

EXTERNSHIP PROGRAM INFORMATIONAL MANUAL*

**WIDENER UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF LAW
HARRISBURG, PA**

PROFESSOR KAREN DURKIN

Director of Externships

Tel: (717) 541-3958

Fax: (717) 541-3990

Kdurkin@widener.edu

*Adapted from Informational Manual
of Syracuse University College of Law, and
Golden Gate University School of Law
Externship Program Handbook

EXTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Widener University

School of Law

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

At Widener, we prepare our students to practice law, not merely learn to practice law. To that end, we devote a substantial portion of our efforts to skills training. The first priority in all of our programs is to produce graduates who have the skill, judgment, and ethical foundation to assume their responsibilities as outstanding members of the legal profession. Our externship program is an important component of this goal.

WHAT IS AN EXTERNSHIP?

Clinical and Judicial Externships present an opportunity for students to be placed in settings outside of the Law School where the primary responsibilities of supervision lies with an attorney or judge in the host agency. Clinical Externships include such placements as state government, not-for-profit organizations, district attorneys or public defenders. Judicial placements include courts at all levels of the system.

The program also includes a classroom component designed to assist the students in processing the information they gather from their work experiences and in developing their professional identity. Externships expose students to real-world legal assignments, with a level of responsibility not typically available to them. The educational value of this program is enriched with combined instruction from and supervision by law school faculty and field supervisors.

Participation in this program differs from paid legal work available to students, both in the level of supervision provided, and in the provision of classroom instruction in conjunction with placement. The professor monitors the quality of the clinical experience and ensures that the placements are integrated with the other parts of the law school curriculum.

COMMENTARY¹

An externship program should require of student participants certain acknowledgements of responsibility for successful completion of the fieldwork placement experience, and specific evidence and documentation of learning activities and outcomes.

Before engaging in the externship, a student should consider whether the learning outcomes sought by the fieldwork experience might be achieved through another approach to learning, such as classroom or live-client clinic experience, and, if so, the advantages and disadvantages of each approach. In order for the student to evaluate the appropriate learning method or mode, the student must have a clear and articulated set of learning objectives in mind. The student also should have identified, with some precision, the tasks and activities to be pursued at the placement that are intended to achieve the chosen learning objectives and outcomes.

Before engaging in the fieldwork placement, the student should appreciate the skills, values, self-awareness, and commitment of time that are necessary for successful negotiation of the specific placement experience. The program is responsible for guiding the student through this reflective process, documenting the outcome of the process, and, where necessary, guiding the student away from an inappropriate placement or preparing the student for the placement by helping him or her obtain the skills and self-awareness necessary for a successful experience at a chosen placement.

In order for the student and program to document learning outcomes from the fieldwork experience, the program should require the student to articulate standards by which the student intends to demonstrate achievement of his or her personal learning objectives.

Since reflection on the fieldwork experiences is necessary for learning, the program should require the student to acknowledge the need for reflection and to plan for periodic reflection. The student may be guided in using the tools of reflection such as logs, journals, presentations, and other devices that require articulation of the reflective process. Since some of the results of the student's reflection may benefit not only the student's own learning but that of others in the program, such as fellow students, the faculty supervisor, and the fieldwork supervisor, the program should require the student to share some of his or her

¹ J.P. Ogilvy. *Guidelines with Commentary for the Evaluation of Legal Externship Programs*. Gonzaga Law Review, Volume 38, Number 1, 2002/3, pages 174-176

reflections in an appropriate forum and manner, such as in a seminar or in oral or written evaluations.

In every externship, learning from experience is a central element. Therefore, the program should ask the student to agree to be responsible throughout all states of the fieldwork experience, to participate actively in his or her own learning, and routinely monitor his or her activities. To encourage the student to get the most from the experience, the program should ask the student, at the commencement of the fieldwork placement, to provide evidence throughout, or at least at the end of the experience, that the student sought additional learning opportunities, activities, or training to make the fieldwork experience more meaningful or successful. The program should also ask for evidence from the student and from the fieldwork supervisor that the student sought, and was given, appropriate feedback from the fieldwork supervisor.

Frequently, a student may find that his or her goals and objectives change in the midst of the experience or that the tasks thought to be available no longer are. Under those circumstances, it may be appropriate for the student to revise his or her list of goals, objectives, or tasks. The program should acknowledge this possibility, explicitly ask the student to identify when he or she made adjustments in response to changes in circumstances, and require evidence of the reflection that occurred when the change of plans was made.

The program also should ask the student to document the learning that he or she achieved from the fieldwork placement. The documentation should be readily understandable to the faculty supervisor and fieldwork supervisor, and should track the student's original and revised goals, objectives, and standards for evaluation, as well as account for unanticipated learning.

The program should assist the student in extending his or her learning from fieldwork experience by requiring the student to submit a plan for further learning. The plan should identify a new set of goals, objectives, tasks and learning environments that build on the learning outcomes achieved in the externship.

ELIGIBILITY

Second and third year students who are in good academic standing, and have a GPA of 2.3 and above for Clinical Externships, or 2.5 and above for Judicial Externships, are eligible to apply for the Externship Program. A student may enroll in this program only if the student is simultaneously enrolled in Professional Responsibility, or has successfully completed Professional Responsibility prior to enrolling in a clinical or judicial extern program. In addition, the student must successfully complete Evidence. Under certain circumstances, this requirement

may be waived if the Externship Director determines, after consulting with the supervising field attorney, that the student does not need Evidence to be successful in the placement because the externship does not involve litigation or substantial client contact.

Successful completion of a course means the student has earned a grade of at least 2.0 in that course.

Some placements may also require a security clearance. Students who do not pass the required security clearance may not register for an Externship course, or may be asked to change their placement.

Students are permitted to register for a second semester provided that they do not exceed the clinical credit limit of 8 credits.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Obtain a Clinic Credit Approval Form from the Registrar's Office. Meet with Professor Durkin for approval to register and discuss location of placement.

REGISTRATION

Turn in the Clinic Credit Approval Form to the Registrar during the registration period after approval from Professor Durkin. You cannot register online for this class. Unless you are informed otherwise in regard to a particular placement, you should make arrangements with the placement to begin work during the first week of classes.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students enroll in an Externship Course for one semester for two to four credits and are required to work 72 hours for each credit hour for a total of 14 weeks each semester. Students are encouraged to continue for a second semester as long as the 8 clinical credit hours threshold is not exceeded.

Permission to withdraw from an Externship Course requires the written permission of the placement supervisor and Professor Durkin. A student may not

drop an Externship Course without extremely compelling circumstances. Further, students are encouraged to consider whether dropping the class is in the student's best professional interest.

Students are required to attend all classes, to submit time logs and journals as requested, to complete 2-3 reflective papers, and to complete all required evaluation forms and any other course requirements. Failure to comply with these requirements may result in denial of course credit.

Students who have completed the classroom component in a previous semester need not attend the class in the second semester. Students are required to submit all written material in accordance with the course calendar posted on the course's TWEN page, and to consult with the instructor throughout the semester.

Students may not receive monetary compensation from their placements. Payment for incidental expenses may be permitted upon consultation with the Professor Durkin.

Course Requirements – Summer Session

Due to the shortened semester during the summer session, students are required to spend a greater amount of time in the placement. Two credit hours require 18 hours per week, three credit hours require 27 hours per week, and four credit hours require 36 hours per week. A classroom component, record-keeping tasks, and writing requirement similar to the regular semester are required to be followed.

JOURNALS

Students are required to maintain weekly journals of their activities. The journals will include a summary of the week's activities, and the student's reflections on the work of the week.

In your journal, you may reflect on your role as an attorney; how well or poorly you performed a given activity and/or your difficulties with an activity, and/or any other reflections you may have regarding your work at the placement.

Judicial externs may reflect additionally on the role of a law clerk, the process of judicial decision-making, and how factual issues are resolved by the court.

Advocacy externs may reflect additionally on the role of government attorneys and how their role differs, if at all, from attorneys in the private sector, how government attorneys exercise their discretion to pursue certain cases and not others, and observations about the legal system within which his/her placement operates.

Public Interest externs may reflect additionally on the legal system's effect on the lives of people with low incomes/on access to lawyer's for people with low incomes.

No confidential client or case information should be included in the journals.

FINAL MATERIALS

Each student is required to turn in their journals, time sheets, evaluations, and any writings done in the placement in accordance with the course calendar and syllabus.

MEETINGS

Each student will meet with the Professor Durkin on an as-needed basis. These meetings will likely be individual meetings with the purpose of discussing the student's placement experience and any other matters relating to the placement.

CODE OF PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

All students are expected to conform their conduct as externs to the Code of Professional Responsibility and the Judicial Code as applicable. Students are prohibited from discussing confidential case information with anyone other than personnel at their placement.

CHOOSING A PLACEMENT

Students are permitted to choose their own placement and then confer with the Professor Durkin. When making a choice, students should consider their own learning goals and decide which area might best serve those goals.

GRADING POLICY

The Externship Course is graded on a pass/fail basis. To earn credit, students must fulfill all course requirements – including hours worked at the placement. Externship grades are based on the instructor's review of student achievement, which is measured by:

- Class attendance
- Reflective papers
- Activities journals
- Time logs
- Supervising attorney evaluation of the student's competencies
- Instructor evaluation of student participation in the classroom

Satisfactory completion requires performance of all stated requirements.

GLOSSARY²

Employee: A law student who works for an institution for pay. In contrast, a legal extern works for the institution solely for academic credit. Compare Extern and Volunteer.

Extern: A law student receiving academic credit for supervised, practical training in a setting, typically, outside of law school. Also called an Intern. Compare Employee and Volunteer.

Externship: The program of study in which a law student earns academic credit for engaging in authentic lawyering tasks under the guidance and supervision of an

² J.P. Ogilvy. *Guidelines with Commentary for the Evaluation of Legal Externship Programs*. Gonzaga Law Review, Volume 38, Number 1, 2002/3, pages 179-181

experienced supervisor in an institution outside of the law school. Also called an Internship.

Faculty Supervisor: The faculty member is responsible for monitoring the externship experience of an extern and for providing the opportunities for the student to reflect on the externship, typically, through a seminar or tutorial meetings. The faculty supervisor also certifies the award of academic credit for the externship experience.

Faculty Tutorial: The method of instruction in which a faculty supervisor meets individually or in very small groups with externs in order to facilitate learning from the externship experience.

Fieldwork Supervisor: The person at the placement site responsible for assigning tasks, monitoring performance, and providing critique and feedback to the extern. Also called a Mentor.

Individualized Learning Plan: A document prepared by the student embarking on an externship that sets out the goals, objectives, and tasks expected to be pursued during the externship. Also called a Learning Agenda or Learning Contract. Typically, the Individualized Learning Plan is drafted by the student with input from both the Faculty Supervisor and Fieldwork Supervisor.

Intern: See Extern.

Internship: See Externship.

Journal: A document in which an extern will record reflections on the externship experience. Journals generally are intended to be read by the faculty supervisor.

Learning Agenda: See Individualized Learning Plan.

Learning Contract: See Individualized Learning Plan.

Log: Contrasted with a Journal, a log is less reflective, often used to record the events from an externship experience for later reflection, or to account for time spent on the placement's tasks.

Mentor: See Fieldwork Supervisor.

Placement: The placement or placement site is the location, usually outside of the law school, where the student extern performs the tasks of the externship experience.

Portfolio: A collection of documents produced by an extern during the externship. The contents of the portfolio may form a basis for a portion of the grade for the externship course. The portfolio may contain drafts and final work product, reflective papers, and other writings done at the placement or as coursework.

Reflective Paper: An academic exercise that is an extended reflection piece on some aspect of the externship experience.

Seminar: The classroom component of an externship course in which the student externs and the faculty supervisor meet and discuss topics related to the externship experiences of the externs.

Site Visit: A visit by the faculty supervisor or externship administrator to the placement site for the purpose of obtaining in-person knowledge of the work of the extern at the placement, the nature and extent of the supervision, and the physical conditions and resources available to the extern.

Summative Evaluation: The evaluation conducted at the conclusion of the externship or specific period of time. Faculty supervisors and fieldwork supervisors conduct summative evaluations of the student at the conclusion of the extern's placement experience. Students conduct summative evaluations of their placements and of the externship program at the end of their participation. Faculty and other stakeholders conduct summative evaluations of the externship program on a periodic basis.

Unanticipated Outcomes: Learning outcomes not anticipated by the student extern when drafting the Individualized Learning Plan. Because experiential learning is so context specific, there are likely to be many unanticipated outcomes for the extern over the course of the externship. It is important for the externship program to value and credit these, and encourage the student participants to recognize them.

Volunteer: A student who works in an institution without academic credit, pay, or other compensation. Compare Employee and Extern.