

# 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 (unpaid)/Law 579 (paid):  
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.

\*Students may only complete paid externships for credit in the final two full semesters of their academic career.



Updated May 2019

## 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" 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. 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. 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;
    - iv. the days you anticipate you will be able to work at the externship; and
    - 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 with the professor will be 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 must complete the information form on the Externship module in Symplicity. Students should select "add new" to complete the form. After the form has been approved, students will be registered by the Records Office in the appropriate section. Supervisor name or contact information can be added at a later time on the form if such information is unknown at the time the student submits the form for approval.
4. 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, and students may only complete paid externships for credit in the final two full semesters of their academic careers.
5. No later than the first week of externship work, the "Supervised Externship – Virginia Practice Service Agreement" (p. 6-7) must be signed by the student and the supervising attorney. Signed forms should be scanned and uploaded as attachments to the Externship Information Form on Symplicity.

6. If a student has any difficulties or unmet expectations during the externship, it is his or her responsibility to initially discuss such issues with their supervisor. If any such issues are not properly rectified, the student shall promptly inform the professor by email of the situation so that appropriate steps may be taken to address the concerns.
7. Each student must have a mid-semester consultation with the professor to discuss the externship and work being accomplished. In addition, supervisors must complete a mid-semester evaluation.
8. 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.

9. To earn credit, the following tasks must be completed:

Externship Information Form Completed and Approved (on Symplicity)	_____
Signed Service Agreement (scan and attach to your Externship Information Form on Symplicity)	_____
Mid-Semester Meeting with Professor (by phone or in-person)	_____
Mid-Semester Employer Evaluation (by email, phone, or in person)	_____
Tutorial Attendance	
Fall/Spring Semester (two)	_____
Summer Term (one)	_____
Track Hours (hours log must include a general description of tasks completed; hours should be logged on Symplicity and must be logged before the final supervisor evaluation can be completed)	_____
Self-Evaluation (on Symplicity)*	_____
Sample of your Written Work Product (attach to your Self Evaluation on Symplicity; waivers granted with prior approval)	_____
Student Program Evaluation (on Symplicity)*	_____
Final Employer Evaluation (on Symplicity)	_____

\*Student Self-Evaluation should include comments about the work accomplished in the program; the skills developed through the program; the extent and nature of the student’s interaction with and feedback from supervisors and other attorneys. Student Program Evaluation should include comments regarding any recommendations to future students interested in the same or a similar opportunity.

10. Students must ensure that their supervisor submits a timely evaluation both at the mid-semester point and at the end of the semester. The due dates for the mid-semester evaluation and the final evaluation are set forth in the class syllabus.

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.

## **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 sign the “Supervised Externship – Virginia Practice Service Agreement” (see p. 6-7) no later than the first week of the externship.
4. Supervisors 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. Supervisors must complete the online final evaluation of the student’s performance at the end of the externship. In the final evaluation, supervisors must review and approve the student’s hours log.
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. George Mason University 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 [anields@gmu.edu](mailto:anields@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/City/Town Attorney's Office:

Students will draft pleadings, conduct research, draft memoranda, and assist the county attorney in a wide variety of civil 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, criminal, or family law 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 supervisor.

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

This agreement is among \_\_\_\_\_ (student's name),  
\_\_\_\_\_(supervisor's name) at \_\_\_\_\_  
(Agency, firm name, etc.), and \_\_\_\_\_ (George Mason University Antonin Scalia Law  
School). 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 SERVICE 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) \_\_\_\_\_.

**SUPERVISOR:**

**STUDENT:**

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

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

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

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Organization

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

After obtaining the supervisor’s signature and signing the document himself or herself, the student should scan and upload the agreement as an attachment to the student’s Externship Information Form found in the Externship Module in Symplicity.

**SCALIA LAW:**

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Professor Signature

Date

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Phone Number & Email Address