Policy & Procedures Handbook
Externship Program

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INTRODUCTION

This handbook provides students with an overview of the policies and procedures relevant to the Whittier Law School (WLS) Externship Program. An externship is a law-related placement outside WLS, where students perform and observe legal work under the guidance of a supervising attorney or judge and earn academic credit. Externships provide practical training that complements classroom study in a wide range of practice settings, including government agencies, the courts, public interest organizations, private firms and companies. Externs gain valuable “real world” experience and exposure to diverse legal environments.

The WLS Externship Program has several educational goals for students, including: 1) training students in lawyering skills; 2) acquiring insight into the workings of various aspects of the legal system and profession; 3) encouraging a sense of professional responsibility; 4) developing students’ abilities to reflect on and learn from their experience; and 5) facilitating students’ career planning.

I. EXTERNSHIP PROGRAM RULES AND REQUIREMENTS

Student Eligibility

Students who have completed one academic year of study; at least nineteen (19) units, and are in good academic standing, are eligible to enroll in an externship. Students cannot participate if they are on Academic Notice or Probation unless an exception has been made by the Academic Standards Committee. Certain types of externship placements, including placements with private firms, carry additional prerequisites (as set forth in the WLS Academic Rules and Regulations, this Handbook, and placements’ own requirements).

Externship Placement Requirements

• Students Find Placements. Students are responsible for securing their own externship placement (see infra Sec. II - How to Find an Externship). Externship opportunities are advertised through both Fall and Spring On-Campus Recruitment (OCR), as well as the Symplicity Job Board. The Office of Career and Professional Development (CPD) will inform students, via e-mail, of OCR application instructions and deadlines. OCR application materials are submitted via Symplicity and the CPD or the employer will contact the student directly if he/she is selected for an interview. If a student accepts an externship offer, the student will arrange with the placement the appropriate schedule and number of hours to be worked during the semester.

• Externship Approval. All externships must be approved by the Externship Department prior to registration. Students must comply with WLS externship application deadlines (see infra Sec. III - Externship Approval and Registration Procedures).

• Enrollment Limits. Enrollment in the Externship Program may be limited in order to ensure appropriate faculty supervision and a high-quality educational experience.
• **Appropriate Placements.** Students may seek externship placements with law firms, companies and organizations. A list of approved placements is in available in the Externship Department office.

NOTE: Externship placements not on the approved employer list will only be considered if they are presented to the Externship Department for approval two weeks prior to the start of the semester.

• **Supervision.** All externs must be supervised by an on-site attorney with at least two years of practice experience.

• **Substantive Work.** Externships must involve legal or law-related work, such as legal services, advocacy, or public policy.

• **No Volunteering at For-Profit Companies.** Federal Wage and Hours law prohibits students from volunteering at for-profit companies, like law firms and in-house counsel departments. Students must either receive school credit or pay. For additional information, visit Wage and Hour Division Website: [http://www.wagehour.dol.gov](http://www.wagehour.dol.gov) and/or call their toll-free information and helpline, at 1-866-4USWAGE 1-866-487-9243.

• **Compensation.** Students may earn six units in paid externships, meaning externships for which the student is also receiving monetary compensation. A student may obtain more than six units for a paid externship, but only with permission from the Externship Department. In considering the request, an Externship Director will review the entire experience of the student at the externship and be satisfied that it has been a valuable placement that provides substantial lawyering experience.

• **Work Station.** Students must work in the office and NOT off-site. A work station consists of a desk, chair, telephone, and a computer with internet access.

• **Semester Time-Frame.** The timing of externships must conform to WLS academic semesters - Fall, Spring or Summer. Externs must begin work at their placements during the first week of the relevant semester’s classes and work throughout the entire semester. Students may not “front-end” or “back-end” their hours, or work before or after the semester.

• **Certified Student Status.** Students who have completed, or are currently enrolled in, Civil Procedure and Evidence may apply to the California State Bar Practical Training of Law Students Program, which certifies students to provide legal services, such as participating in hearings and trials, under the supervision of an attorney. Some externship placements require or recommend that students become certified. Application materials for Certified Status are available on the State Bar website([http://www.calbar.ca.gov/Admissions/Special-Admissions/Practical-Training-of-Law-Students](http://www.calbar.ca.gov/Admissions/Special-Admissions/Practical-Training-of-Law-Students)). The “Declaration by Dean of Law School Form” should be submitted to the Registrar’s Office. It takes up to three weeks for the State Bar to approve an application after receipt of a complete packet.
Externship Units and Course Requirements

- **Externship Credit Calculation.** Students are required to work fifty-six hours at the externship site for each unit of externship credit earned. For example, a student earning 2 units must work 112 hours.

- **Maximum and Minimum Externship Units.** A maximum of 10 units of externship academic credit may be applied toward graduation. The minimum credit that is approved for most externship placements is two. Students must work a minimum of 8-12 hours per week. Students must work the entire semester and cannot “front-end” hours to satisfy their hours requirement before the semester ends.

Externship Requirements and Grades

- Externships are graded on a Credit/No Credit basis.
- Initial Externship students are required to enroll in the one unit Learning From Practice course. This course must be taken concurrently with the Externship.
- All students will be required to submit, prior to starting the Externship, a Site Supervisor, Student Extern and Externship Director Agreement.
- All students are to maintain a log of their hours for their placement work and must submit reflective journals, memos, and writing samples. At the conclusion of the externship, students complete an evaluation of their externship site and supervisor, and ensure that their supervisor submits an evaluation of the student’s work.
- All students must complete the required hours at their placement and perform their field placement work in a satisfactory manner.

Center/Certificate Credit for Externships

WLS specialization programs (international and comparative law, intellectual property, criminal law, and children’s rights) have their own limits on the number of externship units that may be applied toward the particular concentration. Please consult the relevant program rules for details. In order to earn specialization credit, externship work must be primarily or exclusively in the substantive area of the applicable program. A student’s request for Certificate/Center credit may be re-evaluated at the conclusion of the externship.

II. HOW TO FIND AN EXTERNSHIP

Plan in Advance

Begin the process of researching and applying for externships *at least one semester before* you plan to extern. Many externship placements, particularly for the summer, have early application deadlines and fill their slots well in advance.
Define Objectives

The first step in externship research is to think about and prioritize individual goals. Do you want to explore a new area of law practice? Add to existing strengths or experience in a substantive area? Develop a particular set of lawyering skills? Pursue experience that may facilitate finding a job?

Specific Experiences

Consider what types of experiences you would like to have during the externship. Are you interested in research/writing, client contact/interviewing, courtroom experience, policy analysis, fact investigation or negotiation? You should look for externship placements, or divisions within a particular entity, which provide the kind of work you are seeking.

Research Placements

The Externship Department will have the list of private firms, companies, courts, government entities, and organizations which have expressed an interest in participating in, and have been approved by, the Externship Department. Contact the office for a list of these placements.

Internet. The Internet has a wealth of information on legal employers. Many organizations’ websites have weblinks that lead to other related entities. Be sure to research the firm you are applying to so that you will be familiar with the type of work it does!

Individual Appointments

The Externship Directors are available to discuss your particular externship objectives and provide guidance. In order to ensure a productive counseling session, you should first read the Externship Policy & Procedures Handbook and the Registration Bulletin section on externships, conduct research to develop ideas of placements that are of interest, and prepare a resume and cover letter.

Applying for Externships

Applicants should fine-tune their resume and cover letters. The CPD is available to help with resume and cover letter preparation and mock interviews. Learn about the work of each externship site to which you are applying and tailor your application accordingly. Check the application procedures and requirements of each entity and follow them. If you have not heard back within a week or two of sending your materials, follow up with a phone call. While some externship placements require students to apply directly to the organization, others participate in OCR.
III. EXTERNSHIP APPROVAL AND REGISTRATION PROCEDURES

Externship Application Forms

Once a student has discussed the proposed externship placement with one of the Externship Program Directors and has received an offer from a site, he/she must complete and submit to the Externship Department:

- Externship Application Form, which is available on-line under the link for the Registrar’s Office – FORMS or in the Externship Office; and

- A Site Supervisor, Student Extern and Externship Director Agreement.

Externship Application Deadlines

Students must secure an externship offer and submit a fully completed Externship Application Form and a Site Supervisor, Student Extern and Externship Director Agreement to the Externship Department by the first day of class.

Externship Application Approval and Registration

Students should allow up to one week for approval of their Externship Application Form. Students will be contacted via their Whittier Poets email account if there are questions or problems with their application. Once the externship placement is approved, the Registrar will enroll students in the appropriate Externship and Learning From Practice course.

No Drop

If a student is selected for an externship and accepts the offer, he/she will not be able to withdraw the commitment except for compelling reasons. To obtain permission for withdrawal, the student must immediately, upon the knowledge of such compelling reasons, petition in writing to the Externship Department at mbisbee@law.whittier.edu prior to the commencement of the externship. The petition must specify the compelling reasons for withdrawal. Failure to petition and receive approval (which is given only in extraordinary circumstances) will result in a failing grade for the externship and may also jeopardize the student's chances of being considered for a future externship placement. Under no circumstances will a student be allowed to withdraw an acceptance to go to another placement.