

Texas A&M School of Law, Residency Externship: Semester-in-Practice Program Overview

Mission:

The *Residency Externship Program: Semester-in-Practice* provides students the opportunity to earn academic credit by performing legal and law-related work outside the classroom through a semester-long, immersion experience in approved legal and law-related settings such as government, non-profit organizations, and in-house legal departments. Its objective is to afford students the opportunity to receive extensive professional and practical experience while also serving students' diverse subject matter and geographical interests. Through this program, students are immersed in the work of their host organization and, under the supervision of attorneys or judges, gain valuable experience and insight in the applying of classroom learning and legal principles to real world legal and law-related issues and thereby preparing the student to be practice ready upon graduation.

To help students achieve this objective, the goals of the *Residency Externship Program: Semester-in-Practice* are to have students:

1. Improve their lawyering skills such as research, writing, analysis, and oral advocacy;
2. Increase their understanding of the range of skills necessary to effectively perform legal and law-related work.
3. Develop a deeper understanding of substantive law and the legal or law-related issues facing the host organization and its mission;
4. Enhance their understanding of professionalism, professional responsibility, and other workplace issues that arise in a professional work environment;
5. Develop productive working relationships and explore professional options; and
6. Engage in critical self-reflection to promote self-directed, lifelong learning.

Program Overview

1. Fieldwork/Credit: Students earn 9-12 pass/fail credits for completing 45 fieldwork hours for each pass/fail credit over a 12 to 14-week semester-term. The placement term must coincide with the academic semester for which they are enrolled.
2. Assignments – Students must engage in legal and law-related tasks. These tasks can vary with supervisor and assignment, but usually include such activities as: legal or policy research, writing briefs, memoranda or other legal and law-related documents, drafting pleadings, investigating cases, interviewing clients/witnesses, planning or implementing case or policy strategies with supervisor, observing events such as meetings, hearings, trials and depositions.
3. Class Requirements: The course requires the student to:
 - a. Participate in either the General Externship Program Seminar (first-time externs) or in tutorial meetings with a faculty supervisor (repeat externs);
 - b. Submit a learning plan, which is discussed and agreed to by the field supervisor;
 - c. Submit weekly reflective journals and timesheets
 - d. Have a mid-term evaluation (Week 6/7) and final evaluation (Week 12/14) with the field supervisor, which will be submitted to the Extern Director.

4. Compensation – Students may NOT receive compensation for work performed at their placement at any time during the semester the student is enrolled in the Program. This includes stipends and fellowship funds. Students may be reimbursed for reasonable out-of-pocket expenses which they would not have otherwise incurred except for undertaking the externship. Approval for reimbursement of expenses must be approved by the school.
5. Site-Visit: The school will conduct a mid-term visit with the field placement either through an in-person visit or video-conference meeting.
6. Communication: The school will maintain contact with the field supervisor and student throughout the semester. Communications will be either through email or telephonic correspondence.
7. Contact: The school will be accessible to support the student and field supervisor to ensure the learning and working experience is the best it can be. Any questions, concerns can be communicated to:
Cecily A. Becker, J.D.
Director, Externship Program
Texas A&M University School of Law
1515 Commerce Street, Fort Worth, Texas 76102
817-212-4058 or **cbecker@law.tamu.edu**.

Student Requirements & Expectations:

1. Pre-Requisite Requirements: To be eligible to participate, students must satisfy the following criteria:
 - a. Have completed at least 45 credits hours;
 - b. Have a minimum GPA of 3.0;
 - c. Have completed Professional Responsibility; and
 - d. Be in good standing with no honor code violations.
2. In order to receive the fieldwork credit, students must complete all the work requirements established by the field supervisor, and conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times. Students also must satisfactorily complete the classroom requirements which includes participating in the class or faculty supervisor meetings, and timely submitting all forms such as the: *Externship Agreement*, learning plan, and mid-term and final evaluations.
3. Schedule: Students set their schedule in consultation with their field supervisor. Students cannot end their externships before the agreed end date without prior approval from the Extern Director.

Field Supervisor Responsibilities

Field supervisors serve as mentors and are asked to teach students the legal and professional skills necessary to be successful and practice ready. Field supervisors should provide students with opportunities to develop these skills and gain real life experience. To achieve these ends, we've established the following basic responsibilities for field supervisors:

1. Field supervisors must have at least 3 years' experience and be licensed with the appropriate jurisdictional authority (or hold a J.D. if in a compliance placement).
2. Sign and return a copy of the *Externship Agreement*.
3. Discuss confidentiality issues and inform the student of workplace policies at the beginning of the semester;
4. Discuss and develop a learning plan (goals) with the student;
5. Assign legal and law-related activities designed to help the student achieve his/her goals. Provide opportunities to engage in work typical of that of an attorney at the placement. Whenever meetings, briefings, hearings or other events are held, especially in connection with a task assigned to the student, the student should be offered the opportunity to attend, and discuss the event afterward with the field supervisor.
6. Meet regularly with the student to provide feedback on work, and guidance on future assignments. Feedback is an important element to the student's learning. It is expected that a mentoring relationship will be established and the field supervisor will discuss many aspects of practice, including issues of professional responsibility, throughout the semester. Thus, this process will include,
 - a. Reviewing written work and oral communication skills and providing constructive advice and critique;
 - b. Discussing the relationship of the assignment to the larger substantive, procedural or practical issues at hand; and
 - c. Discussing any significant ethical issues involved
7. Complete a mid-term and final evaluation (provided by the school) on the student's work, and review the evaluations with the student.
8. Verify the accuracy of the student's time records, which will be accomplished via an online platform. Students are expected to work full-time during their externship. Students are required to complete 45 hours for each pass/fail credit and can earn between 9-12 credits during the semester.
9. Provide the student the resources necessary to work and learn effectively, including adequate workspace.
10. Be available to speak with the school throughout the semester and as needed, and to notify the Extern Director if the student is not performing competently at any time during the term.
11. Field placements are not permitted to bill a client for the student's time spent on a client's matter. The student cannot be paid by any member of the field placement for any work performed during the semester the student is enrolled in the Program.
12. Field Supervisors are subject to the Texas A&M University Nondiscrimination and Abuse Policy