



Externship Program Handbook

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A. Introduction

The externship program provides students an academic opportunity to obtain practical legal experience while earning course credit. Our externships provide students a setting where, under close supervision of an attorney or judge and with a faculty mentor/guide, they contribute to the ongoing work of the externship site, giving students the chance to learn the law by being active participants in the legal process. We also seek to ensure that externs observe legal proceedings in which the office is engaged in order to receive the broadest possible exposure to the legal system. Students will also set learning goals for their externship, attend seminars, submit timesheets, and interact with faculty who will guide and assist them with learning from their experience.

Externships are regulated by the American Bar Association's (ABA's) Standards for Legal Education. The ABA Standard for externship experiences is Standard 304(c) at https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/legal_education_and_admissions_to_the_bar/standards/2022-2023/22-23-standard-ch3.pdf

Some externship sites will allow (or may require) students to obtain the [Ohio Legal Intern Certificate](#), which affords students the opportunity to appear and represent clients in court, under the supervision of a licensed attorney.

Cleveland State University College of Law currently has more than 40 externship placement locations, including government agencies at the federal, state, and local level; judicial chambers; non-profit and public interest organizations; and corporations. Most sites participate in our program in the fall, spring, and summer semesters, though some participate only in certain semesters.

The Office of Career Strategy (OCS) coordinates the externship application process in CareerConnect. Please read Section D, Application Procedures, in this handbook for full details and instructions for applying to externship sites.

B. Externship Program Rules and Requirements

1. Eligibility

To participate in the Externship Program, a student must be currently enrolled at Cleveland State University College of Law, have a GPA of 2.25 or better and have successfully completed the following courses: Civil Procedure, Contracts, Criminal Law, Legislation and Regulation, Property, Torts, and Legal Research, Writing, and Advocacy. Students must obtain approval of the supervising attorney at the site through the application and interview process. Some externships have additional requirements such as background investigations, additional required courses, or a different minimum GPA. This means that a full-time student may begin applying for a summer or fall externship in the spring of their 1L year, and a part-time student may begin applying for a summer or fall externship in the spring of their 2LP year. Students are permitted to apply to these externships in anticipation that they will successfully complete the required courses before they start their externship.

Students should meet with the Office of Career Strategy before applying to individual externship sites. It is best to begin academic planning very early to determine when and how you will complete your experiential learning requirements, including a possible externship, before you graduate.

2. Site Selection, Academic Rules, and Conflicts of Interest

To ensure that each student has an appropriate externship experience and to comply with ABA Standards and the Ohio Rules of Professional Conduct, the Clinical Faculty at the College of Law have set several requirements and restrictions. The requirements and restrictions are as follows:

- A. Students are permitted to receive compensation from existing pre-approved externship sites. Students must report to the clinical faculty and the Office of Career Strategy any compensation they receive from their externship sites.
- B. Students may **not** participate in an externship and a clinic during the same semester. See Academic Regulation 4.8.
- C. Students may not extern at the same organization more than once. Each externship must be a new, substantially different academic experience to earn academic credit. Very limited exceptions are available and only when the student clearly demonstrates that they will have a substantially different experience and the Clinical Faculty approve. For example, a student who externed in the Juvenile Division of the County Prosecutor's Office may, with faculty approval, extern in the Felony or Appellate Division. Students may enroll in more than one judicial externship, but each externship must be in a different court system. ***If you are planning to pursue an externship with the same organization more than once, you MUST connect with the Clinical Faculty for approval by emailing Professor Carole Heyward at c.heyward@csuohio.edu. You must do so by the deadlines below. The Clinical Faculty's denial is final and is not appealable to the Dean of the law school, the Associate Deans, the faculty, or any committee thereof.***

Spring Externships: December 15

Summer Externships: May 1

Fall Externships: July 25

- D. Students may not extern with their current employer.
- E. Students may not extern at a former employer or organization where they volunteered or served as a Fellow unless the student and the organization agree that the student will have substantially different experience and the Clinical Faculty approve. When determining whether the student will have a substantially different experience and deciding whether or not to approve the externship the Clinical Faculty may consider among other factors: 1) the resources of the organization; 2) whether the student will supervised by the same or a different person; and, 3) a written statement provided by the site and the student that explains how the experience will be different. ***You MUST connect with the Clinical Faculty for approval by emailing Professor Carole Heyward at c.heyward@csuohio.edu by the deadlines below. The Clinical Faculty's denial is final and is not appealable to the Dean of the law school, the Associate Deans, the faculty, or any committee thereof.***

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- F. Students may not enroll in more than one externship per semester.
- G. Students may only enroll in a total of 17 credits in externships and clinics throughout their law school career. See Academic Regulation 4.3.
- H. Students may not enroll in externships that will result in a conflict of interest. Students have an ongoing responsibility to report potential conflicts of interest to their externship supervisor, Clinical Faculty Advisor, and other relevant parties, such as the supervisor of their paid position, throughout their externship experience. **Students must not determine on their own whether there is a conflict of interest.** Conflicts of interest can include the following, but also may include many other situations:
 - 1. Simultaneous work for a public defender's or prosecutor's office and a judicial externship in the same court system;
 - 2. A judicial externship in a court if the student or a member of the student's immediate family is involved in a case pending before the court;
 - 3. Such other work or circumstances determined to constitute a conflict by the site or the Clinical Faculty. Examples of these types of conflicts include but are not limited to: 1) being supervised by a family member or close acquaintance; 2) externing at a placement owned or managed by a family member or close acquaintance; 3) agreeing to extern in return for future paid employment; and, 4) externing at a placement that is representing a party in a dispute with a family member or close acquaintance.
- I. Once students begin their externship, they are required to report any change of employment or other change in circumstance which might result in a potential conflict of interest to their site supervisor and their Clinical Faculty Advisor.
- J. **Externship placements at private law firms are not permitted.**

Students who do not adhere to the rules and requirements of the externship program may (1) be prohibited from participating in future externships, (2) not be granted academic credit, and (3) fail the externship course.

3. Credits

Students must complete 50 hours of fieldwork and academic work for each academic credit (see chart below). Each student should consult with the Externship Site to jointly determine how many hours of fieldwork will be available during a semester. Students are required to set a work schedule with their Site Supervisor. We suggest that students plan to schedule at least a five-hour long work day at their site.

Number of Credits	Total Work Hours	Suggested Hours Per Week – Summer Semester	Suggested Hours Per Week – Fall & Spring Semesters
3	150	21.5	10

4	200	28.5	14
5	250	36	17
6	300	43 ¹	20

4. Academic Requirements

After accepting an externship placement, students MUST notify the Office of Career Strategy to begin the process to enroll in the proper externship course. Notification must be provided through the Microsoft Form that is circulated to the student listserv and posted in the Announcements on CareerConnect.

Students are required to attend a mandatory orientation held by the Clinical Faculty at the beginning of the semester. Students will be notified of externship orientation dates by email by the Clinical Faculty. Students are also required to enter into a written agreement with their site supervisor and their Clinical Faculty Advisor that sets forth each person's obligations during the externship experience. Students are also required to submit weekly timesheets, complete written assignments, attend meetings with their Faculty Advisor and peers, and participate in a final group discussion about their externship experience.

You will not receive course credit for your externship experience unless you are simultaneously enrolled in the proper externship course. You must be sure you are enrolled in the course and it appears on your schedule before you begin work hours.

5. Grading

The externship course is graded on a Pass/Fail basis. The grade is based on several course requirements:

- a. Compliance with the rules and requirements of the externship program;
- b. Satisfactory completion of the requisite number of fieldwork hours;
- c. Satisfactory completion of timesheets and written assignments;
- d. Satisfactory participation in externship seminars and presentations;
- e. Receipt of Site Supervisor's evaluation of your work (which must be satisfactory); and
- f. Receipt of the student's evaluations of the externship and the course.

6. Requests for Withdrawal

Requests to withdraw after accepting a placement are not permitted. Because many of our sites engage in lengthy background checks, withdrawing after a site has accepted you as an extern may result in the site not having an extern that semester and may also prevent another student from externing at the site that semester.

¹ We suggest that students taking 6 credits during a summer semester plan on completing their work hours over 9 weeks versus the 7 week semester. Spreading the hours over 9 weeks would result in working 33.5 hours per week.

Once you accept an externship, you should let all other sites as well as any clinics where you have pending applications know that you are withdrawing your application.

C. Externship Placement Types

A complete listing of all currently approved externship placement sites may be accessed on the College of Law's website.

Students wishing to pursue an externship with an organization or judge not listed on the webpage will need to follow the instructions in Appendix A for requesting approval of an Independent Externship.

1. Judicial Externships

In judicial externships, externs are integrated into the work of the judge's chambers: writing bench memoranda, drafting opinions, researching issues during trials, observing settlement conferences and mediations. Students are encouraged to observe court proceedings, which may include trials, sentencing hearings or oral arguments.

2. Government, Public Interest, and General Counsel Externships

These externships are placements with public interest, governmental, non-profit or for-profit entities that provide opportunities for students to gain experience in a wide-ranging selection of practice areas and practice settings. During an externship, a student may have the opportunity to delve into substantive areas of law; investigate claims; research and write motions or briefs; draft contracts; participate in hearings; or observe trials, hearings, settlement conferences, or negotiations.

3. Independent Externships

We encourage students to pursue externships that relate closely to their professional goals. Frequently, this can be achieved through placement in an existing externship. From time to time, however, students seek a more particularized experience. We support students in their exploration of alternative placements by permitting students to request that an externship be completed at an Independent Externship site. The goals of the Independent Externship are to provide flexibility regarding the placement opportunities available for students while simultaneously maintaining compliance with the ABA requirements. We expect students to engage in work and receive supervision comparable to that of students in other externships. Please see Appendix A of this Handbook for full instructions on applying for an Independent Externship.

Remember that externships with private law firms are not permitted, even if the externship is an Independent Externship.

D. Application Procedures

1. Meet with the Office of Career Strategy to Develop a Plan.

Full-time first year students will begin talking with the Office of Career Strategy about their externship plan at the first initial meeting. Full-time first-year students should re-visit this question with the Office of Career Strategy in the spring semester of their first year and when you begin planning your course

schedule for the subsequent semesters. Part-time students interested in externships should plan to meet with Career Strategy to discuss the process during their second-year.

You must plan carefully for both the semester and the type of externship that you will pursue, aligned with the skills you need to develop and your career goals.

There is some flexibility as to when you might choose to complete an externship, but no student should leave the experiential requirement (six total credits) until their final semester.

It is important to know that externship application cycles happen early the semester prior to the semester in which you plan to do an externships.

The application processes are described below.

Important Note: Application materials must be appropriately drafted, include all requested items, and follow all instructions. Examples of application materials are provided in OCS checklists and should be followed.

There are specific timelines for externship applications for each semester. Students will also be notified of these application timelines each semester via email.

The application timelines are as follows:

- For Summer Term Externships:
 - Externships will be open for applications from February 20 until March 10
- For Fall Semester Externships:
 - Externships will be open for applications from April 10 until April 30
- For Spring Semester Externships:
 - Externships will be open for applications from September 20 until October 10

2. After You Apply.

When the externship application deadline passes, the Office of Career Strategy will provide each site with all applications received for their externship. Some externship sites will make offers based on application materials alone, and others will interview students first. **Calls or emails to set up an interview should be returned promptly by students within 24 hours**

Once you accept an externship offer, you must notify the OCS of your acceptance and for how many credit hours you would like to register and complete the Microsoft Form that is emailed to the student listserv to report your externship and receive permission to enroll in the externship course. Permission must be entered for you to add the externship course in CampusNet. **Students must complete this form and register for the Externship Seminar course no later than the following dates:**

Spring Externships: December 15

Summer Externships: May 1

Fall Externships: July 25

Any changes in the number of credit hours being registered for must also be made by the Add/Drop deadline for each academic term. Once the Add/Drop deadline has passed, changes to the number of

credit hours will only be permitted under exigent circumstances and must have the approval of both the Site Supervisor and the Faculty Advisor.

3. Application Process for Independent Externships

If you are interested in pursuing an Independent Externship, please contact the OCS prior to contacting the potential site in order to discuss the opportunity and review the process and procedure for independent externships.

Summary of Independent Externship Policies and Procedures:

- a. The student informs OCS of their interest in obtaining an independent externship.
- b. The student contacts the organization to determine whether a qualified supervisor is available to assign and mentor the student's work and comply with the externship program's policies and procedures.
- c. The student submits a written proposal detailing the externship to the Clinical Faculty (for academic year 2025-26 send this to Prof. Heyward according to the deadlines below. **A clinical faculty member may request a meeting with the student to discuss the proposal.**

Spring Externships: December 15

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- d. A member of the Clinical Faculty will contact the Site Supervisor at the organization to explain the requirements of our program and our policies and procedures.
- e. If the Clinical Faculty approve the student's written proposal, the student must follow the instructions for registration above.

See Appendix A for the policies and procedures governing Independent Externships.

E. Registering for an Externship

Students may not register for the externship course until the Office of Career Strategy has received confirmation from the student regarding acceptance and hours/credits requested. The student must complete the form provided by the OCS prior to obtain confirmation/permission to enroll. Once confirmation is received, the student will be sent an email from the OCS notifying the student that they are authorized to register for the Externship Course. The permissions are entered in batches by the admin team, but as long as you complete the form to report your externship before the deadlines below you will have a space in the externship course.

Spring Externships: December 15

Summer Externships: May 1

Fall Externships: July 25

F. Ohio Legal Intern Certificate

Students who have completed 30 credit hours may be eligible to obtain certification from the Ohio Supreme Court to represent, with certain restrictions and limitations, individuals in civil or criminal cases (including felony cases). The student must be “employed by or associated with a law school clinic, legal aid bureau, public defender's office, or other legal services organization that provides legal assistance primarily to financially needy individuals, or is responsible for handling civil cases or prosecuting criminal misdemeanor cases for the state of Ohio or a municipal corporation.”

Rule II of the Ohio Supreme Court Rules for the Government of the Bar of Ohio, Limited Practice of Law by a Legal Intern, specifies the eligibility requirements, application process, scope of representation, and other related matters.

For more information please review the full text of Rule II of the Ohio Supreme Court's Rules for the Governance of the Bar, which can be found at:

<https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/LegalResources/Rules/govbar/govbar.pdf#Rule2>

When applying for the Ohio Legal Intern Certificate, forms requiring the Dean's signature should be submitted to academic.services@law.csuohio.edu.

G. Evaluations

1. Student Performance Evaluations

The Supervising Attorney at each externship site must complete a student performance evaluation at the end of the semester. The survey is completed online via a link the Supervising Attorney will receive from the College of Law. Students will not be awarded a grade until the Site Supervisor's performance evaluation is completed and returned. Students are responsible for ensuring that a timely evaluation is forwarded from their Site Supervisor.

2. Student Site Evaluations

Student externs must complete two externship site placement evaluations. The first is a general evaluation of the externship experience, completed in CareerConnect, for the Office of Career Strategy. The second, completed in TWEN, is a more in-depth evaluation intended to provide feedback to both your faculty and Site Supervisors. Students will not be awarded a grade until both site placement evaluations are completed

3. Course Evaluations

Student externs must also complete an evaluation of the externship course.

Appendix A

Policies and Procedures for Independent Externships

I. Policy Statement

CSU|LAW has a long tradition of providing externship opportunities for its law students. For more than two decades, students have been placed with some of the leading government, judicial, corporate counsel, and non-profit legal offices in the region. These placements provide students with a unique opportunity to improve their writing, research and oral communication skills; to appreciate the significant ethical issues facing the profession; and to integrate what they learn in the classroom with the actual practice of law. For the externs to fully achieve these goals, and in order for the program to meet ABA/AALS accreditation standards, significant supervision is required by an attorney at the placement site (referred to as the “Supervising Attorney”) and the Faculty Advisor responsible for the externship program during the relevant term. Externships are further distinguished from other employment situations in that a student cannot receive compensation for the student’s services.

We encourage students to pursue externships that relate closely to their professional goals. Frequently, this can be achieved through placement in an existing externship. From time to time, however, students seek a more particularized experience. CSU|LAW supports students in their exploration of alternative placements by permitting students to identify independent externship placements. Students have secured independent externships at various sites.²

Independent externships are intended to provide flexibility regarding the placement opportunities available for students while simultaneously maintaining CSU|LAW high standards for our externship program. We expect students to have learning experiences that are similar to students at our established externship sites.

With those objectives in mind, we have adopted the procedures stated below to govern the approval and implementation of Independent Externships.

II. Procedures

A. Prerequisites:

1. Completion of the required core curriculum (29 total credits).
3. A cumulative GPA of 2.25 or above.
4. Approval from Clinical Faculty.
5. The Site executes a Memorandum of Understanding with CSU|LAW stating that it will comply with ABA Standard 304.

B. Procedures for obtaining approval of an Independent Externship:

² Most externship placements are in the Greater Cleveland metropolitan area or within reasonable driving distance of Cleveland. We will consider Independent Externship in a more remote location, on the condition that suitable arrangements can be made for participation in the Externship Seminar and appropriate supervision of the student’s work.

1. A student who has identified a particular area of law in which he or she would like to gain experience—for example, poverty law or civil liberties—should identify an organization that addresses that area of law.
2. The student informs the Office of Career Strategy of their interest in securing an independent externship.
2. The student contacts the organization to determine whether an attorney is available to assign and mentor the student's work and comply with the externship program's policies and procedures.
3. The student submits a written proposal to the Clinical Faculty by the relevant deadlines, if approved, will commence. The written proposal shall include the following information:
 - (a) a description of the organization;
 - (b) a description of the legal work the extern will do (e.g., client interviews, legal research, drafting documents or memos, court appearances, etc.);
 - (c) a description of the opportunities to observe attorneys in action that are available to the student such as attending meetings, observing court proceedings, listening to telephone calls between attorneys and clients, attending board meetings, and attending witness interviews.
 - (d) the tentative work schedule the extern has negotiated with the organization, including the days of the week and the hours on those days;
 - (e) an explanation of the educational benefits that the extern believes will result from the placement;
 - (f) the Supervising Attorney's name, position within the organization, address, e-mail address, and phone number;
 - (g) a statement that the student and Supervising Attorney have considered and discussed any anticipated conflicts of interest, impact on the attorney-client privilege between the organization and its clients, and other ethical concerns that the placement might raise; and
 - (h) any other information the student deems relevant to the proposal or specifically requested by the Clinical Faculty.
4. Upon receipt of the written proposal, a member of the Clinical Faculty will meet with the Site Supervisor to (a) explain how the Externship Program works, (b) determine if the proposed experience meets our requirements, and (c) request that the site execute the Memorandum of Understanding.

5. After a member of the Clinical Faculty meets with the Site Supervisor, the Clinical Faculty will approve or deny the proposal for an independent externship. **The Clinical Faculty's denial of a proposal is final and is not appealable to the Dean of the law school, the Associate Deans, the faculty, or any committee thereof.**

C. Procedures following approval of an Independent Externship:

After the independent externship is approved, the student must register for the independent externship course and comply with the externship program rules and requirements set forth in the Externship Program Handbook.