Mission Statement

The mission of the Mason Veterans and Servicemembers Legal Clinic (M-VETS) is to provide (a) active-duty members of the armed forces, their families and veterans with free representation in matters of clear injustice or in which they could not retain counsel without undue hardship; and (b) law students with hands-on experience working with real clients and an opportunity to learn about, interact and give back to the military community.

Summary

General. This multidisciplinary clinic qualifies for the law school’s national and homeland security concentration. M-VETS Student offices are located on the 4th floor of Hazel Hall. Access to M-VETS is by security code which will be given out, along with computer and phone passwords, at the first class meeting.

Casework. The focus of clinic students’ efforts is casework on applicant and client matters, which are primarily accomplished outside the classroom. Students are required to submit weekly status reports (WSR and time sheets emailed to Director), and should be prepared to discuss the same for that evening’s class.

Classwork. In addition to casework, M-VETS students will meet each Wednesday during the term, as to which normal academic rules apply. Classes will be devoted in part to instructional topics, drawn from the blocks of instruction set forth below, partially to a status roundtable and to scenarios selected to enhance the instructional topics. Course materials (provided or online) will be selected for review and classroom instruction at a schedule determined by class progress on casework.

At the outset of the term, time and attention will primarily be devoted to orientation to clinic operations and administration, a review of status reports, archives, time sheets, and a military

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1 Attendance regulations are set forth in Academic Regulations 4-1 through 4-1.4.
history, status and law overview. As the semester progresses, attention and instruction will turn to areas related to the substantive casework stemming from the intake of matters and how to develop a case, ethics and conflicts, client interviewing and counseling, as well as other legal developments that may have an impact on servicemembers and their families.

In-Clinic Requirement. In addition to the proscribed class time on Wednesday, students are required to spend a minimum of two (2) additional hours per week in the M-VETS office. Students will sign up for a regularly time at the beginning of the semester and are expected to complete a minimum of one hour of office time per week. This time shall be used for intake, electronic and hard copy client file maintenance, and other assigned tasks.

Grades. There will be no exam. Students will be graded on written work, oral presentations, and professional responsibility. Graded written work will relate to matters for which you have primary responsibility (weekly and final status reports, factual and assessment memoranda, understanding and analysis of legal issues, court filings, substantive communications with clients, supervisors and adversaries (letters, emails, etc.), and other written assignments, as needed). Graded oral work will be based on class participation and your oral presentation of your status reports during weekly meeting, discussion of associated legal issues, as well as subjects of instruction and discussion of assignments in individual meetings.

Other Grading Factors. In the work of M-VETS you will need to be attentive to aspects of legal representation such as responsiveness to supervisory direction, clients and applicants; judgment in case management; effort and allocation in time management (including timesheets); maintenance of electronic and paper files (including use of standard clinic forms); and relationships with supervisor(s).

Every student will arrange a final, individual transition meeting with the Director at the end of the semester to review case files (hard copy and electronic), activity logs, final correspondence and transition memoranda.

Furthermore, the law school rule of thumb that each credit entails approximately 60 hours of work applies.

Office Hours/Contact. I am regularly available in my office for meetings and discussions with students, Monday and Wednesday. I am also available by appointment and will typically be available via phone and email for questions that may arise outside normal working hours.

Blocks of Instruction

Clinic Operations. E.g., organization (law-firm model), history, resources, procedures, students, support, and publications.

Professional Skills. E.g., client interviewing, client development, case and file management, and supervision.
Substantive Law. Military-unique (e.g., Titles 10 and 38, UCMJ, TSGLI, SCRA, USERRA, USFSPA); professional responsibility (e.g., confidentiality, conflicts, communication and competence); and case-related (e.g., administrative, consumer, contracts, benefits, domestic relations and landlord-tenant).

Relevant Communities. E.g., military, veterans, legal services, and clinical.

M-VETS Cases. E.g., status, lessons, supervision, questions, and next steps.