

EP Program

Externship

Summer 2009 *Student Manual* *Washington, DC Program*

Purpose: The Student Manual was created to answer your questions about participating in a summer externship. Please read the *Nuts and Bolts* and then we can answer any remaining questions you might have.

Externships	1
Eligibility	1
Field Placement Requirements	1
Field Placement Credit	2
Additional Field Placements	3
Repeat Field Placements	3
Externship Seminar - 3 credits	3
Small Group Supervision Seminar- 1 credit	4
Advanced Supervision Seminar - 1 credit	4
Financial Aid	5
Credit Maximums	5
National and International Programs	5
“Doing the Math”	5
How to Find an Externship	6
How to Register	9
When You Have Completed Your Externship	10

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Externships

Externships provide students with the opportunity to receive academic credit for unpaid legal work. Unlike internships, which are volunteer positions, students engaged in externships must commit to working a set number of hours during the semester. In return, the employers agree to provide the students with substantive legal experience equivalent to that of a junior attorney. Students engaged in externships participate in related seminars through which they are encouraged to actively reflect on the externship experience. For more information, please see the Externship Program website at www.wcl.american.edu/externship.

Eligibility

Students are eligible to participate in externships after they have completed their first year of law school (beginning in the summer after their first year).

EXTERNSHIP = Field placement + seminar

FIELD PLACEMENTS

Field Placement Requirements

Requirements for field placements include the following:

- 1) The field placement must be in a **not-for-profit** organization, government agencies, courts or tribunals, or a *pro bono* project within a law firm.
- 2) The student must be engaged in **substantive law-related work**.

- 3) The student must be **supervised by a licensed attorney** (though day-to-day assignments may be handled by others).
- 4) The position must be **unpaid** (a requirement of the ABA standards). In addition, students may not receive stipends except to cover some limited out-of-pocket expenses.

All field placements must be approved by the Externship Office (*see* Registration Process, below). Simply because a field placement is listed in the Externship Database does not mean that it is automatically approved.

For-profit law firms will be approved only if the student is assigned exclusively to *pro bono* matters. All students externing with a for-profit law firm must speak to a member of the Externship Program staff prior to obtaining approval.

A full description of the requirements for the field placement can be found on the externship website: Please go to

http://www.wcl.american.edu/externship/place_req.cfm

Field Placement Credit

Students earn one, two, or three credits for their fieldwork, depending on the number of hours worked during the course of the semester. **All fieldwork credits are graded pass/fail.**

140 hours = 1 Credit (Approx. 16 hrs./week for 9 weeks)

210 hours = 2 Credits (Approx. 24 hrs./week for 9 weeks)

280 hours = 3 Credits (Approx. 32 hrs./week for 9 weeks)*

Hours must be completed during the semester that the student is participating in the externship seminar.

Students may earn a maximum of three credits for field work in any given semester. Students arrange with the field placements for the appropriate number of hours, depending on the students' schedule and the needs of the organizations.

* Please note that during the 14-week Fall/Spring semesters, the weekly requirement changes.

Additional Field Placements

Students are permitted to participate in additional externships in subsequent semesters up to a maximum of **six credits for field work** while they are in school. Additional field placements are typically taken in conjunction with the Advanced Supervision 1 credit, pass/fail seminar.

Repeat Field Placements

Students may remain in the same field placement for a second semester if their duties will be substantially different and/or involve substantially more advanced work than during the first semester. **Repeat field placements must be approved by the Externship Office.**

SEMINARS/FACULTY SUPERVISION

Students participating in the Externship Program **MUST** enroll in an externship seminar. During the summer semester, Individual Supervision is not available. There are a variety of seminars offered to externship students. Students are free to choose which seminar interests them or has relevance to their fieldwork. Descriptions of seminars will be available online and on the Externship Bulletin Board outside of Room 413. They are also listed on the course schedule with the prefix LAW-769.

Externship Seminar—3 credits

The 3-credit externship seminar is graded (A-F). Some of the requirements include:

- 1) **Seminar:** 2 hrs, 50 min per week (Due to the shortened length of the semester, each class is longer than during the fall and spring semesters).
- 2) **Small group supervision:** In addition to the seminar, students meet on a regular basis with their seminar professor either individually, or in small groups, for a total of 5-7 hours per semester. Many professors schedule student small group meetings during the hour directly before or after the regular class meeting.

Students should check the course page for additional information about the scheduling of small group supervision.

3) **Reflective journals.**

4) **Reading assignments.**

5) **Substantial 10-15 page written product:** This could take the form of a series of short reflective papers, one longer reflective paper, or a traditional research paper.

6) **Additional assignments or projects:** Externship faculty may assign other projects, such as class presentations throughout the semester.

Small Group Supervision Seminar (summer only) – 1 credit (P/F)

During the summer students may enroll in a one-credit seminar rather than the three-credit seminar. In this seminar, students receive one pass/fail credit. Students meet once a week with a faculty member to discuss issues arising in their externship. They are required to keep reflective journals and provide a substantial written product.

Advanced Supervision Seminar – 1 credit (P/F)

After taking a three-credit seminar, students who wish to participate in another externship will generally enroll in the one-credit Advanced Supervision seminar[†] (faculty supervision through a seminar is required in order to receive academic credit for the field placement).

This option is available only to students who have already taken a 3-credit seminar and are working on their second or third externship. Students meet with their professor for 5-7 hours over the course of the semester in a small group to discuss the progress of their externships. They are required to keep reflective journals and provide a substantial written product. Students interested in this course must obtain the approval of the Externship Office.

[†] Students may not enroll in a second three-credit seminar unless the content is substantially different from the previous seminar. The permission of the Externship Director is required.

Financial Aid

Students may apply for Financial Aid if they are participating in an externship, just as they would for any other course. Contact the Office of Financial Aid [Suite 505; (202) 274-4107] directly for more information.

Credit Maximums

During their study at WCL, students may earn a maximum of six externship seminar credits and a maximum of six externship field credits. The field credits, but not seminar credits, count toward the maximum number of credits that a student is permitted to earn outside of the classroom.

National and International Programs

WCL also provides externship opportunities out-of-state and abroad through the Long-Distance Externship Seminar. During the field placement, students and supervising faculty are linked via an Internet “virtual classroom.” Students submit weekly journal entries to their faculty supervisors and meet regularly on-line, or via telephone to discuss the student’s progress. Students **MUST** attend a three-day seminar (held in mid-May) prior to departure and another three-day “debriefing” seminar (held in mid-August) upon completion. **Attendance at these seminars is mandatory.** For more information on these programs, please see www.wcl.american.edu/externship/national.cfm and www.wcl.american.edu/externship/international.cfm and contact the Externship Office.

Students interested in the International Externship Program must submit an “International Externship Program Application” no later than November 16th, 2008.

“Doing the Math” – Summer Semester

3 credit seminar and fieldwork:

- 1 field credit (**140 hrs.**) (Approx. 16 hrs./week for 9 weeks) + 3 credit seminar = **4 credits**
- 2 field credits (**210 hrs.**) (Approx. 24 hrs./week for 9 weeks) + 3 credit seminar = **5 credits**
- 3 field credits (**280 hrs.**) (Approx. 32 hrs./week for 9 weeks) + 3 credit seminar = **6 credits**

1 credit advanced supervision or small group supervision and fieldwork:

1 field credit (**140 hrs.**) (Approx. 16 hrs./week for 9 weeks) + 1 credit supervision = **2 credits**

2 field credits (**210 hrs.**) (Approx. 24 hrs./week for 9 weeks) + 1 credit supervision = **3 credits**

3 field credits (**280 hrs.**) (Approx. 32 hrs./week for 9 weeks) + 1 credit supervision = **4 credits**

How to Find an Externship

Students are responsible for applying to legal organizations. The Externship Office provides assistance through an extensive database of employers, an annual Externship Fair, evaluations of organizations where students have externed in the past, counseling with individual students and more. If you need assistance or have questions, review the Externship website and then make an appointment to meet with Externship Program staff.

I. Determine the Type of Externship You Want

Before thinking about specific field placements, you should think about the kind of legal experience for which you are looking. Some externships primarily offer research and writing experience; others involve interviewing/intake and representation of clients; still others may offer the opportunity to work in a policy area. If you do not have a particular substantive area in mind, think about which courses you have taken that were interesting and what about them interested you.

II. Locating an Externship

• **Externship Database: *Hundreds of listings updated regularly***

The Externship Program Database, accessible from the Externship Program home page, offers information about employers that have requested a WCL student for an externship and/or have hosted a student in the past. It is separate and distinct from the Office of Career and Professional Development's Careerlink listings. It is searchable by keyword, such as a specific area of practice. In addition to contact information, and information about the organization and the extern's duties, the database provides information such as

the number of students who have externed in recent years and whether the organization recently requested an extern.

You may search by area of practice or keyword to find an externship that interests you. Review the description of the extern duties and keep in mind that the actual tasks involved in the externship are at least as important as the substantive area. For example, if you are interested in having client contact and working in the immigration law area, you will probably be disappointed with an externship at an immigration policy organization. The database contains well over 500 employers located in the Washington metropolitan area, as well as a limited number of national externships. Students interested in pursuing an externship outside of the United States should review the International Database and contact the Externship Program Office for assistance.

To search the Employer Database:

From the WCL home page, click on “All Links,” then “Externships” or go directly to www.wcl.american.edu/externship/externshipapp. Our Employer Database is for use by WCL students only; use your Novell user name and password to log in. Scroll to the bottom of the page to search for employers who have recently contacted WCL requesting externs.

To search for International Externships:

The Externship Program has forged relationships with organizations around the globe, and many of the organizations have agreed to accept qualified WCL students as externs during the summer semester. Students interested in participating in an international externship should look at the “2009 International Externship List,” which contains some of the organizations with which the Externship Program has developed strong ties. Additionally, you may look at the **International** Externship Database (a separate database from the Externship Database). The International Database contains additional information such as pre-requisites and language requirements. It also contains additional listings. Note that there is no contact information provided in the

International Database or in the “2009 International Externship List.” To obtain the contact information and to apply to those externships, you must submit an International **Externship Program Application**. Applications are available at wcl.american.edu/externship or from the Externship Office. Applications are due November 16th, 2008. After you have submitted an application, the Externship Program will set up a meeting with you to discuss opportunities and to prepare applications for the international opportunities.

- **Externship Fair**

In January, the Externship Program holds its annual Externship Fair, attended by representatives from over 125 area organizations and agencies. The Externship Fair provides an informal environment in which students may learn about the agencies and organizations and make valuable contacts with the attorneys attending the event. Many employers will accept resumes at the Fair, and will use the opportunity to engage in an informal interviewing process.

- **Posted Listings**

Watch *The Docket* and our bulletin boards (outside Rooms 411 & 413) for new listings and employers who are currently searching for externs.

- **Counseling**

After reviewing the database, you may make an appointment with the Externship Program Director to discuss field placement opportunities. To set up an appointment, sign up outside of the Director’s office (Room 411), call (202) 274-4200, or email externship@wcl.american.edu.

- **Design Your Own Externship**

Rather than selecting from externships used by the law school in the past, you are also free to design your own field placement, if it fits our program criteria.

- **Meet with Career Services Specialists in the Office of Career and Professional Development (OCPD)**

WCL career counselors are available for students who want to consider how to most effectively take advantage of an externship to assist them in meeting their long-term career goals. Résumé review services are provided and specialists in public interest law, government law, international relations, and judicial clerkships are available to meet with students. OCPD has excellent software available for formatting legal resumes. It is available at <https://wcl.optimalresume.com/>. For individual counseling, contact the OCPD [Suite 122 (202) 274-4090].

- **Review Evaluations**

After reviewing the database listings, peruse the field placement evaluations, available in binders in the Externship Office. These evaluations, written by WCL students, can be helpful in providing additional information about the field placements and supervisors.

How to Register

It is important to note that you will need to register for two separate “classes.” The first is the seminar (LAW-769). You will register for the seminar on my.american.edu as you would any other class. To register for the field component, LAW-899, you need to follow the instructions provided on the externship website.

1. **Register for an Externship Seminar**

Register for the seminar class online as you would for any other class.

Externships are listed on the course schedule page with the prefix LAW-769.

You may register for a seminar as soon as they are posted, and do not need to wait until your externship has been finalized. Unless they explicitly say otherwise, all externship seminars are open to students in any placement.

2. **Register for Externship Field Credits**

All placements must be approved by the Externship Program Office. The online fieldwork application process is available at

www.wcl.american.edu/externship/registration. Specific instructions are posted on the website. After you have secured a field placement, enter all of your

field placement information online and submit it electronically for approval. After you and your employer have agreed to the Externship requirements and our Office has approved the placement (all electronically), you will be sent a form which must be signed by the Externship Office and turned into the Registrar. This will add the field placement, LAW-899, to your schedule. This should be completed before add/drop has ended. If you have not submitted your form by add/drop, you will need to contact the Externship Office to obtain approval.

When you have completed your externship:

- Complete an online Externship Evaluation (available at wcl.american.edu/externship). The evaluations are an excellent resource for students in the future. If you indicate that your evaluation should remain confidential, it will still provide us with valuable information. **You will not receive a grade until you have turned in the form.**
- Submit your log of hours to your professor. You cannot receive a field placement grade until you have submitted an hour log.
- Let your field supervisor know to expect contact from your professor requesting a brief evaluation of your work. This is the second component in determining your field placement grade.
- Your professor will submit your grades to the Office of the Registrar.