

WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF LAW

EXTERNSHIP

PROGRAM GUIDELINES

CONTENTS

- I. Goals
- II. Externship Overview
- III. Steps for Registration and Enrollment
- IV. Field Placement Supervision

I. Goals

The overarching goals of the Externship program are consistent with and are designed to serve the goals articulated in the mission statement of the College of Law: “Preparing 21st century lawyers and leaders to serve the public, [and] government, . . . —both locally and globally—while focusing on justice, ethics, professionalism, and service in a diverse, vibrant and respectful community.”

To that end, the Externship Program offers the opportunity to incorporate practice experience with discussion, critical thinking, reflection and analysis. The purpose of the program is to help students in the following ways:

- 1) to develop the art of lawyering, including research, writing, analysis, interviewing, and communication of facts and information;
- 2) to identify professional goals and reflect on individual professional development;
- 3) to develop sensitivity to issues of professional responsibility, ethical problem solving, and the role of the lawyer in providing access to justice in society; and
- 4) to develop awareness of meaningful career opportunities in public interest and governmental settings and to establish relationships in chosen fields of law.

II. Externship Program Overview

The Externship program is designed to provide students with an opportunity to gain practical legal experience as part of their legal education. An externship is substantive legal work for academic credit in a judge’s chambers, government agency or non-profit organization. The externship also includes a course component with class meetings and assignments to further the experiential learning. The policies and requirements outlined below are designed to ensure a high quality experience for students as they work toward their educational goals during the externship.

A. Externship Placements

Externship placements may be performed with government agencies, the judiciary, legal aid offices, or other non-profit or public interest organizations performing legal work. The Externship Program does not include work in the private sector and no externships in private sector settings will be approved. All placements must be approved by the Director of the Center for Law and Public Service or the Teaching Professor for the course. Please see the attached list for a list of approved local sites. Full-time federal agency sites have included the National Labor Relations Board, the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Mine Safety and Health Administration. If there is another externship opportunity that a student wants to pursue that is not on the list of approved sites, then the student should contact the Director of the Center for Law and Public Service for approval first, then apply to the organization. If students have questions about placements or need advice about finding a site that best fits with his or her educational goals then he or she should contact the Director of the Center for Law and Public Service at (304) 293-8555.

B. Work and Credit Requirements

Work performed for academic credit must be unpaid. Students must have adequate supervision, guidance and training by a dedicated field supervisor at the site. The field supervisor must be a licensed attorney who has been in practice for at least two years.

In the fall and spring semesters, students may choose from three different externship types:

1. A *full-time externship* with an approved **federal agency**. Full-time externs must work full time (as defined by the site) over the course of the semester to earn 13 credits. Of those 13 credits, 3 are graded and 10 are pass/fail. The graded portion of the course is earned through enrollment in the full-time agency externship course. The pass/fail credits are earned through completing work assignments at the externship site. To qualify for this externship, students must have completed at least one year of law school, submit a letter of recommendation from a law school faculty member recommending the student for the externship, and be in the top 40% of their law school class.
2. A *full-time externship* with a **federal judge**. Full-time judicial externs also earn 13 credits. Of those 13 credits, 3 are graded and 10 are pass/fail. The graded portion of the course is earned through enrollment in the full-time judicial externship course. The pass/fail credits are earned through completing work assignments at the judicial externship site. To qualify for this externship, students must have completed at least one year of law school, submit a letter of recommendation from a law school faculty member recommending the student for the externship, and be in the top 25% of their law school class.
3. A *part-time externship* with a **federal agency or a state agency, federal or state judiciary or legal services office**. Students may earn a minimum of 3 to a maximum of 6 credits. Of those, 1 is graded and the rest are pass/fail. Students can choose to earn a variable amount of pass/fail credits--between two (2) and five (5) site placement/field work credits during a fall or spring semester. Students will receive one (1) academic credit for every fifty (50) hours of work.

performed during the semester. Students are advised to consult with the field placement supervisor to create a suitable work schedule. To be eligible, students must have completed one year of law school and be in good academic standing. Sites may require a higher standard, however.

Placement/Field Work Credits	Total Hours of Work Required	Approx. Hours of Work Per Week	Total Credit Including Course Component
2	100	7	3
3	150	11	4
4	200	14	5
5	250	18	6

Please note for purposes of academic planning that students may receive no more than a total of 26 total “out of classroom” credits toward graduation. This includes any externship, moot court, law review, independent study, and foreign study. This credit maximum does not include credits earned in a law school clinic. More complete information is available in the Student Handbook.

Please note: Only one externship can be counted toward your total graduation requirement.

C. Externship Class Requirements

Students who are selected for a full-time federal agency externship will enroll in Law 655, the graded course and Law 656 for the field work portion of the externship. Students who are selected for the full-time federal judicial externship will enroll in Law 780, the graded portion of the course and Law 780A for the field work portion of the course. Students who enroll in the part-time externship course will register for Law 653, which is the one hour graded course and Law 654 for the variable number of placement/field work credits.

The externship courses will meet periodically on campus during the semester and depending on the placement site, other course meetings will be arranged online or through distance-learning technology. During the field placement for each of the externship courses, students will be required to submit the following assignments to successfully complete the course requirements:

- Reflective essays or journals related to field work
- A class presentation on a topic which draws upon the externship experience
- Discussion topics in class or online via TWEN to facilitate student communication and foster experiential learning
- Weekly time sheets documenting hours and work performed
- Supervisor evaluations (including a mid-semester and final evaluation)

- Full-time judicial and agency externs must write a substantive law-review style paper based upon an issue related to the externship placement and field work

These assignments are designed to enhance the students' field experiences and are more fully described in the course syllabi.

III. Steps for Registration and Enrollment

A. Registration

1. Students **must** attend the externship information/registration session when announced.

If students cannot attend this meeting, they must set up an individual meeting with the Director of the Center for Law and Public Service or the Teaching Professor for the course.
2. Students interested in the Externship Program must submit a resume, unofficial transcript, cover letter, letter of recommendation (for full-time externships) and a letter stating the name and contact information for the placement (or potential placement if awaiting confirmation). Please submit a hard copy of these materials to the Director of the Center for Law and Public Service at a deadline date to be announced each semester.
3. Upon approval, students will register for the appropriate externship course.

B. Receiving credit

1. Students will submit weekly timesheets, attend any scheduled class meetings or participate in on-line discussions, and complete all course assignments.
2. Submit the signed Externship Supervisor Agreement available on the class TWEN site.
3. Students must complete all field placement work in a competent and professional manner in accordance with the relevant Rules of Professional Conduct.
4. Students must submit a Mid Term and Final Evaluation from their supervisors (unless you are working with the Federal Judiciary).

IV. Field Placement Supervision

Field placements are asked to identify one person, who must be a lawyer, who will be the student's primary supervisor and contact person for the Externship. The field supervisor at the chosen placement must agree to support the student's educational goals. While a student will often perform assignments for multiple lawyers at an organization, the externship requires that one person is designated as the field supervisor and mentor for the student. The supervisor and student should meet at least once per week to review assignments and discuss questions. The supervisor will complete a final letter of evaluation to be submitted by the end of the semester.

Students are asked to coordinate with their field placement supervisors to complete the following tasks:

- meet with the field placement supervisor at the beginning of the placement to discuss the student's learning goals during the placement;
- meet with the supervisor weekly to review and evaluate assignments, overall performance, and general issues; and
- set up a final evaluation exit meeting to obtain a final evaluation form from field supervisor and submit it to the Teaching Professor for the course.
- The Final Evaluation form must also include a certification of hours from the Field Placement Supervisor.