



Detroit Mercy School of Law Externship Course
Field Placement Supervisor's Guide

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the Detroit Mercy Law School Externship Program. Detroit Mercy Law has long been a recognized leader in preparing students for the actual practice of law and educating our students to become complete lawyers by providing practical and relevant legal education and experience.

Detroit Mercy Law Externship Program allows students to receive academic credit for service as a legal extern for a court, government agency or nonprofit organization consistent with the American Bar Association (ABA) Standards. Externships provide students with real-world experience in the legal field. This program is a partnership between the student, law school and field placement (i.e., externship organization). Below are a few rules and guidelines to ensure the educational quality of the experience for the student.

- I. Externs must work under the direct supervision of a “Site Supervisor” who is a licensed attorney or person similarly qualified to supervise legal work.
- II. Externs are also supervised by a faculty member of the law school who provides classroom instruction, reviews weekly journals and a reflective paper, and evaluates the student’s overall educational achievement.
- III. At the beginning of the field placement, the student, site supervisor and faculty member should agree on a set of goals, methods and overall plan that will be reduced to writing by the student and faculty member, and then signed by the student, site supervisor and faculty member. This document should include: (1) a description of the substantial lawyering experience the student expects to have including the opportunity for performance, feedback and a final evaluation by the site supervisor; (2) an understanding that the site supervisor will supervise the legal work of the student, but the faculty member will supervise journals, the reflective paper and the student’s self-evaluation; (3) an understanding that the faculty member will be responsible for the final grade (pass or no pass); and (4) an understanding that the faculty member may, where appropriate, intervene with the site supervisor to ensure the educational quality of the experience for the student.¹
- IV. Students are expected to submit weekly time sheets for approval to the site supervisor. The student should save these signed time sheets and provide them to the law school faculty member in the time and/or manner required by the law school faculty member.

¹ ABA Standard 304(c)(vii) requires that a field placement course include “sufficient control of the student experience to ensure that the requirements of the Standard are met.”

V. Students are expected to work a minimum of 120 hours and a maximum of 180 hours throughout the field placement. This work can be spread over a period of 15 weeks during the Fall and Winter semesters (i.e., the student may work one week beyond the traditional 14-week semester) and may be completed a week or two beyond the traditional 7-week Summer semester. If the site supervisor has insufficient work to meet the minimum requirements, the site supervisor should immediately contact the law school at the contact numbers listed below. ***Please note students who are not U.S. citizens and who maintain full-time status during the semester that includes the Externship course may not work more than 20 hours per week in light of immigration restrictions.***

VI. According to ABA Standard 304(c), the field placement must provide opportunities for performance and feedback as well as a “substantial lawyering experience.”

This means the student’s experience must be reasonably similar to the experience of a lawyer advising or representing a client or engaging in other lawyering work. A substantial lawyering experience provides opportunities for performance, feedback, reflection and self-evaluation. To achieve this, students should be required to perform legal tasks, such as *research, analysis, investigation, counseling, legal writing or other similar legal work*. Some opportunity for learning by observation will be appropriate, but should be limited.

A substantial lawyering experience should not include clerical or administrative work that could be done by a non-lawyer. Clerical duties such as photocopying, filing or completing forms that do not require the exercise of professional judgment should be avoided or should constitute a small part of the student’s work.

VII. The site supervisor may choose to provide written feedback to the student on the student’s work product and should provide an opportunity to revise and correct work, as appropriate, as part of the student’s learning experience. Constructive criticism and suggestions for improvement are appropriate.

VIII. Site supervisors agree to provide verbal feedback directly to the extern throughout the field placement. Students are learning to become lawyers and verbal guidance is always welcome.

IX. Site supervisors agree to return to the law school a completed written evaluation form at the end of the semester. Supervisors are encouraged to review the evaluation form with the student once it has been completed. A copy of the evaluation form is attached to these guidelines.

X. Detroit Mercy Law, either through the faculty member or clinical director, will maintain regular contact with the site supervisor to assure the quality of the student’s educational experience.

- XI. Site supervisors should participate in periodic training events hosted by the law school.
- XII. Site supervisors are encouraged to immediately report any areas of concern so that any issue(s) can be resolved on a timely basis.
- XIII. Students may not be paid for their field work, although they may receive compensation for reasonable out-of-pocket expenses related to the fieldwork, such as parking fees and mileage incurred as part of the field placement work.

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