

**MICHIGAN STATE**  
**UNIVERSITY**  
**COLLEGE OF LAW**

**EXTERNSHIP HANDBOOK**

2023-24 Academic Year

For Site Supervisors, Supervising Attorneys, and Student Externs



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## I. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES OF THE EXTERNSHIP PROGRAM

The Michigan State University College of Law Externship Program provides law students with a stimulating and practical educational experience. Externship Sites offer hands-on opportunities to observe the legal and judicial systems and engage in relevant legal work supervised by practicing attorneys or judges. The general educational outcomes of the program include: (a) developing professional skills, values, judgment, and identity; (b) learning about professionalism, the practice of law, and the legal system; and (c) becoming reflective practitioners with the capacity for self-directed professional identity formation.

## II. GOVERNING RULES

MSU Law's Externship Program is governed by (1) [the American Bar Association Standards and Rules of Procedure for Approval of Law Schools Standard 304](#) and (2) [MSU Law's Externship Handbook](#).

Please direct any questions to the Externship Director at [law.extern@law.msu.edu](mailto:law.extern@law.msu.edu).

## III. EXTERNSHIP ELIGIBILITY & CREDIT ALLOCATION

### A. Externship Site Eligibility:

1. MSU Law permits externships with the judiciary, non-profit organizations, governmental entities, corporations, and select law firms. Externships at for-profit locations may be limited to 3-credit placements.
2. An externship site must comply with all MSU Law Externship Program requirements detailed in the MSU Law Externship Handbook, and a site supervisor must sign the Externship Agreement before an externship site will be approved.
3. A supervising attorney must provide the student with direct supervision and timely, specific feedback. The feedback should constructively assess the student's lawyering skills, and the supervising attorney should advise the student on their strengths and areas of improvement.
4. If appropriate, an externship site must provide the student with the resources needed to complete assignments, including access to system networks. If the placement includes in-person activities over a sustained period, an externship site must secure a designated workspace for the student.
5. An externship site is responsible for ensuring that its labor and employment practices comply with state, local, and federal laws related to the externship, including all health and safety guidelines.
6. An externship may be paid or unpaid. Paid externships may be limited to 3 credits. MSU Law is not responsible for monitoring any compensation provided, and any issue regarding compensation is solely between the externship site and the student.
7. Students may not receive academic credit at an externship site where a relative or close family friend would serve as the supervising attorney or have authority over the supervising attorney.

B. Student Eligibility:

1. Students must have completed first-year courses and be in good academic standing (minimum GPA 2.0) to participate in an externship.
2. Students must comply with all MSU Law Externship Program requirements detailed in the MSU Law Externship Handbook and Externship Seminar syllabus.
3. Students must meet all Externship Program deadlines detailed in CASE. Requests for extensions must be made in writing before the deadline. Students should email extension requests to [law.extern@law.msu.edu](mailto:law.extern@law.msu.edu).
4. Students must also comply with the application deadlines of the proposed externship locations.
5. Students must meet all deadlines detailed in the Externship Seminar course syllabus.
6. Students completing an externship for the first time must complete an Externship Orientation session.
7. Students considering a Talsky Center Externship must satisfy additional criteria set by the Director of the Talsky Center for Human Rights of Women and Children.

C. Credit Allocation:

1. To receive externship course credit, students must work approximately 10 hours per week over the 14-week fall/spring semester and approximately 20 hours per week over 7 weeks in the summer term. Generally, students cannot receive externship credit even if they complete the hours in fewer weeks. Students must continue working until they satisfy the 14-week or 7-week requirement.
2. Credit is allocated based on the number of hours a student works during the semester. A 3-credit externship requires 135 hours of work, a 6-credit externship requires 270 hours, and a 9-credit externship requires 405 hours. Externships are graded pass/fail. Students may not complete 9-credit externships during the summer term. Summer externships are billed at a per credit hour rate. Students may not complete more than 9 externship credits.
3. Talsky Center Externships are generally 9-credit externships. Requests for all other 9-credit placements will only be approved for exceptional circumstances. Students requesting a 9-credit placement must complete the 9-credit Request Approval Form located in CASE. Students should email the form to [law.extern@law.msu.edu](mailto:law.extern@law.msu.edu) before the externship application deadline. The request must be approved in writing by the Externship Director.
4. For the 2023-24 academic year, students may complete fully remote externships only with the advance approval of the Externship Director.
5. The externship hours requirement does not include travel time to the externship site for in-person externship activities and time spent in the Externship Seminar. Training programs with the externship site are included in the externship hours requirement.
6. Students may not receive credit for work completed at an externship site where the student previously worked unless the proposed externship experience is substantially different than the work performed before. Even when this criterion is demonstrated, repeat work experiences may still not be permitted. Students are encouraged to use externships to pursue different lawyering experiences.

7. Students pursuing a study abroad program and an externship in the same semester must receive written permission from the Externship Director. Students should email requests to [law.extern@law.msu.edu](mailto:law.extern@law.msu.edu) in advance of the externship application deadline. The request must be approved in writing by the Externship Director.

8. Students may not participate in a clinic and an externship in the same semester.

The Externship Director will determine if these criteria are met and approve placements.

#### IV. PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

Externship placements provide students with substantial lawyering experience. A substantial lawyering experience offers students intentional opportunities to learn what advising or representing a client entails. Students must perform legal tasks such as research, analysis, investigation, counseling, or legal writing. Students may not receive academic credit for positions that consist primarily of clerical activities. Non-legal clerical or other tasks should be kept to a minimum.

The opportunity to discuss legal issues of concern in the externship with attorneys or judges at the placement and an opportunity to observe the inner workings of the legal system meaningfully is a critical component of the externship experience. Observing court proceedings or other legal functions is appropriate but should not form the basis for the externship.

#### V. EXTERNSHIP SUPERVISION

The experience must include direct supervision by a supervising attorney and timely, specific feedback on the student's performance. Students should be introduced to the work and role of the externship office, the working environment, available support resources, and the attorney's or judge's staff with whom the student will work.

A meaningful academic experience requires adequate and appropriate direction in work assignments, including a sufficiently detailed description of the problem assigned, the timeframe in which the student should complete the work, access to the necessary resources, and contact with the supervising attorney or judge for further guidance.

#### VI. EVALUATION OF EXTERNSHIP AND PLACEMENT

A. Supervising Attorney: During the semester, students should receive a periodic review of their performance in the program. Supervising attorneys will be expected to complete a mid-semester evaluation. After the externship period, supervising attorneys are responsible for providing a final evaluation of the student's work to the Law School. Supervising attorneys are encouraged to share and discuss the evaluations with the student.

B. Student Extern: Students must complete a mid-semester report of the placement for submission to the Law School and share the report with the supervising attorney and seminar professor. After the externship concludes, students are responsible for providing a final evaluation of the externship site to the Law School.

## VII. EXTERNSHIP SEMINAR

All externships include a seminar component or other faculty-guided reflection. This component assists students in identifying future employment goals, plans, and opportunities. Students must complete all course requirements, which may include reflective writing assignments and discussions with other students in the Externship Program and timely hour tracking in CASE. The requirements are detailed in the course syllabus. The seminar will appear on a student's transcript. These seminars provide a foundation upon which students can begin their engagement with legal practice and promote a baseline skill level to build upon during their externship. They focus on professional identity formation. Additionally, through a final evaluation submitted to the Externship Director and Seminar Professor, the site supervisor evaluates the student's acquisition of MSU Law's learning outcomes:

- a. Knowledge and understanding of substantive and procedural law;
- b. Competence in legal analysis and reasoning, legal research, problem-solving, and written and oral communication in the legal context;
- c. Exercise of proper professional and ethical responsibilities to clients and the legal system; and
- d. Other professional skills needed for competent and ethical participation as a member of the legal profession.

## VIII. STUDENT-PROPOSED EXTERNSHIPS

In addition to opportunities posted in CASE under Recent Externship Placements, students may propose a new externship placement. After submission of the New Opportunity Form in CASE, provided that the proposed site location meets with the preliminary approval of the Externship Director, students will be directed to submit an executed Externship Agreement to the Director for review for final approval. Students are responsible for sending the Externship Agreement to the proposed externship site for execution and submission to the Career Services Office. Submission deadlines are posted in CASE. Students must also comply with the application deadlines of the proposed externship locations. If the Student-Proposed Externship is approved, the student must comply with all Externship Program requirements.