



EXTERNSHIP PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

If you have questions, please contact:

Matthew McGovern
Director of Experiential Learning
Villanova University
Charles Widger School of Law
610-519-3893
mcgovern@law.villanova.edu

The Villanova Law Externship Program offers to experienced practitioners, law school faculty, and enterprising students the opportunity to collaborate in a structured dynamic learning process. A robust externship for academic credit can be a keystone in a law students' academic and professional development. It provides students with an opportunity to develop their legal and professional skills, appreciate the real world application of legal doctrine, and focus their professional interests.

Hosting a Villanova Extern

There are a number of courts, government agencies, public interest organizations, corporate legal departments, and law firms that routinely host Villanova student externs. Students may also seek out and secure their own externship placements and apply for externship credit provided that the proposed placement complies with the Law School's Externship Policy. If your organization is interested in hosting a law student extern, please complete the Externship Host Registration form, which is available on the Law School's website (<http://www1.villanova.edu/villanova/law/academics/externships/hostext.html>).

Once a student has secured an externship, he or she should coordinate a work schedule directly with the externship host. Ordinarily, students earn three academic credits for an externship. This requires a minimum of 135 hours of work with the host organization. For Fall and Spring semester externships, a work schedule of 12 hours per week will permit the student to complete that requirement. When the host organization has capacity to supervise a student for more than 12 hours per week and is ready to provide assignments and projects warranting increased credit amounts, the student may request additional credit. Our Fall semester runs from late August until early December and our Spring semester runs from the middle of January through the end of April. Students are required to complete their hours by the last day of classes for the semester. For summer externships, students have from the end of the Spring semester final examination period (mid-May) to the start of the Fall semester to complete their hours.

Educational Objectives

An externship is a great opportunity for a student to learn by doing. After securing an externship, the student works with the faculty advisor to set a learning agenda. The student's particular goals will depend on the nature of the placement, but all students are encouraged to use their externship as a means to further both their legal education and their professional development. To be approved for the externship, the student must identify a field supervisor. Although students may work closely with non-lawyers, the field supervisor must be ultimately responsible for the student's work. The student is encouraged to discuss the learning agenda with the field supervisor at the beginning of the externship to ensure that the student's goals and expectations are realistic. Prior to commencement of the externship, the law school will provide the field supervisor with a memorandum of understanding outlining the role of the student, supervisor and faculty advisor.

Because students earn academic credit for an externship, it is important that the experience is educational. In most respects, the work assigned to the student extern should be the same as that given to a first year lawyer, taking into account the student's relative inexperience at the beginning of the semester or summer and the constraints imposed by the limited number of available work hours. Routine and repetitive projects or clerical work should be avoided, except to the extent that it is a normal incident of work performed by attorneys in the host agency. We encourage that students be assigned a progression of challenging, varied, and increasingly complex legal projects. The following are examples of the type of assignments that should make up the majority of the work assigned to a student extern:

- (1) developing and investigating facts;
- (2) conducting legal research and communicating the results of that research orally and in writing;
- (3) participating in preparation for a hearing;
- (4) drafting legal documents, such as letters, pleadings, orders, briefs, and transactional materials;
- (5) participating in or attending sessions in which lawyers counsel clients, witnesses, or others associated with the work of the host agency; and
- (6) participating in or attending negotiation sessions, conferences, or other meetings.

Performance Evaluation

Field supervisors are requested to complete a short evaluation of the student's performance at the conclusion of the externship. The student's experience will be greatly enhanced, however, if the field supervisor provides regular feedback to the student throughout the externship. The learning agenda provides an excellent starting point for feedback.

Externs meet biweekly with a member of the Law School faculty. Students are cautioned at the outset of the externship against discussing privileged or confidential information with their faculty advisor. The purpose of these meetings is to discuss the extern's progress toward the goals set forth in the learning agenda.

Our externs are expected to work hard, produce quality work, and take their commitment to their externship placements seriously. We generally receive very positive feedback on our externs. In those rare cases in which the student's performance is unsatisfactory, it is important that the field supervisor inform not only the student but also the faculty advisor so that we may discuss the matter with the student.

Course Credit

Externships are open to all second-year and third-year students who meet the eligibility requirements (e.g., prerequisite courses) for the particular placement. Students who successfully complete an externship receive three credits, in most cases, for the course on a pass-fail basis. Although students are evaluated by the field supervisors, the final grade is the responsibility of the faculty advisor.