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## SUMMER ASSOCIATES IDENTIFY WRITING AND LEGAL RESEARCH SKILLS REQUIRED ON THE JOB

“ Close to half reported spending between 50% and 100% of their time conducting legal research. ”

“ Are law students prepared for the work required in their summer associate positions? ”

### SUMMARY

Greater emphasis is being placed on practical skills in legal education as schools acknowledge that it is crucial for law students to develop strong research and writing skills to succeed in practice. This need becomes quickly apparent once a student lands that first summer associate position. In a recent survey of summer associates, close to half reported spending between 50% and 100% of their time conducting legal research. When working on client matters, research often entails accessing a broader range of content than associates used in law school. Writing and drafting skills are extremely important as well, since summer associates are often expected to draft memos, motions, briefs and contracts.

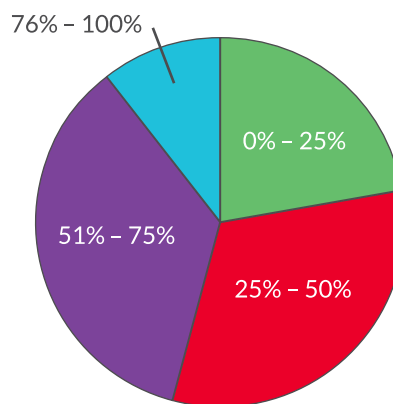
Are law students prepared for the work required in their summer associate positions? What types of content do they need to complete assignments? In what areas would they benefit from additional instruction? These questions are addressed in this report summarizing the results of a survey that was conducted in July 2016 by LexisNexis® among 330 summer associates working in large U.S. law firms (50+ attorneys).

### SUMMER ASSOCIATES REQUIRE STRONG RESEARCH SKILLS

When it comes to legal research, summer associates are expected to hit the ground running, as reflected in the significant amount of time they spend conducting legal research. Close to half report that over 50% of their time per week is spent on legal research. Another 32% of summer associates spend at least a quarter of their time per week on research. Considering summer associates spend so much time researching the law, it's not surprising that 86% of hiring partners believe legal research skills are highly important.<sup>1</sup>

### TIME SPENT ON LEGAL RESEARCH

Q. Thinking about a typical week in your summer associate position, on average, what percentage of your time is spent conducting legal research?



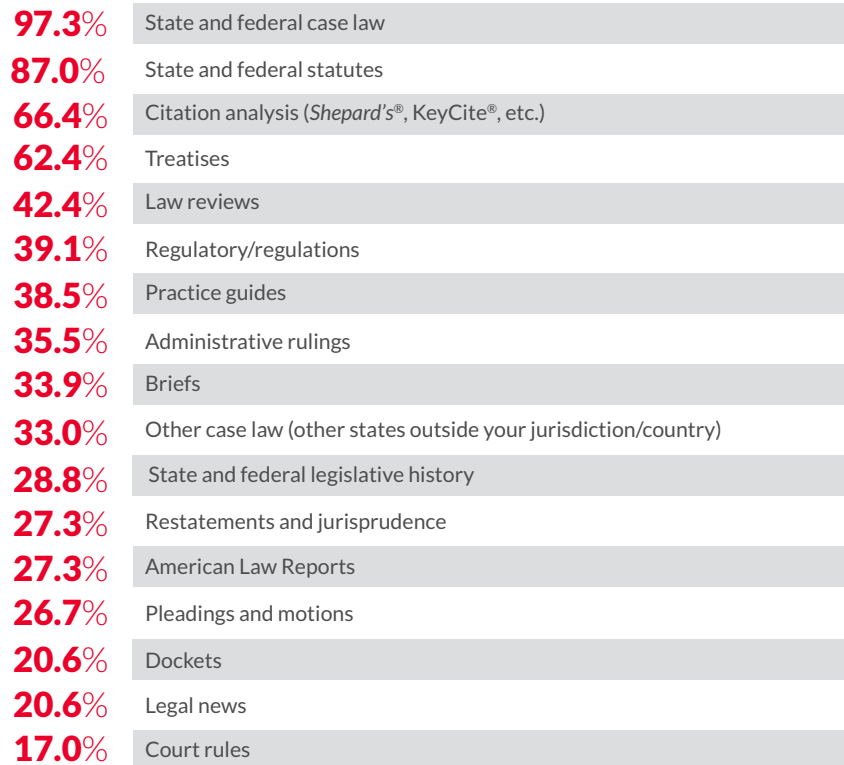
“ Almost all summer associates access case law and statutes in the scope of their work. ”

### SUMMER ASSOCIATES ACCESS A VARIETY OF CONTENT ON THE JOB

Summer associates' projects require them to access content similar to that which new associates use in practice.<sup>2</sup> As one would expect, almost all summer associates access case law and statutes in the scope of their work, and 66% use citation analysis services. Summer associates quickly learn that treatises are used extensively in practice, since at 62%, they are by far the most accessed secondary source. Treatises are followed by law reviews and practice guides at 42% and 39%, respectively. Approximately one-third also accessed regulations, administrative rulings and briefs. Pleadings and motions, dockets, legal news and court rules were used to a lesser extent.

### LEGAL CONTENT USED

Q. Which types of content do you access when conducting legal research as a summer associate?



“ 51% claim they were not prepared for one or more research assignments. ”

### SUMMER ASSOCIATES ARE SPLIT BETWEEN THOSE WHO FEEL FULLY PREPARED AND THOSE WHO DO NOT FEEL FULLY PREPARED FOR THEIR RESEARCH ASSIGNMENTS

Although half of the summer associates surveyed felt competent completing all their legal research assignments, 51% claim they were not prepared for one or more research assignments. In particular, summer associates would benefit from additional training in regulatory research, secondary sources, verdicts, briefs and dockets, case law research, citation analysis and public records.

### ADDITIONAL RESEARCH SKILLS

Q. Which legal research skills would you have liked more instruction on?



“Between 20% and 30% of summer associates said they would benefit from additional training on drafting contracts, memos, pleadings and motions and briefs.”

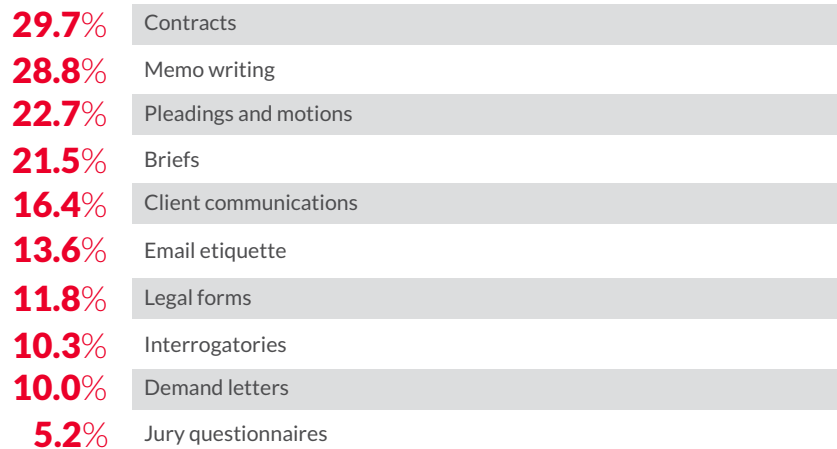
Regarding online legal research systems, 36% of summer associates think more instruction on using Lexis Advance® and Westlaw® in law school would have helped them in their summer jobs.

### OVERALL, SUMMER ASSOCIATES FELT PREPARED TO COMPLETE WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

While 65% of summer associates felt fully prepared to complete all writing and drafting assignments, 35% had one or more writing assignments they were not fully prepared to complete. Between 20% and 30% of summer associates said they would benefit from additional training on drafting contracts, memos, pleadings and motions and briefs.

### ADDITIONAL WRITING AND DRAFTING SKILLS

Q. Which writing or drafting skills would you have liked more instruction on?



### CONCLUSION

Research and writing skills have always been at the core of the law school curriculum. Fundamental skills are typically taught in the first-year legal research and writing program, and many law schools offer or require advanced courses in legal research or writing, among other opportunities. But do the number of credits and hours dedicated to legal research and writing align with the time summer associates and new attorneys spend exercising these skills in practice?

“ *Additional instruction is needed in regulatory research, case law and citation analysis, and secondary sources.* ”

The data indicates law schools could serve their students well by augmenting current training in specific skill sets. In particular, additional instruction is needed in regulatory research, case law, citation analysis, and secondary sources. Summer associates are expected to use the firm’s online research services, and over one-third stated additional instruction on Lexis Advance and Westlaw would have benefited them on the job. Finally, summer associates report the need for more experience drafting, specifically contracts and memos.

As law schools increase and enhance the practical skills component of the curriculum, these survey results can help educate administrators about the need for strong legal research and writing skills, as well as inform updates to the legal research and writing curriculum. The better prepared students are for their professional positions, the greater their chances for success.

<sup>1</sup> “Hiring partners reveal new attorney readiness for real world practice,” 2015.

<sup>2</sup> “Rebooting Legal Research in a Digital Age,” 2013.