



THE SQUARE CIRCLE CLINIC

NALSAR UNIVERSITY OF LAW, HYDERABAD

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

Criminal Justice Student Fellowships (2026-27)

About The Square Circle Clinic

[The Square Circle Clinic](#) is a criminal justice initiative at NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad with offices in Delhi, Pune and Nagpur. It was established in April 2025 by the team that built and led Project 39A from 2013 to 2025. Our work is driven by a commitment to securing fairness for those entangled in the criminal justice system while imagining and working towards a fairer system for tomorrow. Our pro-bono work and research enquiries span across the death penalty, forensics, mental health and criminal justice, wrongful convictions, criminalisation and punishment, prevention of torture, and the use of science and technology in criminal justice.

About the Criminal Justice Student Fellowship

The Fellowship is a 12-month intensive programme through which Fellows will work closely with the Clinic's litigation, mitigation, research and communications teams. Alongside assisting with the work of these teams, Fellows will gain a deeper understanding of how a defence-oriented criminal justice organisation functions in practice and meaningful exposure to the complexities of India's criminal justice system. In addition to practical exposure, Fellows will engage with in-depth research and strategic thinking on criminal justice issues. The Fellowship is designed to provide Fellows with the opportunity to undertake independent research and produce outputs under the guidance of members of the Clinic.

Key areas of work and responsibilities

Fellows will have the opportunity to contribute to and develop the following areas of our work:

- **Research:** Our research projects combine doctrinal, philosophical, interdisciplinary and empirical approaches to criminal law and criminal justice. Current areas of work include forensic science (with a particular focus on DNA forensics), mental health and criminal justice, the administration of the death penalty, wrongful convictions, the criminalisation of poverty, and science and technology in criminal justice. Fellows may assist with legal

and empirical research, contribute to reports and academic publications, collect and analyse empirical data, and support ongoing research projects.

- **Litigation:** The work involves ensuring competent *pro bono* legal representation for prisoners sentenced to death in various parts of India. Fellows will assist the litigation team in the preparation of death penalty cases and other strategic litigation matters. This may include legal research, analysing case records, preparing case briefs and supporting ongoing litigation.
- **Mitigation Investigation:** Fellows will work with the mitigation team in developing comprehensive life histories of prisoners sentenced to death for use in sentencing proceedings. This will include documenting interviews, research on various areas of humanities and social sciences that may be relevant for the mitigation report developed by the mitigation team.
- **Strategic Communications:** Fellows will contribute to the Clinic's public engagement initiatives through blogs, social media content and other communication strategies aimed at making criminal justice issues accessible to a wider audience.
- **Independent Research Project** - Fellows will be mentored and supervised to complete a small independent research project that is feasible within 12 months.

All members of The Square Circle Clinic undertake administrative tasks and therefore Fellows will also be expected to assist in administrative matters. While the organisation shall attempt to account for the interests expressed by the Fellows, it reserves the right to allocate tasks based on organisational priorities.

Eligibility and Expectations: The Fellowship is open to students in the III, IV, & V-year of the integrated 5-year B.A., LL.B. (Hons.) programme or II & III-year of the 3-year LL.B. programme during the academic year 2026-2027.

Fellows will be expected to work a minimum of 15 hours a week during the academic year and will be expected to balance the work assigned during the Fellowship along with their other academic commitments. Owing to the nature of criminal defence work, there may occasionally be periods where Fellows are required to devote additional time beyond the minimum expected commitment.

Number of Fellows: Three

Duration: The Fellowship will be for 12 months starting mid-August 2026.

Location: The Fellowship can be done remotely but Fellows will be required to work in-person in our Delhi office for eight weeks cumulatively during the one-year period of the Fellowship. It

is preferred that the eight weeks in-person requirement be completed in two installments of four weeks each. The equivalent of II-AC train fare will be reimbursed for such travel.

Selected Fellows might also be required to travel to Delhi for the induction programme (travel and accommodation support will be provided for the induction).

Stipend: Fellows will be paid a stipend of ₹60,000/- (Rupees Sixty Thousand Only) after the successful completion of the Fellowship.

Application Process and Deadline: Applications are accepted only through the online application form available here - <https://forms.gle/J2fm7g3KnmAHiCom8>. The deadline for applications is **5 PM, 31st July 2026**.

Through the online application form, applicants will be required to upload their:

- A. Resumé
- B. Statement of Purpose (not more than 700 words responding to the following questions)
 - How does the right to a legal defense ensure that the presumption of innocence remains a meaningful right for the accused throughout a trial?
 - How should criminal sentencing frameworks weigh an individual's rehabilitation potential against the principle of proportionality?
 - What standards must the justice system implement to ensure that new investigative technologies respect individual liberty and safeguard the innocent?
- C. *Writing Sample* of not more than 1200 words (exclusive of footnotes) critically commenting on an issue related to criminal justice.

Please note that submissions that exceed the word limit will not be considered. Applicants are encouraged to submit a carefully written piece that demonstrates sufficient quality, depth of engagement and clarity of thought as this is for a competitive selection process.

Note:

1. Shortlisted applicants will be invited for an online interview and The Square Circle Clinic reserves the right to conduct further rounds of assessment.
2. Due to the volume of applications we are likely to receive, we are unable to reply to individual queries about the status of applications. Only applicants shortlisted for interviews will be contacted. If you do not hear from us by 10th August 2026, you should assume that your application has been unsuccessful.
3. The Square Circle Clinic works on behalf of all prisoners sentenced to death and undertrials, regardless of the offence involved.
4. If you have any queries, please write to us at squarecircleinternships@nalsar.ac.in. However, please note that we cannot provide application status updates.