I. INTRODUCTION

The University of Houston Law Center offers a number of opportunities for students to write papers for a professor or group of professors for credit.

Putting aside regular seminar papers, the primary examples are:

(i)   Special Research and Writing (course numbers 5198, 5298 and 5398 for one through three credit hours respectively);

(ii)   asking a professor to be a reader for an LLM thesis;

(iii)   asking a professor to be a thesis advisor for an LLM thesis; and

In any of situations (i)-(iii), or in any case where a students wishes to have me supervise written work for credit outside the context of a regular seminar paper, I have a particular process that I ask students to follow to request such a writing opportunity.

This document outlines this process so that a requesting student can follow it in order to achieve maximum consideration for their request.

I am interested in supervising individuals who want to write in intellectual property and computer law, including:

▪ Copyright and computer law topics related to software and licensing, particularly open-source software

▪ Other issues and current developments in international intellectual property

▪ Patent law issues

My availability to supervise writing projects varies from time to time. In any given semester I will schedule no more than a handful of supervised writing commitments. However, even if I do not currently have availability, I am always interested in meeting persons interested in these areas and holding their request submittals on file for future availability. Also, different writing supervision projects have different time requirements. A three credit hour Special Research paper is a bigger commitment than a one hour paper. Similarly, acting as a thesis advisor is more time consuming than serving as a reader.

If you want to inquire as to whether I have current availability before undertaking the full application process, please email me. I will likely respond with either "no" or "perhaps - it depends on the details – but no guarantees." Or, if you like, submit a request as outlined below and I will let you know the status of my availability upon receipt of your materials. This would also be your only available option if my response to an availability inquiry was "perhaps" – in which case I need to see your request submittal to evaluate the time it would take me to supervise the project, which of course goes to availability.

II. CREDIT HOURS

The number of Special Research credit hours obtainable for the writing project is negotiable. You should propose a number in your request.

Other writing projects, such as an LLM thesis, have administratively delineated credit hour requirements. If your request is for a LLM thesis, you should so specify and tell me the number of credit hours along with the role you are requesting: advisor or reader.

III. DECISION CRITERIA

Determining whether to accept a supervised writing request is admittedly a somewhat subjective and ad hoc evaluation. I imagine that most requestors would produce fine papers and that I would enjoy working with them or reading their paper. However, in order to make a decision, the following factors are relevant to me:

- The student's goals in undertaking the supervised writing project. Why do you want to do this? What do you expect from the process?

- The clarity and level of refinement of the student's topic proposal. The more refined and viable, the better. Refined means detailed: "*My tentative topic is anticipation by inherency in patent law when the allegedly anticipating prior art reference does not disclose any elements of the claim at issue. My thesis is that such a situation should not anticipate the patent claim because a person of ordinary skill in the relevant art would not recognize from the reference that it would anticipate. My argument is that recent cases that hold otherwise are wrong because they . . .*"

- These topic proposals are not detailed enough: "*something in patent law*" or "*something about one of the five elements of patentability*" or "*anticipation in patent law*" or even "*inherent anticipation in patent law.*"

- While part of my participation will be to help the student focus and narrow the topic (at least for Special Research or as thesis advisor), and while I can provide some initial topic direction, a critical point is that the student must take full responsibility and ownership of her topic – finding it, researching its viability, and focusing it. I will help, but awkward situations can arise if the student stalls in that process and expects that finishing the job is my role. I am happy to help undo the stall, but not land the plane.

- The fit between the student's proposed topic and the student's general background and future career trajectory. In addition, the fit between the proposed topic and my background, trajectory and other current scholarly activities.

- As demonstrated or documented in the request submittal or in the interview: (i) the student's ability to pay attention to detail and do a quality job with both work that is fun and with work that is "drudge" – to me, most legal writing is a varying mix of both; (ii) the ability to work through setbacks, twists, turns and blind alleys in a project; (iii) the attitude and ability to "self-learn;" (iv) the ability to organize and prioritize materials and one's own work; and (v) research, writing and "Bluebooking" skills.

- Because a supervised writing project is a close professional working engagement (except for perhaps when my role is only to serve as an LLM thesis reader), personal manner, disposition, and interpersonal communication skills.

- The student's willingness to, and recognition that it is important to, follow the detailed document requirements and draft submittal procedures outlined in my other web-published document for supervised writing opportunities. Similarly, the student's acknowledgement and acceptance of the paper evaluation methodology also contained therein. The foregoing applies only for Special Research or when I am the LLM thesis advisor. When another Law Center faculty member is the LLM thesis advisor, his or her document requirements and grading evaluation methods will apply.

IV. REQUEST SUBMITTAL PROCESS

Please submit to me, in confidence, via email, the items set forth below.

1. A letter, which can be in the body of the email, requesting a supervised writing project with me and the scope of the engagement: Special Research, LLM advisor, LLM reader, or some other scope. Please note that Directed Research Assistance is a different engagement and does not fall under this request submittal process.

2. A resume. Please ensure that the resume provides your Law Center GPA and estimated class rank as well as that same information for any undergraduate and/or graduate degrees.

3. Please highlight in your resume any prior experience that is directly or indirectly connected with intellectual property, technology generally, information technology and/or computing, or international commerce.

4. A copy of your current Law Center transcript.

5. In your letter, indicate the various details mentioned above, such as the number of credits hours for your writing project, your *detailed* topic proposal, etc. Also, to the extent you wish to, address any considerations you would like to highlight from the decision criteria factors I have listed.

6. In your letter, state that you have read and considered in a detailed way these two documents that I have web-published on my site:

   Student Journal Paper Topic Selection, available from my main web page: http://www.law.uh.edu/faculty/gvetter/documents/StudentJournalPaperTopicSelection.Prof.Vetter1c.5.1.2005.pdf

   Note: some of this document does not apply because it is written for students seeking my input for journal paper topics, not for soliciting a supervised writing engagement. However, the advice on topic selection applies, and this is most of the document.

Supervised Writing Requirements, Procedures, and Evaluation Criteria, available at the sub-page where you found this document: http://www.law.uh.edu/faculty/gvetter/documents/Prof.Vetter.Super visedWriting.RequirementsProceduresEvaluation_6.21.2005.pdf

7. In your letter, include a one-paragraph (one hundred words or less) description, authored by you, telling me how you define legal scholarship and its purpose. Your paper will be a work of legal scholarship, so I request this brief introspection on the topic.

I will seriously consider each request and determine whether it makes sense to meet for a request submittal evaluation interview. The interview would occur somewhere in the Law Center at a mutually convenient time, or by telephone if I am not available at the Law Center for an extended period of time. I would expect it to take twenty to thirty minutes. From the request submittal package and interview I will make a determination about the request. You can expect that I will not accept any supervised writing requests without an interview.

If I accept your request for supervised writing, the last step to begin the engagement is that you must send me an email saying that you have read, understood, and agree to the other document that I have web-published for supervised writing, entitled: *"Supervised Writing Requirements, Procedures and Evaluation Criteria for Prof. Vetter."* In addition, to the extent that your topic needs additional narrowing, I may request you to do so before accepting your email. I will not sign the Law Center petition for you to enroll in Special Research or to be your LLM thesis advisor until I am in possession of this email and the topic is ready. In addition, do not name me to your LLM thesis committee until these two items are complete.

In the event that I am unable to accept your request, if you want me to, I will keep your request submittal package on file (this is primarily relevant for Special Research). Events and my availability may change in future semesters, perhaps allowing for a different result later.

V. CLOSING

I sincerely appreciate you taking the time to read this document to evaluate whether to request a supervised writing opportunity with me. Even if you decide not to submit a request to me, I hope you consider opportunities with the other faculty here at the Law Center.