



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

James E. Rogers College of Law

Career Development Office

Externship Program

MANUAL FOR EXTERN SUPERVISORS

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RESPONSIBILITIES OF A FIELD SUPERVISOR

Under recent changes to ABA Standard 304, which governs law students' field placement experiences at ABA accredited law schools, students earning credit for work outside of school must be provided with a

[s]ubstantial lawyering experience that

(1) is reasonably similar to the experience of a lawyer advising or representing a client or engaging in other lawyering tasks in a setting outside a law clinic under the supervision of a licensed attorney or an individual otherwise qualified to supervise” and

(2) includes, among other requirements:

(i) direct supervision of the student’s performance by a...site supervisor;

(ii) opportunities for performance, feedback from either a...or site supervisor, and self-evaluation;

(iii) a written understanding among the student, faculty member, and a person in authority at the field placement that describes both

A. the substantial lawyering experience and opportunities for performance, feedback and self-evaluation; and

B. the respective roles of faculty and any site supervisor in supervising the students and in assuring the educational quality of the experience for the students, including a clearly articulated method of evaluations the students’ academic performance...¹

Thus, a field supervisor should provide externs with the experience of an entry-level attorney at the office and provide adequate supervision, feedback and self-evaluation. While achieving these goals, the main obligations to the law school are:

1. At the start of the semester, the field supervisor will complete a “Learning Contract” with the student and Director of Externships setting forth the expectations and requirements at the placement.
2. The field supervisor will be expected to communicate with the Director of Externships throughout the semester.
3. Allow the Director of Externships to visit the placement for a “site visit” wherein the student’s progress will be discussed, and
4. Provide a final evaluation to the College of Law after the externship hours have been completed.

¹ For complete language of ABA Standard 304, see Attachment. Below we have provided guidance on how site supervisors can ensure that these requirements are fulfilled and that the experience meets expectations for both students and field placements.

STRUCTURING THE EXTERN'S EXPERIENCE

Be prepared: Before the student's arrival, think about the projects you will assign the student and who would be best to supervise those projects. Many students arrive to find that they are without an assigned desk or workspace, a computer, password access, telephone access, office keys or entry codes, for a substantial period of time. All of this should be prepared before the student's arrival so the student can begin work right away.

Ensure attorney supervision: Students must have attorney or an individual otherwise qualified to supervise who are directly providing supervision and feedback. Although the student may work with non-lawyers for discrete aspects of the externship, an attorney or other qualified person must supervise the student's legal work. Supervisors must work on site in the same location as the student.

Schedule an orientation: Before the student arrives, schedule an orientation to acquaint the student with the office and other staff members. During the orientation, brief the student about the office protocols regarding such things as attendance, punctuality, security, safety emergency procedures, filing systems, routing phone calls, dress code, computer usage, and use of research databases such as Lexis/Nexis and Westlaw. (See the attached "Orientation Checklist" for guidance)

Assign only substantive legal matters: Students are required to be engaged in substantive legal work in order to receive academic credit for their externships. Although there are times, in an effort to meet a deadline, prepare for trial, etc. that everyone pitches in to assist with administrative matters, administrative work should NOT be part of the student's regularly scheduled duties. For example, students should not answer phones, photocopy, update databases, or schedule events on a regular basis. Students should never be assigned personal errands. Providing referrals to other agencies may provide some useful experience but should be a limited portion of the student's work.

Goals meeting: Within the first week, meet with the student to discuss the student's educational goals for the semester and your goals regarding work product to be completed. To the extent possible, the work that students receive should promote the stated goals. Students are also likely to have some personal goals that they may be hesitant to articulate that you may want to ask about, and to help coordinate. For example, consider asking your student if he or she is interested in producing a writing sample, networking with other attorneys in the field and/or discussing career strategies.

Set up scheduled meetings: It is important that you meet regularly with students individually to check in, review completed work, address any problems and discuss future assignments. Meetings should cover both substantive work and professional development when applicable. Scheduled meetings should take place a minimum of once a week.

Keep the lines of communication open: Many externs may be reluctant to ask questions or seek advice for fear of appearing incompetent. When you make every effort to create and maintain a comfortable and effective working relationship, the externs' educational experiences and their contributions to your office will be maximized. Create opportunities to observe legal practice. One of the most important aspects of a legal externship is the opportunity to observe attorneys engaged in the practice of law. Avoid having students spend large amounts of time in relative isolation in the library or other location. Students should be given every opportunity to meet with attorneys and to observe them in action by attending meetings, hearings and trials, settlement conferences, client interviews and preparation, appellate arguments, CLE events, and any other substantive activities involving the attorneys working in the office. In addition,

students should be allowed to see the application of their work to the final product. Ensure that students are included on the lists of those receiving office memoranda.

ASSIGNMENTS

Provide clarity in assignments: One of the best ways to ensure that students provide you with the product you want is to make sure that you have given them enough information at the commencement of the project. To maximize clarity, assignments should provide an adequate description of the work required, including the desired form for the finished product; provide a sufficient factual and contextual background; clearly explain the purpose or objectives of the assignment; provide a realistic timeframe for completion, which accounts for a student's level of experience; suggest available reference materials; and indicate whom the student should consult regarding questions along the way and how that person should be contacted.

Assign only substantive projects: Students are required to be engaged in substantive legal, legislative, and law policy work commensurate with an entry level attorney.

FEEDBACK

Our students want feedback: You may be reluctant to critique an extern's work but externs need, deserve, and actually want honest feedback. Without feedback, externs often assume that "no news is good news," and will continue to repeat the same errors unless they are given specific suggestions regarding how to improve. Lead with the positive – the goal is to highlight a particular success (be it a paragraph or an aspect of a presentation) so that it can be reinforced and replicated. Recognition of something that was well done can be a powerful motivator. Provide a limited number of suggestions for improvement at any given time.

Provide feedback early in the process: Externs should receive timely feedback from the assigning attorney on every completed assignment soon after the assignment is completed. If too much time passes, externs are likely to repeat mistakes.

Show your work: Occasionally, walk the student through your editing process so the student understands exactly what was changed and why. Check for understanding by posing a question or comment that allows the extern to show he/she can incorporate the suggestions going forward. At the conclusion of assignments, give the student a copy of the edited and/or final product.

Listen to the student: Externs are encouraged to engage with you in a collaborative supervision mode, not a passive one. We suggest that you encourage externs to assess their own work, reflect on their experiences, identify and discuss what they found challenging, and suggest their ideas as to how the work could be improved.

Feedback: You may be reluctant to critique an extern's work, but externs need, deserve, and actually *want* honest feedback. Without feedback, externs often assume that "no news is good news," and will continue to repeat the same errors unless they are given specific suggestions regarding how to improve.

We suggest that you encourage externs to assess their own work, to identify and discuss what they found challenging, and to suggest their ideas as to how the work could be improved. Don't underestimate the power of self-critique.

THE STUDENT'S WORK SCHEDULE

An essential element of the externship experience is establishing a sense of responsibility and commitment. To this end, students must have a regular schedule so that everyone knows when the student will be at work. As a supervising attorney who must plan assignments and still get your own work done, you are entitled to know when the student will be at your office. A set schedule also gives the student an opportunity to develop a sense of commitment and to view his work as a regular part of the office's functioning.

We ask you to be firm with students about their work schedule. Let the student know that tardiness or absences are unacceptable in the professional world. If a student is tardy or absent more than once, please discuss this with the student. If this behavior continues, report it to the Director of Externships so that we can talk with the student.

ISSUES

In the vast majority of cases, externships proceed smoothly, with both students and supervising attorneys reaping the benefits of the mentor/student relationship. However, there are occasional surprises. We ask that you contact us should any problems arise during the course of the externship which might require our input.

Examples of such issues might be the student's failure to appear timely, the student's inability to accomplish tasks assigned, or an uncomfortable relationship between the extern and yourself or other members of the office. When students raise such issues, we ask that they first contact you in order to discuss them.

We will intervene only where the student is unable to discuss them, for one reason or another, or where such discussion proves fruitless. Similarly, should you perceive any problems, we ask that you raise them with the student first. If they are not immediately rectified, we ask that you inform us as soon as possible. If they are issues relating to the students irresponsibility toward their internship or ethical issues, we ask that you contact us right away in addition to discussing them with the student.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND OTHER ETHICAL OBLIGATIONS

Law students may not have completed formal training in professional responsibility at the time they commence their externships. For that reason, supervisors should inform students of the placements' specific policies concerning confidentiality. We also encourage you to assist your extern to identify and navigate ethical issues that may arise during the student's fieldwork, such as protecting client confidences, upholding the duty of candor to third parties and tribunals, zealous advocacy, and avoiding conflicts of interest.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM LAW SCHOOL:

Classroom Component: Students engage in an online classroom component. Students are required to submit journals and engage in continuous contemporaneous reflection.

Communication: The Director of Externships and staff at the law school are here to support you. At the outset, the Director of Externships should be communicating with you about our goals and expectations for the student's experience. The Director of Externships is mindful of your need for confidentiality. The Director of Externships will be communicating with you on a regular basis about the status of the externship. The Director of Externships will also be communicating with you about assessing the student's performance and improving the overall experience for both current and future students.

Site Visit: At some point, the Director of Externships will conduct a "site visit" wherein she will visit the placement site and discuss the student's performance. The purpose of a site visit is to maintain open communication between the placement and the school and to model collaboration for the externs. We are eager to support you and are grateful for your work with our students; please do not hesitate to call upon us for assistance.

Assessment: Your assessment of the student and the student's experience is particularly important to us. Your honest feedback is appreciated. You are the person who will have hands on contact with the student. You can tell us not only what the student has accomplished but also how we improve the program.

Training: We are happy to provide training for you and your office on effective supervision techniques for CLE credit, to assist you with giving feedback, to brainstorm how to address a student who is underperforming, or any other concerns you might have about an extern or the program. We also maintain training materials on our externship website.

Facilitation: Each semester, field supervisors are contacted by the Director of Externships to assess the needs of the placement. The Career Development Office can post job postings, collect resumes, and even provide space for student interviews on campus. If you are interested in a student extern, please contact Amanda Bynum to start the next steps in the process. abynum@email.arizona.edu | 520-621-4212.

ORIENTATION CHECKLIST

On the extern's first day, please make sure to review the following:

1. The function of your agency, office, or organization;
2. The role of the student extern in the office's functioning;
3. The nature of the student's work;
4. Relevant office policies and chain-of-command;
5. Schedule for weekly meetings with the student;
6. The student's expectations for the externship;
7. The student's work schedule;
8. Layout of the office and library and introduction to others;
9. Showing the student his/her workspace; and
10. Explanation of the first assignment.