

Mitchell Hamline School of Law
Overview of Externships for Blended Learning & Other Part-time Students
For Field Sites Considering Externships

1. Introduction

Thank you for your interest in hosting a student extern from the Mitchell Hamline School of Law. Mitchell Hamline is proud to be the first ABA-approved law school in the country to offer a part-time, on-campus/online J.D. program (the Blended Learning program). The first-of-its-kind program features two interrelated elements: intensive in-person experiential learning and online coursework that allows Blended Learning students to study the law from anywhere in the world. We have created a unique externship program for our Blended Learning students and have recently opened that program to our fully in-person Part-time students.

We recognize that extern supervision takes time and effort, but we hope your experience as a site supervisor will also be enjoyable and rewarding. This set of guidelines is intended to provide information about externships for the Blended Learning and other Part-time students and assist you in working with our students.

2. What is an Externship?

An externship is a for-credit course where the student uses the knowledge and skills learned in the classroom and applies them in a real work setting. Students will work at a field site under the guidance of a site supervisor. Students will also be engaged in an online course taught by a faculty supervisor. Coursework will include readings and exercises to enhance students' fieldwork experiences, as well as opportunities for reflection on and discussions about fieldwork (consistent with confidentiality obligations).

The purpose of the externship is to give students substantial lawyering experience with opportunities for performance, feedback, and self-evaluation. Substantial lawyering experience is work reasonably similar to the experience of a lawyer advising or representing a client or engaging in other lawyering tasks under the supervision of a licensed attorney or an individual with a J.D. who is otherwise qualified to supervise. Students may earn credit for paid fieldwork that otherwise meets the requirements for an externship placement.

3. How many hours do students need in order to earn credit(s)?

For this course, students will need to work 90 hours total between work at the field site and work done for the course in order to earn two credits. We anticipate that about 18 hours of the 90-hour total will be spent on course work for the externship. That leaves about 72 hours of work spent at the field site during the spring semester. It is up to the individual discretion of the site supervisor and the student as to how those hours are distributed over the semester, but all hours should be completed by the end of the semester. Students will log all their hours through their student accounts at Mitchell Hamline.

In some instances, students may take an externship for three or four credits instead of two during the externship course. To earn three credits the student must complete a total of 135 hours, and for four credits the student must complete a total of 180 hours. Virtually all the additional hours over 90 must be completed at the field site.

4. What kind of work should the student do during their externship?

As noted above, the field activities must provide students with substantial lawyering experience including opportunities for performance, feedback, and self-evaluation. In addition, the field work should provide the student with opportunities to learn the values and responsibilities of the legal profession, develop the student's ability to assess their performance and level of competence, expose the student to a variety of activities, and involve the student as a direct participant, not merely as an observer.

Some examples of field activities include reviewing and drafting legal documents, drafting communications to internal and external parties; researching law; interviewing and counseling clients; negotiating, observing and participating in meetings; and providing advocacy in court proceedings.

Administrative work must be kept to a minimum.

5. What are the requirements and responsibilities of the site supervisor?

A field site supervisor needs to be identified at the placement site to serve as the primary contact for the student. The site supervisor must be a licensed attorney or an individual with a J.D. otherwise qualified to supervise the planned field activities.

The site supervisor will work with the student to identify learning goals for the externship and work with the faculty supervisor and student to develop a written education agreement that (a) memorializes the student's learning goals, (b) describes in specific terms the planned substantial lawyering experience and opportunities for performance, feedback, and self-evaluation, and (c) sets out the respective roles of the faculty and field supervisors in supervising the student and assuring the educational quality of the experience for the student.

The site supervisor will meet regularly with the student throughout the externship to discuss and assess the student's field activities, assignments, and progress toward meeting learning goals. The site supervisor will also provide feedback to the faculty supervisor about the student's performance as requested by the faculty supervisor during and after completion of the student's field work. If the student is being compensated for externship fieldwork, there must be a mid-semester meeting among the student, faculty supervisor and site supervisor, which may be held using video conferencing technology.

6. What support will Mitchell Hamline provide to the student and field supervisor?

Mitchell Hamline will provide an education agreement template to facilitate and guide development of the education agreement to be signed by the field site supervisor, faculty supervisor, and student. Mitchell Hamline will provide a means for students to record externship hours and will report progress on hours to the student. Mitchell Hamline personnel, such as the faculty supervisor or Externship Director, will initiate regular contact with the field supervisor to assure the educational quality of the externship and respond to any questions or concerns the field supervisor may have. The faculty supervisor, staff members from Mitchell Hamline's Career & Professional Development Office and Mitchell Hamline's Externship Director are available as resources to the site supervisor and student throughout the externship.