



Detroit Mercy School of Law Externship Course
Student's Guide to Frequently Asked Questions

University of Detroit Mercy School of Law has long been a recognized leader in preparing students for the actual practice of law. We offer experiential learning through multiple in-house clinics, a comprehensive externship program and rigorous Law Firm Practice courses. The Externship Program is a cornerstone of our experiential learning program as it allows students to receive academic credit and integrate practical experience in a legal setting while working as a legal extern for a court, government agency, or nonprofit organization. A student's externship experience is often the highlight of his or her law school experience.

How does an externship differ from in-house clinical work? Clinic students typically have more responsibility for their clients and cases while working under the guidance of a clinical professor. Clinics focus on the students' development as a lawyer, sometimes to a greater extent than may occur in an externship setting. But the clinical program operates in a controlled setting. The special value of an externship, in contrast, lies in the "real world" experience it provides:

In-house clinics have special strengths, but most do not accurately replicate the atmosphere of law practice in terms of their office settings, workloads, and ivory tower approaches to practice. Placing students in practicing lawyers' and judges' offices removes this artificiality, and students know they are working in contexts similar to those that await them after graduation.

Roy Stucky and Others, *Best Practices for Legal Education: A Vision and a Roadmap*, p. 146 (2007).

What follows are frequently asked questions about the Externship Program, the experience and the registration and application process.

1. WHAT IS AN EXTERNSHIP?

The Externship course allows a Detroit Mercy Law student to earn three academic credits for working outside the law school with a court, government agency or non-profit organization. Students work under the direct supervision of a site supervisor in the office where they are placed. At the same time, they are supervised by a faculty member of the law school who co-teaches the Externship course. Students must satisfy classroom, journaling and paper requirements as set forth by the Externship faculty member, and they must additionally meet the minimum number of hours required for the field portion of the course.

2. IS THE EXTERNSHIP COURSE A REQUIRED COURSE?

No. Externships are elective courses that are not required for graduation, but are recommended for second and third year students for the practical training they provide.

3. ARE THERE GPA REQUIREMENTS OR PRE-REQUISITES?

All students must be in academic good standing and have a cumulative G.P.A. of 2.2 or better to enroll in the Externship course. For first year students who wish to do an externship during the summer following their first year, the American J.D. students must possess a first-semester G.P.A. of 2.2 or higher and have completed 24 credits hours in their first year. First year Dual J.D. students must have a first-semester G.P.A. of 2.2 or higher in Comparative Legal Theory and Analysis I. Please note: Externship credits for the Dual J.D. students count toward credits required for graduation. For all students who meet the above eligibility requirements: Students may not apply to a federal judge or state appellate judge unless they meet the specific criteria required for each judge.

4. ARE THERE INTERNAL LAW SCHOOL DEADLINES FOR APPLYING FOR THE EXTERNSHIP COURSE?

Yes. Students will be notified when the application process begins each semester for the externship program. There will be a required information session held in the second week of each semester. You may submit any questions regarding externship opportunities to Rebecca Nowak, simkinrg@udmercy.edu.

5. DOES THE LAW SCHOOL SECURE THE EXTERNSHIP PLACEMENT FOR ME?

No. Students must find their own externship placement from a list of approved placement sites. The proper procedure for doing so is as follows:

- Student registers on Career Services Office “CSO” website and then consults list of externship placements.
- Students are to apply only for opportunities that they are eligible for, such as GPA requirements. Do not apply to a federal judge or a state appellate opportunity unless you meet the stated criteria.
- Student submits cover letter, resume and writing sample CSO *before* applying to the externship placement
- After review by the CSO, the student sends cover letter, résumé, writing sample and transcripts to the desired externship placement
- If the student is accepted for the externship placement, the student **MUST** notify then complete the information about the placement in the CSO website.
- Students will then be registered for the Externship course
- Additional requirements apply for non-United States citizens, see Question 22.

6. AM I REQUIRED TO SUBMIT ALL OF MY EXTERNSHIP APPLICATION MATERIALS TO THE CAREER SERVICES OFFICE?

You should work with the CSO prior to submitting any application materials to a field placement agency or organization. CSO provides an excellent service to students and we want our students to take advantage of that service.

7. ARE THERE ANY PLACES WHERE I CANNOT DO AN EXTERNSHIP?

Please consult the list of approved placements as there are numerous externship opportunities for students. Note, the first externship must be done at a court, government agency or non-profit organization. We do not permit placement at a private law firm or for-profit corporation for the first externship experience.

8. CAN I DO MY EXTERNSHIP WITH A FOR-PROFIT FIRM?

No, unless this is your second externship experience and the placement has been pre-approved by Rebecca Nowak simkinrg@udmercy.edu.

9. CAN I GET PAID BY THE EXTERNSHIP AGENCY?

No. Detroit Mercy Law does not allow its students to be paid for the work done in the Externship Program unless the student has received a stipend or scholarship funded by an entity other than the field placement.

10. WHAT IF I HAVE A CONTACT THAT CAN GET ME INTO A GREAT EXTERNSHIP THAT IS NOT ON THE LIST?

Please contact Rebecca Nowak if you are seeking an externship that is not on the list of field placements provided to students. Please allow time for the approval process. Also, please remember that the first externship experience must be with a court, government agency or non-profit organization.

A student may work with a for-profit organization only for the *second* externship placement, but the placement must be pre-approved by Rebecca Nowak. Please allow ample time for the approval process.

11. DO I HAVE TO FORMALLY REGISTER FOR THE EXTERNSHIP COURSE?

Yes. Once the student secures the externship placement (i.e., the pre-approved court, agency or organization agrees to work with the student), the student must update the CSO website and then your information will be submitted to the registrar who will register you for the course.

12. HOW MANY CREDITS ARE AWARDED FOR AN EXTERNSHIP?

Three.

13. HOW IS THE EXTERNSHIP COURSE GRADED?

Pass or No Pass. In order to pass the course, students must complete a *minimum* of 120 hours at the field placement and must complete all additional requirements of the Externship course. Please also note the general rule that a student may have no more than 11 credit hours of pass/no pass credits during his or her law school career.

14. DOES THE COURSE INCLUDE A MINIMUM NUMBER OF HOURS FOR THE FIELD WORK?

Students must complete a minimum of 120 of work at the field placement over the course of 15 weeks during the Fall and Winter semester and over the course of 8 weeks during the Summer semester. Student may begin working at the field placement no more than one week before the start of the semester and may conclude their work hours no more than one week after the end of the semester. Typically, a student will work 9 to 12 hours per week (or 18 to 24 hours during in the Summer semester). Students should consult with the site supervisor to determine how many days per week the student will work. Also, students are advised to plan on working *more* than the minimum 120 hours to avoid problems related to unexpected emergencies, closure of the court/agency, etc.

15. MUST I SUBMIT WEEKLY TIME LOGS DURING THE SEMESTER?

Yes. Students must have the site supervisor sign a weekly time log prepared by the student. The student should then submit the logs through TWEN.

16. WHAT ARE THE ADDITIONAL COURSE REQUIREMENTS OF THE EXTERNSHIP PROGRAM?

Students must attend an initial orientation session (to be held before or at the start of the semester) and must also attend classroom meetings that are scheduled by the faculty member teaching the Externship course. Students must also prepare weekly journals, reflection papers and a final paper.

Additionally, students must review, complete and sign a Memorandum of Understanding to be signed by the student, faculty member and site supervisor that describes the “substantial lawyering experience and opportunities for performance, feedback and self-evaluation” that are required by ABA Standard 304(c)(iii). This written understanding should also include “the respective roles of faculty and any site supervisor in supervising the student and in assuring the educational quality of the experience for the student[.]” *Id.*

17. WHO TEACHES THE EXTERNSHIP COURSE?

The Externship course is co-taught by Nicholas Schroeck, Associate Dean of Experiential Education, Associate Professor of Law, Director Environmental Clinic, and Rebecca Nowak, Director Clinical Operations and Outreach. Any questions should be directed to Rebecca Nowak.

18. WHAT IS A SITE SUPERVISOR?

“Site Supervisor” is a term used by the American Bar Association to describe the person who is responsible for supervising you at the field placement. The Site Supervisor is the extern’s contact person at the externship site. In addition to providing day-to-day supervision at the externship site, the Site Supervisor will provide a formal written evaluation of the student's performance and certify the hours worked at the completion of the term.

19. WHAT TYPES OF DUTIES WILL I BE EXPECTED TO PERFORM?

Duties will vary by location, but generally include research, writing, legal analysis, observation and possible court appearance.

20. CAN I WORK FROM HOME?

No. Externship work must be performed at the site location.

21. ONCE MY EXTERNSHIP HAS STARTED, WHAT IF I HAVE A CONCERN ABOUT THE SITE, THE WORK, THE SUPERVISOR OR ANY OTHER ISSUE?

As a general rule, you should first try to resolve the issue with the Site Supervisor. If this is not possible or the problem has not been resolved, students should immediately communicate with Rebecca Nowak.

22. ARE THERE SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR NON-UNITED STATES CITIZENS?

Yes. All non-U.S. citizens must obtain a Curricular Practical Training (CPT) application in order to receive the CPT I-20 form. The CPT application will be signed by Rebecca Nowak and I-20 forms will be distributed at the first class.

Students who are not U.S. citizens (whether in the American J.D. or Dual Degree program) may not volunteer to work in the United States without appropriate immigration documents. As indicated above, the School of Law requires a CPT form for its non-U.S. citizens who wish to gain practical experience through an internship or externship with a legal provider. The CPT form is dependent on the student receiving academic credit and cannot be provided without the connected Externship course. In short, students may NOT volunteer with a legal provider without also taking the Externship course.

Further, full-time non-U.S. citizen-students may not work more than 20 hours per week in the Externship course when they also maintain full-time status during the same semester. Please note full-time status is required of dual degree students during the summer following their first year

****Please note the United States Attorney Office does not accept non-U.S. citizens into their externship program.**

23. MAY I DO MORE THAN ONE EXTERNSHIP?

Students are permitted to take the externship course twice, although not at the same location. A third externship is not permitted.

You may contact Rebecca Nowak if you have questions that are not answered by this handout or should you need further clarification. simking@udmercy.edu.