



VALPARAISO UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

CAREER PLANNING CENTER

VALPARAISO UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW EXTERNSHIP FIELD SUPERVISOR GUIDELINES

Students at Valparaiso University School of Law have a special opportunity to work and learn as an extern for as few as 45 hours to as much as 135 hours per semester. Your role in the program is vital, for it is your frequent contact with and mentoring of the student extern that allows the extern to grow and learn in unique ways. You are asked to spend as much time with the student as a teacher and role model as is practical. The law school views your responsibility similar to that of an adjunct faculty and the externship comparable to a law course.

The student extern is earning academic credit and, therefore, odd-jobs and clerical work should be kept to a minimum. The student needs to learn by doing the work of an attorney and by discussing with you things that you both observed. Supervisors have found that orienting the student to the workplace at the beginning of the externship saves time later. Allowing the student to “shadow” an attorney and then discuss the student’s observations and questions is an excellent way for the student to learn. To maximize learning, try to include the student extern in as many aspects of your work as possible. When a student performs research and writing in a case, include the student in counseling the client, taking a deposition, mediating the dispute, arguing a motion, and other events, when possible.

Student externs must complete 45 hours of fieldwork for each academic credit. When hours will be scheduled should be mutually agreed upon by the extern and field supervisor at the time of acceptance or prior to the start of the semester. Fieldwork must be completed by the last day of the semester’s classes at the law school. Students may wish to complete the hours one week before the end of the semester in order to allow extra time for exam preparation, if that is agreeable.

Fieldwork must be completed under the direction of a licensed attorney (Field Supervisor). We prefer that the extern hours be completed on site. It is important that the extern have a work station and access to the tools necessary to complete the assigned tasks. If students are to receive work from several people, there must be one attorney who is the student’s primary supervisor. This person should be aware of the range of the student’s assignments and should resolve any conflicting priorities that arise. The supervisor should also be available to discuss with the student any problems that arise in the placement and should be the individual who completes the mid-term and final progress evaluation.

One of the most useful aspects of the externship program is the opportunity for students to think about elements of lawyering not easily taught in law school, such as building a legal strategy, making predictions based on experience, and grappling with professional responsibility problems. It enriches the student’s externship.

We ask that you complete a written evaluation of the student at mid-semester (after approximately six-seven weeks) and at the end of the semester. These evaluations are available online at <http://www.valpo.edu/law/externships/>. The mid-term evaluation will be shared with the student so that the

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student is assured of feedback while time remains to improve. We encourage you to go over your evaluation with the student at the time you return it to the school.

Of course, we hope that giving feedback through conversations is a regular occurrence on the job. If the Director of Experiential Education or Faculty Supervisor can be of assistance in any way in speaking with the student, do not hesitate to call.

Educational Objectives of the Externship Program

The educational objectives of the externship program are:

1. To promote student understanding of the law in an applied setting by involving the student in decision-making, problem-solving, and strategizing;
2. To enhance the student's professional skills in areas such as client interviewing and counseling, negotiating, legal drafting and writing, and advocating; and
3. To provide the student an opportunity for critical reflection on the attorney's role in various legal institutions and in society from the unique perspective of a participant-observer.

The Externship Program is reviewed at the end of the academic year by the Academic Externship Director and Curriculum Committee as they consider the following factors:

1. Adequacy of instructional resources,
2. Pre-requisites for student participation,
3. Number of students participating,
4. Amount of credit awarded to each student,
5. Evaluation of student academic achievement,
6. Qualifications and training of field supervisors,
7. Evaluation of Field Supervisors,
8. Evaluation of Faculty Supervisors, and
9. Visits to field placements.

Faculty Supervisor

In addition to monitoring the student extern, the Faculty Supervisor or Director of Experiential Education is available to offer you support. Usually a telephone call will clear up any questions you might have. The Faculty Supervisor or Director may also make a visit to the work site either once a year or once a semester, depending on the type of externship. Should the need arise, the Faculty Supervisor is also available to make interventions with the student extern.

The pass/fail evaluation is based on the work performed at the placement and the time logs, journals, assignments, attendance, and the Field Supervisor's written evaluation. These materials provide a way for the student to practice becoming "reflective" during the legal externship and in the practice of law.

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