

BU/MIT Startup Law Clinic

Expectations of Our Clients

The Startup Law Clinic is a free legal service provided by Boston University School of Law and MIT, and exists to provide student entrepreneurs with legal resources needed to help them succeed. The services are provided by BU Law students, under the supervision of licensed attorneys, and so the law students also benefit from the experience by learning how to represent clients.

The mutual benefits shared by Clinic clients and the Clinic's student advocates depends on a meaningful and cooperative attorney-client relationship, and for that reason, this document describes how our clients can contribute to our successful representation of their ventures. Please note that these expectations are specific to the Startup Law Clinic and are separate from those of our sister clinic, the [Technology Law Clinic](#), which has its own processes, timelines, and client expectations.

1. APPRECIATE OUR EDUCATIONAL MISSION

The Clinic is not a law firm. Our student advocates are not yet attorneys, although all their work will be supervised by one. Our legal work will match the quality of a firm. However, we will not necessarily work with the same speed or urgency of a downtown Boston law firm. The process of producing your legal work is a learning opportunity for our students and a teaching opportunity for the supervising attorney, and the back-and-forth of the teaching process means that it may take us some time to finish your project's "deliverables." Please work with your Clinic team to set realistic deadlines.

2. BE RESPONSIVE

Our law students have other classes and academic obligations, other clients, and exams. This is a professional relationship, and our students are working hard to ensure your work gets done well and on time. We will communicate with you at the email address or addresses you provide. If a client "ghosts" us, we may send a warning email, but we always reserve the right to terminate an engagement with a nonresponsive client. If you don't respect our efforts enough to be responsive, we need to be able to move on to other clients that have more immediate needs and respect the relationship.

3. RECOGNIZE THAT EVERY STUDENT HAS MULTIPLE CLIENTS

We endeavor to provide our students with the chance to work on different kinds of startup legal projects. They are trying to set expectations with you that also accommodate other clients and their non-Clinic schoolwork, so please work with them.

4. KEEP YOUR APPOINTMENTS

If you schedule an intake interview, or a meeting with your Clinic team, please show up. If you must cancel, please do so a reasonable amount of time in advance. The Clinic reserves the right not to reschedule client intake interviews for prospective clients who are unexcused no-shows.

5. UNDERSTAND TIMELINES, INCLUDING THE ACADEMIC CALENDAR

We mention responsiveness and our educational mission above, and one reason they matter is because our students work on the academic calendar. During the academic year Clinic, our students have exams and semester breaks. During the summer Clinic, our students complete their employment near the end of July, and our new students are not available until after Labor Day. Please avoid unnecessary last-minute requests and responses so that the students can get your projects finished on the timeline you need!

6. HONOR THE LIMITS OF OUR REPRESENTATION

We define our representation of your venture with an engagement letter that defines the specific projects that will be part of our representation. If a new project arises and you need help, let us know, and we will discuss whether the Clinic will be able to add the new work to the existing engagement. But understand that some legal projects will be outside the Clinic's scope or require a timeline that the Clinic can't meet. In those cases, we will work to refer you to local counsel, but those services might not be free.

7. REMEMBER WHO THE CLIENT IS

Most of our clients are ventures with several founders. In almost all of these cases, our client is the startup company, and not the individual founders. There may be times when we tell a founder that we cannot have a conversation or provide advice about issues that may be adverse to the venture's interests, and there may be other situations where we expect all founders to participate in advising us of a joint decision on a question we present to the client.

8. RESPECT OUR ELIGIBILITY LIMITATIONS

Eligibility for Clinic services depends on matriculated student status at either MIT or BU (this is part of the BU/MIT contract, and the only exceptions are for MIT students participating in MIT accelerators during the post-graduation summer). It's ok if some members of a team don't meet that requirement, but the student who "confers" eligibility must be, in our judgment, a principal (i.e., "C" level founder) of the venture that seeks our representation.

9. PLEASE SEND US THE SIGNED DOCUMENTS

Whenever we send you agreements for signature, we ask you to return a signed copy to us. We then keep those documents in secure electronic folders, and we will be able and eager to put together a set of all your relevant documents when the time comes for you to "graduate" to other counsel.

10. RESPECT OUR REFERRAL NETWORK

For matters beyond the scope of what our Clinic handles, we may refer you to the [Technology Law Clinic](#) or to outside counsel. For some matters, outside lawyers in our referral network have agreed to provide our clients with a brief, free initial consultation. If we make a referral to you, please follow up and keep your appointment.