



**EXTERNSHIP PROTOCOL**  
INFORMATION  
FOR SUPERVISORS AND STUDENTS

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## INTRODUCTION

Thank you for participating in the University of Akron School of Law's Externship Program! The goal of the Externship Program is to provide an outstanding educational experience for our law students. Akron Law students are encouraged to enroll in externships with legal organizations to gain experience, while learning how law is practiced. Externships offer valuable training that is of interest to future legal employers and help students develop their skills of *advocacy, client counseling, research, legal writing, communication, and professionalism* under the supervision of a mentoring/supervising attorney. The following materials describe how the legal extern may be utilized, supervised, and evaluated, including best practices for a mutually beneficial relationship between the student and supervising attorney.

**Externship Course.** Every law student who participates in the Externship Program is simultaneously enrolled in the Externship Course and will complete weekly assignments that are evaluated by the course instructor. The course focuses on the various aspects of the practice of law and affords students the opportunity to reflect upon and discuss their placement experiences, the skills they are developing, and areas for growth. We also discuss basic and advanced skills to ensure that all students are able to perform at the level expected of a law clerk in your office. For example, we review legal research and writing, communication methods, general lawyering skills, and professional responsibility. We specifically instruct students not to reveal privileged or confidential information that they learn at their placement.

The Externship Program is designed to help students accomplish the following educational objectives:

- Apply knowledge and skills gained from academic studies to the practice environment;
- Learn new aspects of substantive law related to the practice area;
- Learn or improve legal skills, especially those specific to the practice area;
- Learn to be a reflective professional—to self-assess performance, to learn from experience and observation, and to comprehend and integrate new knowledge for future actions;
- Develop understanding of professional responsibility demands and challenges, especially those specific to the practice area;
- Develop legal problem-solving skills and learn to exercise professional judgment;
- Develop effective communication skills;
- Gain skills and knowledge necessary to work with individuals with life experiences different than the student's own;
- Identify and pursue individual learning goals; and
- Define career goals and create professional networks.

**Hour Requirements.** Students are required to work a minimum of 85 hours at the placement for 2 credits, 127.5 hours at the placement for 3 credits, or 255 hours at the placement for 6 credits (42.5 hours of field work per credit hour). In addition, all students are required to submit weekly journals detailing their activities to the Externship Course instructor. The journals are intended to allow us to monitor the tasks being done by the student. They also encourage the student to reflect on the placement experience. The journal is not intended to reveal any placement confidences but rather is a conduit for information between the student and the instructor. The student will also submit weekly time sheets to you. The hours are to be tracked and filled out by the student. You should sign the sheet each week (electronically is fine), thereby verifying the hours worked by the student.

**Site Visits.** Periodically, we visit placements where we regularly place students. During these visits, we will discuss the extern's progress with you. We will be able to discuss whether our student is performing at the level you expect, and what, if anything, we can do to enhance the placement experience for you and your student. *The Externship Instructor will reach out to you at the mid-point of the semester to schedule a check-in call, video conference, or visit.* If any questions or concerns arise at any time during the semester, please contact us. We are here to resolve any problems that may arise, and to help navigate various externship needs.

**Goal-Setting and Evaluations.** At the end of this packet are several forms for your review. We ask that you complete the first form, a goal-setting exercise, at the beginning of the placement experience, together with your student. This exercise requires the student to discuss goals for the placement with you at the outset of the experience. The other forms are short evaluation forms for you to complete at the end of the semester. Please note, you will receive links to these three (3) evaluation forms via email near the end of the semester with further instructions. We provide them now so that you may review and consider this criteria as you offer feedback to your student extern.

We expect and encourage you to evaluate the student's work. Again, the focus is on education and student professional development. We expect students will gain a greater understanding of the legal system, substantive law, procedural requirements, and the skills required to be a successful lawyer. Thus, it is imperative that you set expectations for the student's work and evaluate and critique that work. The type of work done by the student will be dictated by the nature of the placement. The placement might focus on intake interviews, taking complaints, writing briefs, or assisting judges with opinions. Whatever the task, our expectation is that the students produce work product of comparable quality to that of a law clerk or new attorney. As such, frequent feedback from you is critical!

In addition to these evaluation forms, we would appreciate your thoughts about this Program at the end of the student's placement. It is comments from supervisors in the past that have allowed us to modify the Externship Course and curriculum to be more responsive to the needs of our students and placements, and the legal market.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Alisa Benedict O'Brien, Assistant Dean of Career Services, at [ab139@uakron.edu](mailto:ab139@uakron.edu) or 330-972-8540.

**Thank you for providing this outstanding educational experience for our students!**

## **DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNSHIP PLACEMENTS**

The Externship Program permits students to be placed for course credit in any court, public interest organization, governmental agency, or a private enterprise relevant to their career goals. There must be an attorney assigned to supervise each student. You may not pay the student for the work performed; the student may only receive academic credit for the time spent with your office. The work can be done only for non-billable and non-political activities. We also place students in judicial extern positions. These students will be expected to achieve at the highest levels that the Court would expect of its traditionally hired law clerks. In any setting, the student should be treated as a member of the legal team, in the sense that the assignments and engagement are legal work or involve legal-related activities.

Appropriate work for a particular student will be dictated by the specific placement. Appropriate placement activities include, but are not limited to, interviewing, intake, letter writing, legal research and memoranda drafting, pleading or brief writing, observation, shadowing, trial preparation, administrative work, general business activities, and in court activities for students who have their legal intern certificates.

## **BEGINNING THE EXTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE**

During each semester, students are notified in a variety of ways about the Externship Program, from Akron Law's webpage, emails, Symplicity job postings, advising sessions, and word-of-mouth. Students who have completed their first year of law school (28 credit hours) are eligible for a placement beginning the summer after their first year and encouraged to meet with the Career Services Office during their 1L year to begin planning.

We have a list of existing placement opportunities, but we also try to locate placements to meet particular student needs and interests. Our goal is to identify the students' career goals and interests and find the placement that best fits those needs and interests. Students are required to complete an application form on which the student indicates what type of experience they seek. We then meet at least once with every student who applies, interview the student to determine what experiences that student is seeking, and talk about what placements are available that we believe will fit the student's needs as well as the placement's needs. Students are never assigned to a placement simply because an opening is available. Additionally, students may secure their own externship placement, upon approval by Career Services.

Following the meeting between Career Services and the student, we will contact the particular placement supervisor. The placement supervisor will be asked whether there is a need for a student to work in the office. If there is such a need and adequate supervision will be available, the student's background/resume will be discussed with the placement supervisor and the supervisor will make an initial determination whether to interview the student. At the interview, mutual evaluation is encouraged. The placement supervisor should evaluate the student, and the student should evaluate the placement for fit. At the conclusion of the interview, should the supervisor accept the student, the supervisor and the student must jointly generate a mutual understanding of the work to be performed by the student. The student is responsible for notifying Career Services of acceptance of the placement. If the student is not selected, we appreciate when the placement supervisor contacts us and offers reasons for the rejection so we may better understand your needs.

## YOUR ROLE AS TEACHER AND MENTOR

As we have indicated, the focus of the Externship Program is to provide an educational experience to our students. To achieve this goal, we hold class meetings, curate assignments, and meet mid-semester with every student. However, you have the most important role and responsibility to teach the student placed in your office. If you have any questions about what you should do to achieve this goal, do not hesitate to contact us. In general, we want you to act as a teacher and mentor to the student. As teacher, you should explain what you expect of the student for every project you assign. You should provide the student with the assistance, guidance, and resources necessary to complete the project. As mentor, you should serve as a role model for the student, demonstrating the high level of competence and professionalism that you expect from other lawyers and from the student.

Supervisors should be proactive at the outset of the externship to ensure students understand office policies and protocols. Best practices include providing an orientation/on-boarding, handbooks, tutorial videos, and resources as well as a mechanism for quizzing students on comprehension. For example, if a training video exists, send a google form with a short set of questions after the fact, to confirm comprehension of the policies. Supervisors should make time in the initial meetings and trainings to review steps required to protect confidentiality of work product and client information remotely. No detail should be viewed as too small in the beginning and students should be assumed not to have the understanding at the outset. Discuss preferred and available technologies, cybersecurity, nomenclature for saving documents, filing procedures, document management, timekeeping software, protecting passwords, etc. Some student externs may not have had the opportunity to take professional responsibility prior to doing their externship. It is critical that the supervisor takes the time to review the most relevant ethical rules (confidentiality, attorney-client privilege, etc.) in the beginning, with the extern, as well as model an ethical practice of law.

When situations arise where students inevitably make a mistake, supervisors should take the time to thoroughly review the situation and provide critical feedback to assist the student in improving. *Employers should remember that this externship may be the very first legal job that a student has had, and should approach each situation with this lens.*

When assigning projects to students, we ask you to keep the following learning objectives in mind: **research, writing, communication skills, professionalism, and ethics**. When assigning work to externs, we ask that you consider whether the project you have in mind will allow the student to gain new experiences, learn or hone a legal skill, or apply something already learned, and whether this is the type of project you would assign to an attorney or that you would do yourself if the student were not working with you. Remember, imparting guidance on soft skills to your extern, including time-management and how to navigate a stressful profession, are also an important element of the Program and your role. If you have any questions about whether a project or task is appropriate for an extern, please email or call us and we can discuss it.

As you prepare for your extern, we encourage you to consider these **supervisor best practices**:

1. Meet with your extern at the beginning of the semester to discuss the specific goals of the externship and how the practical externship experience will meet and contribute to the student's learning goals and objectives. Clearly set out your expectations for the student. A goal-setting exercise/handout is provided below. Continue to meet or check-in regularly with your student. Build a

communication plan.

2. Assign and evaluate at least two writing assignments during the term. A legal writing assignment will vary according to the placement. Whatever the legal writing in question, we expect each student to complete at least two writing projects. Provide honest feedback on the student's writing and point out areas for improvement. They can learn so much from you.

3. Provide regular feedback on assignments and communicate frequently, including at a minimum scheduling a mid-point meeting and an exit meeting. Students gain the most benefit when the placement supervisor actively and continuously evaluates the student's performance, both verbally and in writing. Strong feedback will also allow the student to improve, which will benefit you during the semester!

A guide to supervising **remote** externs is also included at the end of these materials.

## **EVALUATION OF WRITTEN MATERIAL**

The supervisor should evaluate at least two writing assignments of each student each term, if it is appropriate for the placement. A legal writing will vary according to the placement. In some placements, students will have only the opportunity to write letters. In others, students will write memos, briefs, pleadings, or assist with opinions. Whatever the legal writing in question, we expect each student to complete at least two writing projects. Appendix II is an evaluation form to be used for this purpose. The focus of this evaluation form is on positive and constructive feedback. Supervisors must give students a high level of supervision during the drafting of any writing and significant feedback as to the strengths and weaknesses of the particular writing.

## **EVALUATION OF ORAL COMMUNICATIONS**

In addition to critiquing and evaluating the law student's written work, the placement supervisor should also evaluate any oral presentations. These would include activities such as interviewing clients, conducting hearings, meetings with attorneys, or other activities in which no writing would be generated, including, for example, a briefing on a project that the student completed or a presentation to a group of attorneys. We would expect the supervisor to evaluate and observe at least one of these activities if it is appropriate to the placement. Appendix III is an evaluation form to be used for this purpose.

## **EVALUATION OF OVERALL PLACEMENT**

At the conclusion of the placement, it is imperative that you evaluate both the student and the placement experience. We ask that you would meet with the student at the end of the semester to discuss the student's work during the semester. Appendix IV is to be used for this purpose, and provides a framework for your discussion with the student.

This evaluation should consider the initial goals agreed upon by you and the student, and the degree to which those goals were met. Also worth considering is whether future students assigned to the placement should have certain predicate coursework completed before working at the placement. We would appreciate your feedback about any information that you believe students should receive in the class component to this course.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PROTOCOL**

**Extern and Supervisor:** We have reviewed this document and agree to act in accordance with these expectations. We are aware that we may contact the instructor/director of the Law School's Externship Program with any questions or issues that arise during the externship.

Signature of Supervising Attorney: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Extern: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Akron Law Representative: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX I**  
**Goals of the Externship**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, met with \_\_\_\_\_ to discuss the externship placement at \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_.

We agree that the above student's work will focus on the following objectives and skill development areas.

*Examples of Goals:*

Hone legal research abilities.

Develop legal writing skills, including drafting at least one memo and one brief.

Observe a mediation or trial.

Develop a solid understanding of criminal law.

Sit in on or conduct a client interview.

\_\_\_\_\_  
PLACEMENT SUPERVISOR

\_\_\_\_\_  
STUDENT



**APPENDIX II**  
**Evaluation of Written Work**

Evaluation for \_\_\_\_\_  
(student name and placement)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Writing Task Performed (please describe)

- A. Did the student firmly grasp the purpose of the task?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- B. Did the student properly utilize various research methods? If used, list methods.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- C. How was the student's writing? Was the quality better or worse than expected?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- D. If applicable, did the student anticipate opposing arguments?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- E. Did the student adhere to proper form and procedural rules?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- F. Did the student demonstrate understanding of relevant legal concepts and facts?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- G. If applicable, was the writing persuasive?

\_\_\_\_\_  
PLACEMENT SUPERVISOR

Please initial here if you permit us to share your evaluation with the student you supervised. This evaluation form may also be reviewed by an ABA/AALS Accreditation Committee as part of its seven-year review of our Law School.

**APPENDIX III**  
**Evaluation of Oral Work**

Evaluation for \_\_\_\_\_  
(student name and placement)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Oral Task Performed (please describe)

- A. Did the student develop the necessary information?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- B. Did the student communicate the necessary information?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- C. Did the student establish rapport with the individual being spoken to?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- D. Did the student conduct him/herself in a professional manner?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- E. How effective was the student's oral presentation?

\_\_\_\_\_  
PLACEMENT SUPERVISOR

Please initial here if you permit us to share your evaluation with the student you supervised. This evaluation form may also be reviewed by an ABA/AALS Accreditation Committee as part of its seven-year review of our Law School.

**APPENDIX IV**  
**Overall Evaluation**

Evaluation for \_\_\_\_\_  
(student name and placement)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

A. How did the student benefit from this externship experience?

B. How did you benefit from this externship experience?

C. What suggestions or comments do you have about this program? What could we do to make this a better experience for the student and/or for you?

\_\_\_\_\_  
PLACEMENT SUPERVISOR

Please initial here if you permit us to share your evaluation with the student you supervised. This evaluation form may also be reviewed by an ABA/AALS Accreditation Committee as part of its seven-year review of our Law School.

## Student Placement Evaluation

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Placement: \_\_\_\_\_

A. Did the placement meet your expectations? If not, what expectations were not met and why?

B. Did your placement supervisor provide you with adequate feedback and support during the placement? If not, what additional feedback or support would you have wanted?

C. Do you feel that you had a positive educational experience at your placement?

D. Would you recommend this placement to another law student? Why or why not?

We may share your evaluation with the placement. If you do not want us to share this evaluation, please note that here so that we can contact you. This evaluation form may also be reviewed by an ABA/AALS Accreditation Committee as part of its seven-year review of our Law School.

# REMOTE SUPERVISION

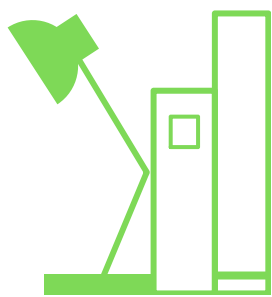


## COMMUNICATE CONTINUALLY & CONSISTENTLY

- Clarify scope of assignments and deadlines.
- Increase interactions with externs.
- Use multiple forms of technology to collaborate.
- Calendar frequent and consistent check-in meetings.

## PROVIDE POLICIES & PROTOCOLS

- Relay internal handbook and discuss.
- Set rules up front about cybersecurity, naming format, document management, filing procedures, email vs. shared drive, timekeeping, and protecting confidential information.

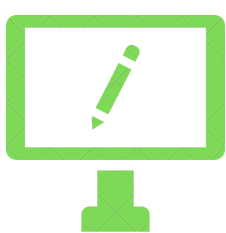


## MAXIMIZE MEETINGS

- Make time for extern meetings one-on-one without checking your phone or responding to emails.
- Set agendas for meetings and share screens for effective collaboration.

## CONVEY CONFIDENTIALITY IS KEY

- Review rules of confidentiality and attorney client privilege with externs.
- Remind externs to keep client information securely saved.
- Model best practices in virtual collaboration and privacy.



## FOLLOW UP WITH FEEDBACK

- Take time to provide substantive feedback in writing and via zoom.
- Use Track-changes and comments for writing critique.
- Discuss written work product and redacting information when using for a writing sample for future use.

## TEACH PROFESSIONALISM

- Whenever possible provide opportunities for extern to see workplace and coworkers in person or via screen.
- Set housekeeping rules for extern (no cell phones, no open emails, go on mute, etc. during meetings and hearings)
- Highlight awareness of visual background during video-calls.

