

# Supervised Externship – Virginia Practice Information Packet

*A placement program for students seeking an externship that will expose them to legal practice in the Commonwealth of Virginia.*

*Externship placements are available in the Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters. Space is limited.*

## Virginia Practice Externships

### Supervising Professor:

Michael L. Davis,  
mdavis4@gmu.edu

### Staff Contact:

Ilissa Belanger,  
ibelange@gmu.edu

### Course & Credit Available:

Law 179: 3 credits for 180 hours of field work. Students participating in fall/spring program must attend two tutorials; the summer program requires attendance at one tutorial.



Updated August 2017

## 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 legal 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. 5.)

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 supervising attorney. Most supervising attorneys 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" involve

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. Students must have completed one academic year of legal education to participate in the program.
2. Applications for the program will be solicited either prior to or shortly after the opening of each semester's registration period. CAS 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. 5);
    - 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;
    - v. whether you have transportation to and from the assigned office.
  - 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.

3. After acceptance into the program, students should register for the appropriate course (Law 179).
4. Prior to the start of the externship, the "Supervised Externship – Virginia Practice Agreement" (p. 6-7) must be signed by the student and the supervising attorney and submitted to Ilissa Belanger. If the person who initially signs the agreement does not act as the student's primary supervisor, the student must obtain a new volunteer agreement signed by the primary supervisor and submit it to Ilissa Belanger as soon as feasible.
5. Students may receive compensation for externship work if offered by the field placement site. A maximum of six (6) externship credits may be earned in performing work for which the student also receives compensation. If the externship opportunity is for pay, students must receive approval from the professor in advance of the student registering for the externship course and detail the compensation terms on the Supervised Externship – Virginia Practice Agreement form.

6. Within the first two weeks of the beginning of the externship, students shall send an email to Ilissa Belanger with their anticipated work schedule, agreed upon by their supervising attorney, and also provide the schedule to their supervising attorney in writing.
7. If a student experiences any difficulties or unmet expectations during the externship, it is his or her responsibility to initially discuss such issues with their supervising attorney. If any such issues are not properly rectified, the student shall promptly inform the supervising professor by email of the situation so that appropriate steps may be taken to address the concerns.
8. Each student must have at least one mid-semester consultation with the supervising professor to discuss the externship and work being accomplished.
9. 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.
10. At the end of the externship, students must submit to Ilissa Belanger the following:
  - a. time sheet, approved by their supervising attorney, showing the hours worked (see p. 8);
  - 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.
11. Students must ensure that their site supervising attorney submits a timely evaluation (p. 9) 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](mailto:lawcareer@gmu.edu) indicating that they do not wish to be listed.

### **Supervising Attorney Commitment & Responsibilities**

1. Supervising attorneys must be members in good standing of a bar and be able to commit to providing supervision, logistical support, and mentorship to students working through the Supervised Externship – Virginia Practice program.

2. Supervising attorneys must provide the student with vocational opportunities and skills instruction in a reasonable number of appropriate activities.
3. Supervising attorneys must sign the “Supervised Externship – Virginia Practice Agreement” (see p. 6-7) prior to the start of the externship.
4. Supervising attorneys must make themselves available for at least one formal mid-semester contact (either in person, by phone, or via email) regarding the placement. This contact may be in addition to periodic phone calls and, in some cases, site visits by the program’s professor.
5. Supervising attorneys must approve the student’s time sheet and submit a written evaluation of the student’s performance at the end of the externship. The evaluation may be shared with the student at the discretion of the supervising professor. These documents must be received by Ilissa Belanger before credit is given.
6. 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. Antonin Scalia Law School 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 [aniels@gmu.edu](mailto:aniels@gmu.edu).

## Placement Opportunities Available & Prerequisites

### Judicial Chambers:

Students will accompany judges to court, review memoranda and briefs from counsel, draft legal memoranda 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 Law, (b) Housing Law, and (c) Family Law. Students will conduct client interviews, perform research, and draft memoranda 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 Arlington, 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 draft pleadings, conduct research, draft memoranda, and assist the county attorney in a wide variety of matters. Students may be placed with the Arlington, Fairfax, 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](http://www.law.gmu.edu/records). Whether a student is provided the opportunity to practice under a Third-Year Practice Certificate is a decision to be made by the supervising attorney.

**ANTONIN SCALIA LAW SCHOOL AT GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY  
SUPERVISED EXTERNSHIP AGREEMENT – VIRGINIA PRACTICE**

This agreement is among \_\_\_\_\_ (student's name),  
\_\_\_\_\_ (supervisor's name) at \_\_\_\_\_  
(Agency, firm name, etc.), and \_\_\_\_\_ (Antonin Scalia Law School at George Mason  
University). The purpose of this agreement is to place \_\_\_\_\_ in a field work opportunity  
with \_\_\_\_\_ (Agency/firm name, etc.) as part of the Supervised  
Externship Program offered by the Antonin Scalia Law School for academic credit to be earned by the student.

The period of work involved in this agreement commences on or about \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_ and will end on  
or about \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_ .

It is understood by all parties to this agreement that:

- (1) \_\_\_\_\_ (student) is enrolled in a course of study at Antonin Scalia Law School,
- (2) Antonin Scalia Law School has given permission for the student to provide his/her services for credit,
- (3) The \_\_\_\_\_ (Agency/Office) will provide supervised, skill-enhancing  
substantive legal or law related work and opportunities for the student, and
- (4) Antonin Scalia Law School will award appropriate academic credit upon satisfactory completion of the  
program described.

The \_\_\_\_\_ (Agency, Office) will ensure compliance with the supervisor  
responsibilities as set forth in the Supervised Externship – Virginia Practice Program Information Packet. It is  
recognized that workflow may vary, but semester totals must be a minimum 180 hours. At the end of the term,  
the supervising attorney will approve the student's timesheet and will provide the Antonin Scalia Law School  
with a written evaluation of the student's performance, including a statement of the skills emphasized and the  
student's progress in using those skills.

This position is (circle one):      Unpaid      Paid

(If paid, please provide or explain the amount of compensation, gift, or stipend):

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**SUPERVISED EXTERNSHIP – VIRGINIA PRACTICE VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT – page 2**

**Student’s site supervisor is:** \_\_\_\_\_ (Name) \_\_\_\_\_ (Phone)

Length of time supervisor has held this position: \_\_\_\_\_ (years) \_\_\_\_\_ (months)

If less than two years in this position, please note previous position and/or employer:

\_\_\_\_\_.

Supervisors who are engaged in the practice of law must confirm that they are members in good standing with a bar and, if so, specify which bar(s). Member in good standing: \_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_ no.

If yes, bar(s) \_\_\_\_\_.

**FOR THE AGENCY, FIRM, OR OTHER EMPLOYER:**

**FOR ANTONIN SCALIA LAW SCHOOL:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name printed or typed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name printed or typed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Organization

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number & Email Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number & Email Address

**FOR THE STUDENT:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number & Email Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature Date





**ANTONIN SCALIA LAW SCHOOL AT GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY  
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](mailto:ibelange@gmu.edu)

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervising 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:

Supervising Attorney signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_