

**American University Washington College of Law**  
**Supplementary Remote Externship Policies – Fall 2020**

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, for the Fall 2020 semester, WCL is waiving its requirement that attorney supervisors and externs must work on-site.

To ensure that students receive a high quality and meaningful experience via their remote placements, we have developed the following remote externship policies for both attorney supervisors and the students earning academic credit. Our goal is to make the remote extern's experience as comparable as possible to that of an extern working on-site.

Supervisors must adhere to the policies below regarding instruction, supervision, and feedback. If there is a conflict between one of the policies included here and either the Field Placement Agreement or Student Agreement, these policies shall take precedence.

**Video conferencing:** Research shows that video conferencing is an optimal form of remote communication, as it is engaging, confers deeper levels of understanding and connection, energizes employees, increases trust, and accelerates the pace of communication. At a minimum, some form of verbal communication -- whether by video conference or by telephone -- allows students to effectively ask and respond to questions and provides a better sense of involvement in the work of the organization. Consequently, the policies below require supervisors to regularly use video conferencing and telephone calls, in addition to text and email.

**Instruction, supervision and feedback:**

- **Weekly Meetings (via Video Conference):** Students and supervisors are required to meet via video conference at least once per week during the course of the semester.

All WCL students have been provided with Zoom accounts and will be able to schedule and these host meetings.

We expect supervisors to use these weekly meetings to set expectations for the week, discuss upcoming projects, provide feedback regarding ongoing projects, and discuss any issues or concerns that may arise. It is also a time to communicate informally and build a personal connection.

- **Regular contact:** Externs and Supervisors are expected to communicate regularly. While this can be a combination of email, text, telephone and video conference, "live" communication (phone or video conference) is required at least once each week in addition to the Weekly Meeting.

## **TWO START-OF-SEMESTER MEETINGS**

### **1) Initial Orientation (Onboarding) (via Video Conference)**

At the start of the semester (*or even before the externship actually begins*), supervisors must hold the Initial Orientation described in the Field Placement Agreement. In addition to the general orientation to the work of the organization and the extern's duties, confidentiality and other administrative matters, the initial orientation should include a discussion of issues *specific to working remotely*, such as:

- Developing the extern's work schedule
- Specifying the supervisor's general schedule and anticipated response times
- Discussing when and how the extern will receive feedback
- Safeguarding the extern's work product and protecting confidentiality
  - If laptop is available to others in the household, how will documents be stored safely?
  - Does the extern have access to earbuds/headphones for telephone and video calls with attorneys or clients?
  - How will documents be transferred securely?
- Ensuring the extern has access to any technology necessary to work
- Developing a plan ahead of time to address common issues (changes in schedule, illness, trouble with technology, etc.).

**Introduction to Co-Workers:** Normally an orientation such as this one would orient the student to the physical office. Since that will not occur, to the extent possible, students should be introduced to other attorneys in the office via video conference and have an opportunity to hear from these attorneys about what they are working on. (We suggest holding this video conference separately and including all externs working in the office as well as all of the attorneys).

### **2) Goals/Learning Outcomes Meeting (via Video Conference)**

As described in the Field Placement Agreement, externs must meet with their supervisors in the first weeks of the semester to discuss the extern's goals (learning outcomes) and the attorney's expectations, and to develop a work plan for the semester to achieve those goals. Note that one of the skills that students will likely be adding is the ability to work effectively when they are working remotely. This meeting must be held via **video conference**.

## **Inclusion in the Workplace**

- If there are ongoing virtual meetings with personnel at the office, students should be included in these meeting to the extent possible to maximize their learning and engagement. In addition, students should be encouraged to communicate with other co-workers (and other externs) via video conference calls, scheduled webinars and other meetings.

## **Hours & Timekeeping:**

- Students must track their time each day and submit weekly timesheets (available on the WCL Externship Program website) that confirm the number of hours the student has worked and generally describe the nature of the work performed without disclosing confidential information. At the end of each week, students must submit timesheets by email to their seminar professor, with a cc to the field supervisor. Attorney supervisors must let externs know if they require additional methods of hours verification.

## **Working on-site:**

- Students may be able to work onsite if certain requirements are met. WCL is in the process of making this determination and will announce the requirements for on-site externships as soon as they are available. At a minimum, field placements permitting externs to work on-site must have a plan in place that will permit students to work remotely should the workplace shut down mid-semester. Externs may create a hybrid work environment in which they work some hours on site and other hours remotely. Please contact the Externship Office ([externship@wcl.american.edu](mailto:externship@wcl.american.edu)) for additional details.