

Plan Your Own Path

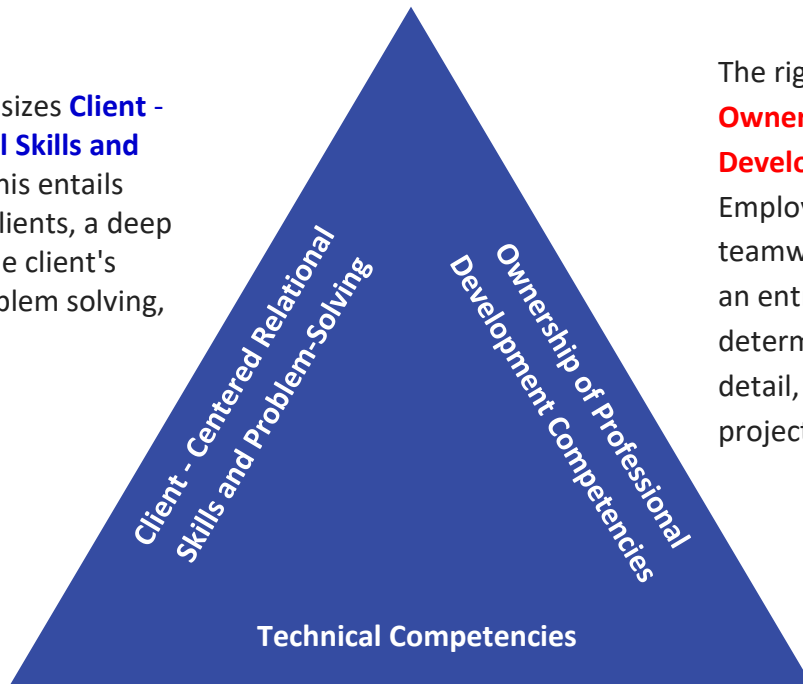
BANKRUPTCY LAW

OVERVIEW

Bankruptcy lawyers represent creditors and debtors in proceedings that will determine the rights of both. The debtors may be businesses or individual consumers. Lawyers working on bankruptcy issues get to deal with commercial law, corporate law, consumer law, and also may have even more opportunities for court appearances than litigators. Bankruptcy lawyers must have a working knowledge of commercial law and bankruptcy procedures as well as skill in negotiating, drafting, and advocacy. Many consider it the best of both worlds: interesting corporate and commercial law deals combined with trial work.

This handout helps you plan your path to a bankruptcy law career, covering essential competencies for clients and legal employers. As you plan, ensure you incorporate all three sides of this triangle.¹

The left side emphasizes **Client - Centered Relational Skills and Problem-Solving**. This entails responsiveness to clients, a deep understanding of the client's needs, creative problem solving, and client-centered communication.



The right side centers on **Ownership of Professional Development Competencies**. Employers and clients require teamwork, a strong work ethic, an entrepreneurial mindset, determination, attention to detail, integrity, and effective project management skills.

The base comprises fundamental **Technical Competencies**, including knowledge of the law, legal analysis, legal research, communication in the legal context, and legal judgment.

¹ See Neil W. Hamilton, *The Gap Between the Foundational Competencies Clients and Legal Employers Need and the Learning Outcomes Law Schools Are Adopting*, 89 UMKC L. Rev. 559 (2021).

This guide is arranged by the three crucial sides of the triangle.

TRADITIONAL TECHNICAL COMPETENCIES

Enroll in foundational courses during your first and second year, such as:

- Creditors' Rights
- Payment Systems
- Secured Transactions
- Sales
- Business Enterprise

Related Courses: Bankruptcy lawyers work within a highly varied legal environment that places a premium on a broad knowledge base beyond substantive bankruptcy law. Of particular relevance to a bankruptcy practitioner are the courses listed below:

- Advanced Bankruptcy
- Commercial Remedies
- Consumer Law
- Corporate Finance & Acquisitions
- Corporate Planning
- Evidence
- Income Taxation
- Intellectual Property in Business Organizations
- Negotiations
- Real Estate Transactions
- Texas Matrimonial Property (for practice in Texas)
- Trial Advocacy or Trial Techniques I

Upper-Level Writing Requirements: In your third year, choose a bankruptcy law-related Edited Writing course or Directed Research paper topic (with Faculty pre-approval) to improve and showcase your research, writing, and analytical competencies.

CLIENT-CENTERED RELATIONAL SKILLS AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Thoughtfully evaluate experiential opportunities. These are excellent ways for you to cultivate superior client focus, innovative problem-solving, and effective communication skills.

Be sure to work closely with your Office of Career Services advisors to obtain additional experiences (internships, judicial clerkships, public service opportunities) to grow your knowledge and skills in this area.

OWNERSHIP OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMPETENCIES

Experiences beyond the formal curriculum are vital to your professional growth. Aim to acquire experiences that closely replicate as much as possible the work lawyers engage in within the bankruptcy law space.

- **Student Organizations:** Commit yourself to relevant, on-campus organizations and actively pursue leadership, project management, and teamwork opportunities within the organization.
 - Bankruptcy Law Association
 - The John C. Ford Inn of Court is composed of practitioners and law students who are interested in bankruptcy practice. In addition, there is often a moot court team that participates in an interschool competition devoted to bankruptcy law.
- **Public Service Opportunities:** These pre-approved placements at 501(c)(3) organizations and government offices may provide you additional perspectives that are valuable to your career development.
- **Board of Advocates:**
 - [Duberstein Bankruptcy Moot Court Competition](#). The team is coached by alumna Alexandria Rahn and tryouts for the team are held each November. Participation is also an excellent networking opportunity for students interested in securing a bankruptcy judicial clerkship.
- **Law Journals:**
 - Author a note or comment on a bankruptcy law topic and seek to have it published in one of our journals or elsewhere.
- **Dallas Bar Association Sections:** Explore your interests and immerse yourself in the legal profession by becoming part of these Dallas Bar Association sections.
 - Bankruptcy and Commercial Law

Faculty: Start building a connection with a professor who is familiar with your work and can write you a letter of recommendation or serve as a reference. Here are some of the full-time faculty members who teach in this field.

Greg Crespi (BE)

Cultivate Your Personal Network: Reach out to corporate attorneys to arrange informational interviews through the Mustang Exchange or connections you establish during your law school journey. You should also ask your Career Services advisor to help you identify graduates and law firms in this space in the location(s) where you want to work.

Full-time and adjunct professor who teach bankruptcy law courses may have strong networks. Ask them for assistance making these connections.

Attend programs featuring bankruptcy law attorneys sponsored by the Office of Career Services or student organizations. These kinds of programs are great opportunities to learn more about entry-level careers and to connect with speakers who are often alumni and more willing to assist you.