Externship Program

Field Placement

Supervisor Guide

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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your willingness to mentor a Washington and Lee University Law student. Your commitment serves an important role in the externship student’s professional development while allowing him or her to obtain invaluable practical experience. It is our goal to make the experience mutually beneficial.

This guide serves to facilitate your mentorship and supervision of your extern. Should you need any additional information or have suggestions for the externship program please do not hesitate to contact Mary Z. Natkin, Clinical Professor of Law and Director, Externship Program at natkinm@wlu.edu.

OVERVIEW OF AN EXTERNSHIP

Externships provide students with the opportunity to pursue off-campus experiential placements. For each externship course, there is a contemporaneous classroom component with required attendance. Students are assessed on both their classroom and on-site work.

Student externs spend one and one-half to two days at their externship site each week and must enroll in an accompanying course taught by the designated faculty member. Professor Natkin and other designated externship faculty maintain an ongoing “conversation” with each of you about the student’s performance and development.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Externships at Washington and Lee University School of Law are governed by the American Bar Association’s Standards for Approval of Law Schools as well as the curriculum established by the School of Law. Washington and Lee’s innovative third-year curriculum is entirely experiential. Expanding upon the lessons and law of the first- and second-year curriculum, students move out of the classroom and into the real world of legal practice. A primary focus of the curriculum is to develop in law students the habits of mind and judgment of legal professionals, in short, to learn and apply law the way lawyers do in the process of solving problems for their clients. Each third-year student must enroll in a course in which the student engages in an actual legal setting in a representational capacity. Externships are one elective that satisfy this requirement. We strive for students to accomplish four things in an externship:

Improve their legal skills, such as research, writing and analysis or negotiation, client communication and courtroom demeanor;

Increase their knowledge of a substantive area of law such as criminal justice, administrative law, corporate law, or employment law;
Learn the mission and administration of an agency, court, or non-profit or for-profit entity and explore how the organization accomplishes its mission; and

Perhaps most importantly, begin to develop a concept of professional identity.

Overall, the externship curriculum is designed for students to be reflective – to think critically and open-handedly about the externship experience and consider how it has helped their growth in career and professional development.

**COURSE CREDIT, HOURS AND GRAADING**

Students are assessed on both their classroom and on-site work, with the classroom component structured as a two-credit graded course and concurrent fieldwork assessed on a pass/no pass basis. Fieldwork is assessed on the completion of the requisite hours and a satisfactory evaluation from the Field Placement Supervisor.

Student externs generally spend one and one-half to two days at their externship site each week. Judicial externship students are limited to two fieldwork credits per semester for a full-year judicial externship (maximum of 4 ungraded field credits). All other externship students will receive three fieldwork credits (minimum 150 hours/semester). Students are counseled that the hours requirement is a *minimum* level each student must attain to receive course credit. Each student is expected to fulfill his or her obligations to the externship site and to complete a full-semester externship. Each student is responsible for tracking and logging fieldwork hours with externship faculty.

**THIRD-YEAR PRACTICE RULE**

Your externship student should have sought and obtained certification from the Virginia State Bar to engage in student practice with a designated supervising attorney. If your student will be appearing under your supervision in the Western or Eastern Federal Districts of Virginia (including the United States Bankruptcy Court), your student will also need to obtain certification from the applicable court. Please confirm your student’s certification and ensure compliance. Copies of each rule are attached as Appendices A - D. If you or your student need any assistance in this regard please contact Professor Natkin.

Appendix A: Third-Year Student Practice Rule (Virginia State Bar)

Appendix B: Third-Year Student Practice Rule (Western District of Virginia)

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1 Students in the Washington, DC Program will not have a third-year practice certification for appearances in the DC courts. If you contemplate making student court appearances in Washington, DC part of your educational mission for your student’s externship, please contact Professor Natkin or Professor Martel.
GUIDELINES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF FIELD PLACEMENT SUPERVISORS

Field Placement Supervisors are an integral part of the externship students’ educational and professional experience. We appreciate the mentoring role you are providing. Below are general guidelines that should assist you and your student in achieving a successful externship. More detailed explanations follow.

● Students must be engaged in substantial, authentic legal work at the site. To the extent possible, the work should place the student in a lawyer’s role.

● The students’ work may not be compensated nor may it be billed. This does not preclude a Field Placement Supervisor from reimbursing a student for travel or other expenses incurred as a direct result of the program.

● The Field Placement Supervisor must designate an individual to serve as a mentor for each student in the placement (the Field Placement Supervisor may also be the designated mentor). The designated mentor is expected to have direct contact with the student each day the student is on-site and to conduct debriefings and provide specific feedback for assignments and tasks undertaken. This does not preclude the student from working with other attorneys and staff on-site.

● The Field Placement Supervisor will give students the opportunity to perform a variety of tasks in order to develop various skills.

● The Field Placement Supervisor will complete formal evaluations of each student twice a semester.

● The Field Placement Supervisor will have routine contact with designated externship faculty teaching the corresponding classroom component. The Field Placement Supervisor will work with externship faculty to develop and encourage appropriate learning goals and objectives for the students.

● The Field Placement Supervisor will provide adequate work space in a safe environment. Sufficient resources will be available to allow the student to successfully perform his or her work.

● The externship is primarily an educational opportunity for the benefit of the student. While the student should be able to contribute to the work of the
placement, the student should not serve as a substitute for other employees within the placement.

**ORIENTATION**

Your student will reach out to you a few weeks prior to the start of the externship to discuss a mutually accommodating schedule. In preparation for your student’s arrival, please consider an orientation similar to that of a new employee. This includes workspace considerations, access issues, account generation, and so forth. Such preparation will help place the student at ease in a new environment, and facilitate efficient use of your time as well as the student’s. Attached as *Appendix E* is a checklist you may wish to consider in preparation for your extern’s arrival:

*Appendix E: Techniques for Effective Supervision - Orientation*

**GOAL SETTING**

Externs will likely be required by their externship faculty to establish learning goals for the semester with measurable objectives to serve as a guide to the externship. Please meet with your student to discuss educational goals for the term. This will allow you and the extern to have a mutual understanding regarding the kinds of work and experiences that will be available to the extern.

Attached as *Appendix F* are suggestions for goal setting, assignments and feedback designed to assist with your mentoring role and facilitate a successful externship for you and your student:

*Appendix F: Techniques for Effective Supervision – Goal Setting/Assignments*

**ASSIGNMENTS AND FEEDBACK**

Washington and Lee University School of Law students receive academic credit for their engagement in an externship. It is therefore critical that each student has the opportunity to meaningfully participate in the work of the externship site, and to fully engage in and observe the environment. Careful explanation of an assignment, your expectations, and associated deadlines are important to convey to your externship student. It is equally important that your externship student receive regular, specific feedback on his or her work. Detailed feedback includes specific information about your student’s work product, as well as concrete suggestions on how to enhance future performance. Both will further each student’s professional development and ensure the educational integrity of the externship.

Attached as *Appendices F and G* are resources that are designed to assist with your mentoring role and facilitate a successful externship for you and your student:
STUDENT EVALUATIONS

You will be asked to complete a written evaluation of your externship student at mid-semester and the close of the externship period. A form will be provided to you; however, you are free to provide an alternative narrative if you wish. Your students will be evaluated (pass/no pass) in part on the basis of your evaluation. Attached as Appendix H are copies of mid-semester and final student evaluations typically used.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND OTHER ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS OR CONCERNS

Class discussion and assignments must redact any client identifying, confidential or otherwise protected information. It is likely that one of your student’s initial classroom assignments will be to consider issues of confidentiality and non-disclosure. Be sure to discuss with your student any specific issues of confidentiality that may govern with respect to your workplace.

Although rare, significant issues of concern may arise during an externship. Please do not hesitate to contact your designated externship faculty or Mary Z. Natkin, Clinical Professor of Law and Director, Externship Program at natkinm@wlu.edu with any questions, concerns or suggestions. In many instances, it is best that the student and an individual supervisor communicate and resolve issues when possible. If an issue is unable to be resolved after meaningful communication, we are available to assist.

NON-DISCRIMINATION AND SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICY

Please note that Washington and Lee prohibits discrimination and harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, veteran’s status, or genetic information in its Interim Policy on Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation Other than Sex (go.wlu.edu/OGC/DiscriminationPolicy). Additionally, Washington and Lee prohibits all forms of sexual misconduct, which includes sexual harassment, non-consensual sexual intercourse, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual exploitation, domestic and dating violence, and stalking in its Interim Sexual Harassment and Misconduct Policy (go.wlu.edu/OGC/SexualMisconductPolicy). All externship sites are expected to adhere to these policies.
APPENDIX

RESOURCES FOR FIELD PLACEMENT SUPERVISORS

A. Third-Year Student Practice Rule (Virginia State Bar)
B. Third-Year Student Practice Rule (Western District of Virginia)
C. Third-Year Student Practice Rule (Western District of Virginia Bankruptcy Court)
D. Third-Year Student Practice Rule (Eastern District of Virginia)
E. Techniques for Effective Supervision – Orientation
F. Techniques for Effective Extern Supervision – Goal Setting/Assignments
G. A Practical Guide to Cooperative Supervision for Law Students and Legal Employers
H. Mid-Semester and Final Evaluation

Thank you for your participation!