Overview

George Mason’s Supervised Externship – Virginia Practice program presents students with the opportunity to take what they have learned in the classroom and utilize it in real litigation settings under the supervision of an attorney or a judge. Enrollment in the program is limited each semester and students are placed with specific externship opportunities. Students may be placed in a Public Defender, Commonwealth’s Attorney, County Attorney, Legal Aid or private practitioner’s office. Students may also be placed in judges’ chambers throughout Northern Virginia. (Placement details at p. 4.)

Students must work a minimum of 180 hours (three credits) for the Supervised Externship – Virginia Practice program. During the semester of the externship, students enrolled for the Fall or Spring semester must attend two classroom tutorials; Summer semester students must attend one classroom tutorial.

Students are free to structure their hours in consultation with their site supervisor. Most site supervisors want students available for meaningful blocks of time. As a guideline: in the Fall or Spring program, students must work an average of 13 hours a week for 14 weeks to earn three credits for field work. In the Summer program, many students elect to work full-time for several weeks (though they may earn no more than three credits for their work). Other students may work part-time at the externship while working at another job or unpaid opportunity. Regardless of how the hours are structured, students are required to maintain accurate time sheets, which must be verified and turned in to the professor before credit will be awarded.

Educational Objectives of the Supervised Externship – Virginia Practice Program

The Supervised Externship - Virginia Practice program is designed to meet the objectives of the American Bar Association’s Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar for professional skills training, live-client or other real life experiences, and study outside of the classroom. The teaching of “professional skills” involves
teaching and evaluating law student performance on real cases or problems, with the goal of mastering basic lawyering skills, professional responsibility, substantive and procedural law and the theory of legal practice.

**Student Requirements & Responsibilities**

1. Pursuant to ABA Standards, students must have completed 28 credit hours before they can participate in the program.

2. No compensation may be received for work performed during the program.

3. Applications for the program will be solicited either prior to or shortly after the opening of each semester’s registration period. CAAS will notify students, via the student listservs, of the date when applications may begin to be submitted. Students will use the law school’s Symplicity system to submit application materials. Application materials include:
   a. A cover letter setting out
      i. the office or offices in which you would like to work and why (see p. 4);
      ii. a brief synopsis of your legal interests and background;
      iii. whether you have taken Trial Advocacy, Evidence, and/or Criminal Procedure; and
      iv. the days you anticipate you will be able to work at the externship.
   b. Resume.
   c. Unofficial law school transcript.
   d. Writing sample.

   Applications will be considered as received and interviews scheduled as part of the selection process. Students will be informed whether they are accepted into the program shortly after the interview. As space is limited students are encouraged to submit their application materials promptly once notified that applications are being collected.

4. After acceptance into the program, students must submit a signed course certification form agreeing to the terms of the externship. (p. 5)

5. Each student must have a mid-semester consultation with the professor to discuss the externship and work being accomplished.

6. Each student must attend the set number of tutorials required by the Fall/Spring or Summer program. The Fall/Spring program requires students to attend two tutorials. The Summer program requires students to attend one tutorial.

7. At the end of the externship, students must submit to Ilissa Belanger a
   a. time sheet, approved by their supervisor, showing the hours worked (see p. 6);
   b. sample of their written work product of any length (with the supervising attorney’s permission; redactions are acceptable to preserve confidentiality);
c. written summary of the legal skills enhancement resulting from their field experience. The summary should be 2-3 pages in length and must include a description of:
   i. the work accomplished in the program;
   ii. the skills developed through the program;
   iii. the extent and nature of the student’s interaction with and feedback from supervisors and other attorneys;
   iv. any recommendations to future students interested in the same or a similar opportunity.

8. Students must ensure that their site supervisor submits a timely evaluation (p. 7) by the end of the semester.

   An “incomplete” will remain on a student’s transcript until all of the above requirements have been met and the documents reviewed by the professor.

NOTE: Students shall be listed in an externship directory so that future externship participants can contact them and speak with them about their experience. Students will be listed with their name, placement, and GMU email address in this directory. Students wishing to “opt-out” of this directory must send an email to lawcareer@gmu.edu indicating that they do not wish to be listed.

**Supervisor Commitment & Responsibilities**

1. Supervisors must be graduates of an accredited law school and be able to commit to providing supervision, logistical support, and mentorship to students working through the Supervised Externship – Virginia Practice program.

2. Supervisors must provide the student with vocational opportunities and skills instruction in a reasonable number of appropriate activities.

3. Supervisors must approve the student’s time log and submit a written evaluation of the student’s performance at the end of the externship. These documents must be received by Ilissa Belanger before credit is given.

4. Supervisors must make themselves available for at least one formal mid-semester contact (either in person, by phone, or via email) regarding placement. This contact may be in addition to periodic phone calls and, in some cases, site visits by the program’s professor.

5. If at any time the supervisor experiences difficulties working with the student, the supervisor is encouraged to have a candid discussion with the student. If the situation is not promptly rectified, the supervisor should contact the program’s professor. Supervisors should not wait until the end of the program to inform the student or school of problems.

7. George Mason University School of Law has an Honor Code and Academic Regulations articulating minimum standards for student conduct and procedures for handling allegations of Honor Code violations. Supervisors with concerns about unethical student behavior are encouraged to contact the Associate Dean for Administration and Student Affairs, Annamaria Nields, at 703-993-8174 or anields@gmu.edu.
Placement Opportunities Available & Prerequisites

Judicial Chambers:
Students will accompany judges to court, review memos and briefs from counsel, draft legal memos for the judges, conduct research, and aid the judges in fulfilling their responsibilities. Students may be placed in judges’ chambers throughout Northern Virginia. Prerequisites: None.

Legal Aid:
The offices of Legal Aid are divided into practice groups, including, but not limited to: (a) Consumer Practice, (b) Employment, (c) Landlord/Tenant, and (d) Domestic Relations. Students will conduct client interviews, perform research, and draft memos and briefs. Students with Third Year Practice Certificates* may also negotiate with opposing parties, argue motions, and try cases in court. Students may be placed with the Fairfax, Arlington, Alexandria, Loudoun and Prince William County offices. Prerequisites: None.

Commonwealth’s Attorney’s Office:
Students will accompany Assistant Commonwealth’s Attorneys as they appear in court, assist in preparing witnesses for trial, research and draft memoranda and briefs, including appellate briefs. Students with a Third Year Practice Certificate*, proving they are competent to argue before judges and try cases, will appear before judges in Circuit, General District, and Juvenile courts to argue motions, participate in plea negotiations and try non-jury cases. Students may be placed with the Arlington, Alexandria, Prince William, and Fairfax offices. Prerequisites: Students must have a Third Year Practice Certificate* to be placed in the Arlington Commonwealth’s Attorney’s Office.

Public Defender’s Office:
Students will accompany Public Defenders as they appear in the Circuit, General District, and Juvenile courts, meet with clients, investigate cases, conduct research and draft memoranda and briefs, possibly including appellate briefs. Students with a Third Year Practice Certificate* will argue motions, conduct plea negotiations, and try cases. Students may be placed with the Fairfax and Loudoun offices. Prerequisites: A Third Year Practice Certificate* and completion of a Trial Advocacy course is encouraged but is not mandatory.

County Attorney’s Office:
Students will accompany attorneys to court, draft pleadings, conduct research, and draft memoranda. Students may be placed with the Fairfax, Arlington, and Loudoun offices. Prerequisites: None.

Private Practitioners:
Students will draft pleadings, conduct research, and draft memoranda for a civil or criminal litigation practitioner. Students with Third Year Practice Certificates* may make court appearances for docket returns, presentations of proof, and possibly to argue motions or participate in trials. Students may be placed with private practitioners throughout Northern Virginia. Prerequisites: None.

To obtain a Third Year Practice Certificate a student must have completed the equivalent of four semesters and Criminal Law, Evidence, Professional Responsibility, and either Criminal Procedure or Civil Procedure. (For more details, see Rules of Virginia Supreme Court Pt.6, §IV, Para. 15.) Third Year Practice Certificate applications can be obtained at www.law.gmu.edu/records. Whether a student is able to practice under a Third-Year Practice Certificate is a decision to be made by the supervising attorney.
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW
SUPERVISED EXTERNSHIP PROGRAM – VIRGINIA PRACTICE
COURSE CERTIFICATION

I __________________________ hereby represent as follows:

(Print Name)

1) I understand that it is my responsibility to comply with all of the requirements of the program as set forth in the Supervised Externship – Virginia Practice Information Packet.

2) I further understand that if I experience any difficulties or unmet expectations in my externship it is my responsibility:
   i. to initially discuss such issues with my supervisor;
   ii. if any such issues are not promptly rectified, to promptly inform a supervising professor by email of the situation so that appropriate steps may be taken to address my concerns.

3) I will send an email to Ilissa Belanger within the first two weeks of beginning work with my anticipated work schedule agreed upon by my supervisor, which I will also provide to my supervisor in writing.

__________________________________________
(Print Student Name)

__________________________________________
(Student Signature)

__________________________________________
(Date)
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW
SUPERVISED EXTERNSHIP PROGRAM – VIRGINIA PRACTICE
RECORD OF HOURS WORKED

Students may use this form or substitute their own timesheet. Timesheets must be approved by the supervisor.

Fall / Spring / Summer (circle one)  Year ______

Student: ________________________________  Attorney: ________________________________

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Total Hours: ______
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW
SUPERVISED EXTERNSHIP PROGRAM – VIRGINIA PRACTICE
SUPERVISOR APPRAISAL FORM

(Use of this form is optional; evaluation may be written on official letterhead or emailed.)

Please email the evaluation to Ilissa Belanger, Associate Director, Career Services, at ibelange@gmu.edu

Student’s Name: __________________________________________

Attorney’s Name: __________________________  Firm/Office: __________________________

Address: __________________________________________  Phone: __________________________

Please provide a written evaluation of the student’s performance, including the student’s application of legal skills and how the student progressed in the utilization of those skills:

Attorney signature: __________________________________________  Date: __________