



ARTICLE

Standing Out Sensibly: How Legal Writing Professors Can Equip Students to Leverage Responsible Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in their Summer Employment

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When we began our legal careers in the early 2000s, we were already tethered to the newest electronic devices. Literally. Our BlackBerrys came with a belt clip. But while much has changed in the legal world over the last twenty-five years, one constant has been the continuous evolution of legal technology. As new legal writing professors with very recent experience mentoring interns, we believe law students, including 1Ls, will be better positioned to succeed in their internships if they understand how to ethically and responsibly utilize generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) to improve their work product.

In our experiences supervising legal interns, we found that student work invariably suffered from one or more of the same mistakes: gaps in logic,

unclear prose, misunderstandings of case law or underlying facts, and incorrect citations. In addition, when students were asked to report verbally on their research, these reports often were rambling and unfocused. Interns who have a base level of proficiency with GenAI can avoid or mitigate many of these common mistakes and outshine their intern colleagues in an increasingly competitive job market.

While it is critically important for students to first draft any work product themselves before utilizing GenAI tools in the drafting process, as law professors, we run the risk of disadvantaging our students in their legal internships if we fail to provide guidance and instruction on how students can utilize GenAI to fine-tune their internship work product. This article explores seven practical ways legal interns can effectively utilize widely available GenAI platforms (e.g., CoCounsel, Protégé, or ChatGPT) during their internships.¹ Professors can introduce and apply each of these as part of one or more common legal writing assignments, including objective memos and persuasive briefs, or as a final GenAI-assisted writing assignment before the end of the course.

I. Use GenAI to verify and expand research.

We all know students should never rely on GenAI exclusively. However, interns can use GenAI as a “gut check” to assess whether they have conducted exhaustive research and are ready to start synthesizing and drafting. Using GenAI as a double check on research is the 2025 version of calling the Westlaw or Lexis research line to ask the reference librarian for additional search queries or resources. While interns must always verify, read, and independently analyze every case, statute, and resource identified by GenAI, interns can benefit from having a resource that might identify research areas that they previously overlooked. For example, if an intern uploads the memo they are drafting to CoCounsel’s document analyzer, they will be given an organized list of additional cases, statutes, and secondary sources that may be relevant to each of the legal principles analyzed in the memo.

¹ This article assumes that (1) the employer permits its interns to utilize the relevant GenAI tool; and (2) that the intern is aware of the ethical implications (including confidentiality concerns) regarding the use of GenAI. As noted at the end of this article, it is important for legal writing professors to equip students to identify and ameliorate the risks inherent in GenAI.

Similarly, Protégé’s document analyzer will identify additional potentially relevant sources on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis.

2. Use GenAI to evaluate clarity and logic.

Interns typically are not hired to provide efficient, sophisticated, client-ready legal services. It is understood that part of the internship experience is learning from practice. However, supervising attorneys expect students to produce well-reasoned, logical, clear, and organized work product, even if it is not quite client-ready. GenAI can help interns identify weaknesses in their work before submitting it to their supervisor. It is important to reemphasize that students should first draft the work product themselves before utilizing GenAI tools in the drafting process. Ideally, interns should produce what they believe is a final, supervising attorney-ready draft before turning to GenAI. However, once that draft is ready, students who utilize GenAI to identify gaps in logic and clarity and then take the time to revise their work to address those issues not only improve their immediate work product but also engage in a process of critically evaluating their own writing and reasoning.

GenAI makes this process easy. Students can simply ask their preferred (and permitted) GenAI tool to review their draft “for clarity.” When modeling this task using a student-written, sample objective memo, both Westlaw’s CoCounsel and ChatGPT pinpointed areas that were misleading, confusing, duplicative, and inconsistent. For example, these tools correctly identified the following issues (among many others): (1) the inclusion of legal analysis in the Statement of Facts; (2) the incorrect usage of the word “codified” when referring to a common law rule; (3) the failure to adequately support several specific legal assertions; (4) an incorrect statutory citation; and (5) the inclusion of irrelevant information that undercut the memo’s credibility. As recent intern supervisors and now legal writing instructors, the types of issues identified by CoCounsel and ChatGPT are issues we commonly saw in intern work product. Moreover, these types of issues often lead a supervising attorney to doubt the credibility of the analysis presented.

3. Use GenAI to Update Research.

Ideally, interns will be checking the status of their legal authorities during the research process. However, GenAI can assist with a quick final check before submission. Both Protégé and CoCounsel have Microsoft Word Add-ins that integrate the Protégé and CoCounsel cite checking functionality directly into Microsoft Word. If enabled by an employer or institution, these tools can be found on the Microsoft “Home” ribbon by selecting the “Add-ins” button. After downloading the Add-in, with just a click of a button, students can see the status of the authorities cited in the memo, along with links to the authority itself. With this quick final check, there is no reason for any intern to submit work product with bad law.

4. Use GenAI to Create a Research Meeting Outline.

The “stop by my office and tell me what you found” meeting was often a frustrating experience for us as intern supervisors. Students arrived without a clear structure or organization for the discussion. GenAI can help interns organize their thoughts and create an outline to guide a clear and concise conversation about their research and analysis. Once the intern has finalized their research draft, GenAI can create a structured conversation outline discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the case. For example, an intern can ask ChatGPT to “create a 10-minute research presentation outline based on the uploaded memo.” The output will be an organized outline the intern can use to structure the conversation. If the intern would benefit from an actual script of what to say, they can simply ask ChatGPT to include a “speaker script” with the outline. Of course, the outline and script will not be perfect, but a diligent intern would be wise to either start from the proposed structure and weave in their own analysis and language or use GenAI as a double check that the intern’s own presentation outline is organized, logical, and supported.

5. Use GenAI to Incorporate Supervisor Preferences.

Interns will submit their finished work to senior attorneys, each of whom will have unique style preferences. By typing a list of the supervisor’s preferences into GenAI with instructions on how to implement them, the intern can check whether they have incorporated those conventions into an otherwise final draft. For example, interns might instruct the GenAI tool to review their work product and suggest edits to

make the piece more direct and professional. Alternatively, the intern can upload one or more publicly-available examples of the supervisor's writing and ask the tool to suggest edits aligning with the formatting and style of the supervisor's work product. The intern must still evaluate GenAI's recommended revisions. But after deciding which of the suggestions to include, the intern is more likely to submit a final product that shows attention to detail and impresses the assigning attorney.

6. Use GenAI to Understand Legal Documents.

Reading a lengthy and complex case, pleading, brief, or other legal document is often overwhelming to an intern because of the document's scope, depth, or unfamiliar substance. When overseeing interns' work, we received submissions that demonstrated confusion about the underlying documents. Those misunderstandings then led to incorrect research or unhelpful analyses. In addition, interns often spent excessive amounts of time attempting to decipher the documents' meanings. The following three-step process for utilizing GenAI can help interns efficiently distill documents to their main points while preserving human reasoning and verification of results. First, the intern reviews the pleading or other document independently to form an initial understanding without GenAI's influence. Next, the intern shares the document with GenAI and asks clarifying questions relating to areas of confusion or asks GenAI to summarize the document as verification that the student's understanding is accurate. This process should lead to GenAI results that enhance the intern's initial comprehension. However, the intern still must verify GenAI's feedback, cross-referencing any sources mentioned in the GenAI summary and/or seeking out additional sources to confirm their understanding. Lastly, the intern should reread the underlying document with the new clarity and direction enabled by GenAI. Essentially, the intern uses GenAI as a secondary source. Notwithstanding, if the legal concepts are complex, the student may ultimately need to consult with attorney colleagues to fully verify their understanding.²

² While there is valid concern about GenAI's ability to accurately complete high-level legal analysis, in a recent study by Vals.ai, some GenAI tools have been proven to outperform lawyer control groups on document summarization and document Q&A. For example, CoCounsel outperformed the lawyer control group by more than ten points on both

7. Use GenAI to Proofread the Final Draft.

Finally, in the age of Microsoft Editor and Grammarly, there simply is no good reason for any written work product to be riddled with typos and grammatical errors. In our practice, finding multiple typos on the first page of an assignment was an immediate red flag that the intern's work would require extra scrutiny. It is imperative, as legal writing professors, that we emphasize the importance of submitting a work product free from these types of errors. Running the final product through free tools, such as Microsoft Editor or Grammarly Basic, will help to minimize careless errors.

Legal writing professors are uniquely situated to provide students with opportunities to gain practical, hands-on GenAI experience prior to their internships. This classroom practice gives students the confidence to enhance their internship work using GenAI. However, given the significant risks associated with GenAI usage, it is incumbent on legal writing professors to ensure students are aware of, and able to avoid, the embarrassing missteps we read about in the news on an almost daily basis. Accordingly, any practical GenAI lessons should also introduce students to issues relating to confidentiality, competence, client communications, candor, time-keeping, and bias and provide concrete guidance on how to avoid ethical lapses, including, for example, obtaining permission from employers and clients before using GenAI, and verifying all information generated through GenAI.³ Despite these ethical issues, we believe students should be encouraged to (cautiously) view GenAI as another resource to help fine-tune their research, writing, and analysis in the workplace. When used not as a substitute for independent thought and analysis, but as a double check, the seven ways to utilize GenAI outlined in this article will help students produce better work product and stand out in a field where accuracy and efficiency matter.⁴

of these tasks. *Vals Legal AI Report*, <https://www.vals.ai/industry-reports/vlair-2-27-25> (last visited Nov. 7, 2025).

³ A.B.A. COMM. ON ETHICS & PRO. RESP., Formal Op. 512 (2024).

⁴ We would enjoy hearing whether other 1L legal writing professors teach similar GenAI classes and the details of any of those classes.