maximum) and the names of two or three referees (one of whom should be a legal academic) who may be contacted in relation to suitability for appointment. In addition to contacting the nominated referees, input on the academic ranking and other attributes of candidates may or will be sought on a confidential basis from deans of the law schools and other academic staff and any recent legal employers (applicants must provide contact names and details in their CV).

PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOUR STUDENT ID AND NAME APPEAR ON THE FRONT PAGE OF YOUR APPLICATION. Applications should be forwarded in PDF format by email to:

Yaël Philander
Executive Assistant to the Dean Faculty of Law
(EMAIL: y.philander@auckland.ac.nz)

The deadline to apply is: NOON on Friday, 19 March 2021

In keeping with the wishes of the judiciary, the Law School will participate in the application selection process. Applications received will be forwarded to a Law School committee composed of current academic staff. The Committee will then choose and interview top candidates. These candidates will participate in 15-minute interviews to be held in the week of March 22. Following the interview process, the Committee will forward candidates for the consideration of the Judge who administers the process on behalf of the respective courts.

It is intended that short-listed candidates for positions with the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal will be interviewed on 22 and 23 April 2021 and offers of appointment to those positions made soon thereafter. Those not selected for positions with those Courts will automatically be considered for High Court positions.

Those who were not short-listed for interviews for the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal and those who cannot relocate to Wellington may also be shortlisted for an interview for High Court positions. Interviews for those positions
will be conducted before 14 May 2021. Unsuccessful candidates should expect to be notified by 11 June 2021.

When recruiting clerks, the judges will be looking, as far as is consistent with the attributes necessary for the role, to make diverse appointments, including diversity of background, experience and subject knowledge. The full attributes the judges will be looking for are:

- Very high level of academic ability.
- Proficiency in legal research, although an Honours degree is not essential.
- Regard for human rights and dignity, including gender, ethnic and cultural equity.
- Cultural competence, including a commitment to Te Tiriti and understanding tikanga.
- Commitment to handle confidential information and materials with absolute discretion.
- Good organisational skills and proven ability to prioritise and manage workflows.
- Ability to handle important relationships with skill and sensitivity.
- A professional and focused approach to work.
- An ability to cope with stress.
- Self-motivation and initiative.
- The ability to grasp unfamiliar concepts quickly and to multi-task.
- Lateral and critical thinking ability.
- Ability to work co-operatively with colleagues and court staff.
- Ability and commitment to produce quality work consistently and often under tight deadlines.
- A broad legal education, preferably including Evidence and Company Law.

Some positions as clerks may be available earlier than 2022. Applicants who could start in mid-2021 should indicate this in their covering letter.