



# Information Packet

*A clinical program targeted at helping Servicemembers and Veterans that allows students to gain hands-on legal experience working with real clients under the supervision of the Clinic Director and the Managing Attorney.*

**Clinic Director and Supervising Professor:**

Timothy M. MacArthur

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**Course & Credit Options:**

Law 309: 3 credits. This is a letter graded course. The fall/spring semester clinic awards 2 in-class credits and 1 out-of-class credit. The summer clinic awards 1 in-class and 2 out-of-class credits.



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## Overview

The Mason Veterans and Servicemembers Legal Clinic (M-VETS) mission is to provide free legal representation to active-duty members of the armed forces, veterans, and their families while offering law students the opportunity to receive supervised, practical legal experience by advocating for those who serve or have served in our armed forces. Students have assisted clients from all armed services in civil litigation, administrative law, family law, landlord-tenant, contract, military law, and entitlement matters in federal and state forums. Students are supervised by Professor Tim MacArthur and Managing Attorney Leigh Winstead and receive weekly classroom instruction and discuss other issues relevant to the unique client population M-VETS serves.

Students must contribute a minimum of 180 hours of combined in-class, out-of-class, and office hours to M-VETS to obtain credit and commit to managing all cases they are assigned until handed-off to another M-VETS student in the subsequent semester. Students must also attend a four-hour mandatory training session at the beginning of the program and weekly class meetings.

## Educational Objectives of M-VETS

M-VETS 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. No compensation may be received for work performed during the program.
2. Application and permission of Professor MacArthur is required for registration in M-VETS. Applications for the clinic will be solicited before the opening of each semester's registration period. Students will be notified, via the student listserve, of the date when applications may be submitted. Applications will include, but are not limited to, an interview with the Director and the Managing Attorney, the student's updated resume and the M-VETS Student Advisor Online Application found at [www.mvets.law.gmu.edu/students/](http://www.mvets.law.gmu.edu/students/). Applications will be considered as received. Preference may be given to applicants who 1) are taking M-VETS for a second semester; 2) possess or are able to obtain a Third-Year Practice Certificate\*; and/or 3) those that anticipate participating in M-VETS for consecutive semesters. If accepted, students will be enrolled by the Records Office in the course.
3. Students must contribute a minimum of 180 hours of combined in-class, out-of-class, one-on-one meetings, and office hours to M-VETS to obtain credit and commit to managing all cases they are assigned until handed-off to another M-VETS student in the subsequent semester.
4. Students must attend a four-hour mandatory training session either prior to the start of the semester or at the beginning of the semester.
5. Students must attend a once a week, two-hour course at the law school. Classes will be devoted in part to instructional topics including clinic operations, professional skills development and case theory (client interviewing, client development, case management), and substantive and procedural law unique to the military and veteran communities. In addition, students are expected to participate in class discussions on the instructional topics.
6. Students will work under the supervision of the Director, the Managing Attorney, and the private practitioners who act as supervising attorneys on assigned cases.

7. Depending on the complexity and the status of the cases being handled by the clinic, students are typically assigned three to four cases to work on during the semester. Students may also be involved in assessing M-VETS applicants and making recommendations as to whether M-VETS should take the case.
8. Students must submit Weekly Status Reports (WSR) to the professor and weekly timesheets, with time allocated by each student between casework and classroom/preparation and attendance.
9. Students shall be graded on attendance, written and oral presentations, and professional responsibility. Written work shall include WSRs which describe the nature of the case, status, current issues, deadlines, and next steps; memoranda on legal issues related to the case; memos documenting conversations with supervisors, clients, clerks of court, or tribunals; regular email traffic back and forth between clients or applicants; trial pleadings, appellate briefs, demand letters and transition memo(s) if the case is ongoing past the end of a semester. Oral presentations include discussions in class relating to ongoing cases and lecture topics; individual meetings with the professor, and applicant and client interviews and meetings; performance at motions or trials, as applicable.
10. M-VETS work requires students to be attentive to all aspects of legal representation such as responsiveness to supervisory direction, clients and applicants; judgment in case management; effort and allocation in time management; maintenance of electronic and paper files (including use of standard clinic forms); and relationships with supervising attorney(s).

\* 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](http://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 Clinic Director and/or the Supervising Attorney.