Government and Nonprofit Externship Program
Overview

Through participation in Externship Programs, students can earn academic credit working with nonprofit organizations and government agencies. Field placements run the gamut from working for the Harris County District Attorney’s Office to working for the Museum of Fine Arts/Houston.

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THE BENEFITS OF BEING AN EXTERN

What is the benefit of an externship?

**Perspective**
Although you are taught objective legal argument in law school, the primary thrust is to train you as an advocate. The largest benefit of an externship is for students to see advocacy in action.

**Exposure**
Working as an extern allows you to view the documents and observe hearings on a large number and variety of legal actions.

**Résumé Value**
Legal employers respond favorably to externships. Having externship experience on your résumé boosts your marketability.

**Networking**
Externs often have opportunities to network with a variety of legal professionals.

WHEN AND WHERE TO APPLY FOR AN EXTERNSHIP PLACEMENT

When should I apply for an externship?

Students must have their externship secured before applying for academic credit. As a general rule:

- For fall externships* - send out your placement applications by June 15.
- For spring externships* - send out your placement applications by November 1.
- For summer externships - send out your placement applications by February 15.

Different organizations have different deadlines. If you miss these dates, check with the organization to see if they are still accepting applications.

(*Note: If a student does not seek/receive an externship in the summer, he/she should consider doing one in the fall and/or spring semesters. Many placements take externs year-round, and the positions in fall and spring are less competitive than they are in the summer.)

What organizations should I consider?

First, determine the type of experience and exposure you want. To assist you with this, you have several options: (1) visit with Externship Program Director, Prof. Kristina Van Arsdel, to discuss which externship opportunities would advance your particular career goals, and/or (2) visit with your Career Development Office advisor about organizations which fit these career goals.
(Note that the Career Development Office maintains binders containing evaluations completed by former externs in which students discuss the particulars of their externship experiences. These evaluations are a valuable tool for students in determining which organizations might be of most interest to them.)

To make an appointment with Prof. Kristina Van Arsdel, email her at kgvanars@central.uh.edu.

To make an appointment with your CDO advisor, visit the UHLC Students Appointment page: https://booknow.appointment-plus.com/jy5psh8/10.

**May I work at the same placement for credit for more than one semester?**

No. The goal is for students to have differing work experiences should they participate in a second externship. As a result, students may not receive credit for any placement for which they have previously worked, whether for credit, compensation, or on a volunteer basis.

**Externship placement resources**

For a list of frequent local placement options and their requirements, please see: http://www.law.uh.edu/externship/.

Other placement options can be found on the Symplicity website: https://law-uh-csm.symplicity.com/index.php/pid773916?

**What if the placement I am interested in is not on your resource list?**

If you are interested in a placement that is not on the list, please contact Professor Kristina Van Arsdel at kgvanars@central.uh.edu to ensure the placement meets the Law Center’s requirements for academic credit.

**HOW TO APPLY FOR A PLACEMENT**

**How do I obtain a government or nonprofit externship?**

Students apply directly to the nonprofit organization or government agency for their externships. You should check with the placement for specific application requirements, but most placements will require at least a cover letter and résumé.

**What will the interview be like?**

Depending on the organization, you may interview with one or several attorneys. No matter who interviews you, always display respect toward the staff and be sure to conduct research on the organization prior to the interview.
What should I wear to an interview?

Always wear formal business attire when interviewing. The key is to dress conservatively. This includes dark suits, white shirts, and conservative ties for men, and dark suits, collared shirts, and pantyhose for women.

APPLYING TO THE UHLC GOVERNMENT AND NONPROFIT EXTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Through participation in Externship Programs, students can earn academic credit working with nonprofit organizations and government agencies.

Are placements at all government and nonprofit agencies eligible for academic credit?

No. Verify with Professor Van Arsdel that your placement meets the guidelines for academic credit. For a list of guidelines for seeking academic credit through the Externship Program, visit http://law.uh.edu/externship/Guidelines-for-seeking-academic-credit.asp.

I tried to enroll through PeopleSoft but could not find the course. How do I enroll?

Students cannot enroll themselves in the externship courses; rather, they must apply through the Externship Program’s online application found in the Externship webpage. Once your application is reviewed and accepted by the Externship Program coordinator, she will request your enrollment to the externship course with Student Services. You will be copied on this email so you know your enrollment is in the works. If you have any questions regarding your enrollment status, contact Professor Van Arsdel at kghanars@central.uh.edu.

When can I apply to the Externship Program?

Applications for the Externship Programs are available year-round. The Government and Nonprofit Externship Program application is available online: https://www.law.uh.edu/externship/

Do I have to attend the Externship Orientation?

All accepted first-time externship students will meet for a mandatory orientation of roughly one hour to review the nuts and bolts of the courses’ requirements, discuss matters of ethics and professionalism, and address any initial student concerns/questions. The date, time, and location of the orientation will be made available to students in advance via email. (Students are on notice to check their UH email regularly so as not to miss such announcements.)
WHAT TO EXPECT AS AN EXTERN

What do externs do?

It depends on the organization for which you extern. Most students can expect to do some legal research and writing, observe court proceedings, and attend meetings with the supervising attorney. Some externs may also be involved in interviewing and counseling victims or clients.

How many credits may I earn for working at my placement?

For externships during the fall, spring, or entire summer (i.e., 10 weeks minimum), students may select to earn 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6 credit hours.

For externships during abbreviated summer sessions (i.e., 5-week minimum), students may select to earn either 2 or 3 credit hours.

(Note: all externship credits count towards the 12 hour, non-substantive credit cap.)

How many hours must I work at my placement?

You are responsible for working out your schedule (number of hours per day, number of days per week, number of weeks per semester) with your supervisor.

How many working hours must I work for each credit hour?

Each credit hour requires 60 on-the-job hours. In other words, multiply your requested hours by 60, and that will give you the total minimum number of hours you will need to work at your placement over the semester. (For example, for 3 credits, you must work a minimum of 180 hours.)

What types of activities count towards the required minimum number of hours?

- Time actually working* (writing, observing, etc.)
- Time while at placement, but awaiting assignment (within reason)
- Orientations provided by your placement
- Any outside research assigned by supervisor/judge
- Luncheons and other events ONLY if attended with on-site supervising attorneys and/or a judge

(*Note: Students should be performing substantive legal work, and not be used primarily for secretarial or administrative work. Contact your faculty instructor immediately if you have a problem with this at your placement.)
What types of activities do not count towards the required minimum number of hours?

- Time spent completing your time log or journaling
- Lunch on your own or with other interns (without a supervising attorney or judge along with you)
- Drive time/parking time
- Any days off due to government shutdowns
- Days off due to illness or holidays (government holidays included)

I would like to change the number of credit hours I initially enrolled in for my placement. Can I do that?

Following your official program enrollment, should you desire to switch the initial number of credit hours enrolled for the placement, you have until the last official day to add a class for that semester (Check the official academic calendar for that date: http://www.law.uh.edu/calendar/academic-calendar.asp)

How do I keep track of the hours I work during my placement?

All students must keep track of their daily and weekly hours in a time log, which should look similar to the template you will receive by email before school starts (or at the orientation). Students must scan/email their faculty instructor their time log, along with weekly or bimonthly journal entries (see section “Assignments for receiving academic credit” below for details). Your final time log, which shows your total hours and is signed by your supervisor, may be scanned/ emailed or sent to your faculty instructor via regular U.S. mail. (Remember, only the final, cumulative time sheet must be signed by your supervisor.)

What happens if I do not complete my hours by the end of the semester?

Students should think thoughtfully and carefully when determining the number of credits in which they choose to enroll in for a particular externship. Unlike in years past, now students who do not complete ALL their required working hours during the semester in which they are enrolled in an externship will no longer be permitted to take an “Incomplete,” and have up to a year to complete those hours. Students must now COMPLETE ALL THEIR REQUIRED NUMBER OF HOURS, along with all other assigned coursework, no later than the official last day of classes for the semester.
ASSIGNMENTS FOR RECEIVING ACADEMIC CREDIT

In addition to submitting your time logs to your externship faculty instructor, you must also complete the following assignments in order to receive academic credit for participating in the Externship Program:

Required Meetings
At the midpoint* and end of the externship, a student will have a one-on-one meeting with his/her faculty instructor to discuss the student’s progress and any concerns he/she might have at his/her placement. These meetings will be scheduled individually in consultation with the instructor. Conferences for students working outside of the Houston area will be held telephonically or via Skype. For local students, your assigned instructor will inform you whether she will meet with you personally, telephonically or via Skype.

(*Note: Externships occurring over an abbreviated summer session will not have a midpoint meeting, just an end-of-term meeting.)

Journaling
The purpose of journaling is to assist you in reflecting on what you are learning, what has surprised you about your placement, different lawyering/judging styles you witness, etc. Your faculty instructor will inform you if she requires writings on specific topics. Failure to submit journal entries will result in you not receiving credit. Details about this requirement will be covered during orientation.

Evaluations
Students must complete a placement evaluation at the end of the semester (which will not be shared with the placement) which is meant to assist future student externs when deciding where they might wish to apply. You may choose to remain anonymous on this form.

Your instructor will email your supervisors asking them to complete a brief online evaluation of your performance. Supervisors are encouraged to review their evaluation with you.

How will I be graded?

You can expect to receive a passing grade for your Externship if you complete your required number of hours and fulfill the other requirements listed here and in the course syllabus. If you do not do all of these things, you will not pass and receive credit for your externship.

STILL FEEL LIKE YOU NEED MORE GUIDANCE OR INFORMATION?
Please email Bill Powers (wapowers@Central.UH.EDU), Director of Internship & Externship Programs, for more information about the Programs.

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