



UNIVERSITY OF  
**BALTIMORE**

School of Law  
Externship Program



**Field Placement Supervisor Manual**

# University of Baltimore School of Law Field Placement Supervisor Manual

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## Preface

Dear Field Supervisors:

Welcome to the University of Baltimore School of Law ("UBalt Law") Externship Program! There are a lot of things about lawyering that you just cannot teach in a classroom alone. We are so grateful for your generosity in teaching and mentoring our students.

As a field placement supervisor, you will help shape your students' learning experience and the lawyers they become. But you are not in it alone. We are here to support you and navigate any challenges along the way.

This Manual is a roadmap to support your work in teaching your students. We know that real life is messy, and we certainly do not expect that you can do everything in this Manual. Rather, we want you to have a guide to best practices to help make this easier for you. We also know that your time is limited, so we have tried to make the materials as practical as possible.

The success of our Externship Program is a direct result of the dedication, service, and mentorship of supervising attorneys, judges, and law clerks. I look forward to getting to know you better and working with you to teach our students.

With Gratitude,

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# 1 | Overview & Objectives of the Externship Experience

## A. Externship vs. Uncredited Job or Internship

“Externship” is a term-of-art, and people are constantly confusing it with other types of work experiences. Externships integrate field work experience with a curricular component to create a cohesive experiential education course. While it is similar to an uncredited internship or law clerk position, because credit-bearing externships are part of the program of legal education, they must comply with ABA standards.

In externships, we want students to take responsibility for their own learning by setting their own goals, engaging in reflection, and communicating with their supervisors. Instead of being passive recipients of assignments, externships teach students to become engaged learners, working towards their own self-improvement.

For this reason, externships are more intentionally structured than a typical job or internship. There may be more “paperwork” in an externship than you are used to, but if the student is thoughtful about how they approach these tasks, this structure should make your job as a supervisor easier.

Key differences between externships and uncredited internships/jobs are highlighted below:

Credited Externship	Uncredited Job or Internship
Student must be engaged in diverse substantive legal work that is educational, driven by the student's learning goals, and gives the student a broad range of experiences	Student may be assigned any kind of work—including repetitive tasks and administrative work—based on whatever the employer needs
Student must be supervised by an experienced, designated attorney	Student may be supervised by anyone
Student must meet with their attorney supervisor one-on-one weekly to ensure the student's educational goals are being met	Student may meet with their supervisor sporadically based on the supervisor's needs
Student must produce 10 cumulative pages of substantive legal writing	No substantive legal writing is required
Field placement supervisor acts as an extension of the law school's teaching	Supervisor doesn't necessarily play an educational role

faculty, helping the student learn from their field experience	
Supervisor should include the student in internal and external networking and social events so that the student can meet their professional development goals	No formalized professional development goals
Student should be invited to observe meetings, hearings, trainings, and other events as part of their learning experience	Student may be expected to work through all working hours

## B. Objectives of the Externship Experience

The overarching objective of the externship experience is to provide an experiential educational experience from which the student learns practice-ready professional skills. While externships are designed to be self-led educational experiences that require the student to be actively engaged in crafting the curriculum, there are clear objectives that underlie all externship experiences—regardless of the placement. Those objectives are:

### Technical Skills

- **Legal Analysis & Expression:** Students will expand their critical thinking, problem solving, legal analysis, and oral communication skills.
- **Research Skills:** In addition to honing their legal research skills, students will engage in fact finding through interviews, document review, and information organization.
- **Substantive Law:** Students will increase their knowledge of at least one substantive area of law (e.g., civil or criminal procedure, fair housing law, contracts, land use, etc.).

### Professional Skills

- **Professional Development:** Students will develop essential professional competencies such as time management and communication. Additionally, students will further develop their professional identity, examine ethics in a practical setting, and increase their self-awareness as it relates to integrity, civility, bias, etc.
- **Business Development:** Students will develop strategic relationships and have networking opportunities (whether it's with other colleagues at the placement or with legal professionals outside of the placement). Further, students will gain an understanding of the operational management side of their placement—whether it is a law firm, non-profit, or government agency.
- **Meeting Preparation:** Students will learn to proactively prepare for meetings by being responsible for preparing an agenda for each weekly one-on-one supervision meeting and providing it to the supervisor at least a day in advance.

By preparing the meeting agenda, the student will build skills such as providing status updates on assignments, asking for feedback, and formulating their questions.

- **Other Professional Skills:** Students will develop other key lawyering skills such as interviewing, counseling, fact development and analysis, trial practice, document drafting, conflict resolution, organization and case management, collaboration, goal setting, and self-evaluation.

## C. Externship Requirements

Because externships receive academic credit, ABA Standard 304 drives the requirements of the externship experience. Supervisors—as an extension of the law school faculty in a sense—play a critical role in ensuring that these objectives and requirements are met, and that the externship experience is educational for the student. Key requirements over which the supervisor has control that must be met for the student to receive credit are outlined below:

### Supervision

Students must be assigned to a qualified supervising attorney, judge, or judicial law clerk. Supervisors should be barred attorneys with at least three years of experience. In the case of J.D. advantage positions, such as legal compliance, the supervisor must have completed law school and have at least three years of relevant legal experience. Judicial law clerks with less than three years of experience may supervise an extern with oversight by the judge. Students may not be solely supervised by a non-attorney law clerk, paralegal, administrator, or the like.

### Hours

Students are required to keep a record of their time spent at the field placement throughout the semester and the supervisor will be asked to confirm the time log is an accurate representation of the student's time at the end of the placement.

### Legal Writing

Students must complete 10 cumulative pages of substantive legal writing. Multiple documents may be used to satisfy the requirement.

### Observation

Students must have opportunities to observe court proceedings, meetings, and other professional activities (e.g., depositions, client interviews and meetings, witness preparation, case strategy meetings, etc.). This also applies to remote and hybrid placements. While students are only required to submit written reflections to their seminar professor on two observational experiences, please remember to include students in as many beneficial observational activities as possible.

## 2 | Overview of Externship Process

### Approval of the Externship

Prior to a student receiving academic credit for their externship, certain paperwork must be submitted for law school approval.

- **Student Schedule Form:** Externs must fill out this form with a proposed schedule that includes all their fixed time obligations (e.g., classes, commute, other jobs, family obligations) as well as dedicated time to complete externship field placement work and law school course work.
- **Expectations for a Respectful Learning Environment:** Required for all externships. This form requires acknowledgment of the expectations that UBalt Law has for field supervisors related to fostering a supportive culture of respect and learning for externs.
- **Paid Externship Supervisor Rider Agreement:** Required only for paid externships. This agreement outlines the distinctions between legal externs receiving academic credit and paid employees.
- **Externship Educational Plan:** Required only when a student requests externship credit at a site at which they have previously worked. Prior to approval, the student and supervisor must create an educational plan to ensure the externship experience is distinct from the student's current or previous work at the placement.

### During the Externship

- **[Learning Agreement:](#)** Required for all externships. This form is completed at the beginning of the semester and sets out the agreement between the extern and the supervisor and contains critical details such as the start and end date of the externship and outlines the student's learning goals. Externs are encouraged to get the insight and guidance of their supervisor in crafting learning goals that are attainable during the externship period.
- **[Mid-Semester Self Evaluation:](#)** Required for all externships. This form asks the extern to reflect on how the semester is going, the progress they are making towards their learning goals, and their strengths and growth areas. Externs are required to evaluate themselves and discuss the evaluation with their supervisor.

### At the End of the Externship

- **Student Evaluation:** Required for all externships. This form will be sent to you by the Director of Externships at the end of the externship and asks for feedback on the extern's performance.

# 3 | Preparing for a Successful Externship: Pre-Arrival Planning & Orientation for New Externs

## A. Onboarding: Before the Student Arrives

A little bit of planning before the extern arrives ensures a smooth start and makes the student feel welcome. For some externs this may be their first legal work experience, so they may be a bit nervous. A phone call or email before they start, even just covering first day logistics, can go a long way!

About a week before the extern arrives, start mapping out these critical issues:

### Structure of the Externship Experience & Supervision

- **Brainstorm learning opportunities and assignments**
  - What types of assignments will you give the extern?
  - Do you have colleagues that also have projects the extern could help with?
  - What types of observational experiences may be coming up that would be good learning opportunities for the extern?
- **Let colleagues know the extern is coming**
  - Send an email (ideally with a photo) to introduce the student to the team. This will help the student feel seen, especially in a remote or hybrid environment.
  - Encourage colleagues to welcome the student to the team.
- **Communication methods**
  - Think about ways to communicate beyond email—such as Teams or Slack—to cut down on emails and provide an avenue for informal chats, especially if the office is hybrid.
  - Plan to tell the student when they can expect you to be available to respond to emails, calls, etc. What are your limitations?
  - Determine who will be a secondary contact for the extern in the event you are not available.

### Logistics for the Extern

- **Confirm when the extern will work**
  - Establish an initial schedule for what hours the student will work and confirm start and end dates.
  - Do the students have other academic commitments that you should consider (e.g., exams, moot court competitions, etc.)?



- **Address first day essentials with the extern**
  - Tell students expressly what the expectations are regarding attire. These standards vary widely, especially post-pandemic, and the student will appreciate not having to figure this out on their own.
  - When and where the extern should arrive on the first day? Provide any guidance regarding parking or accessing the building.
- **Background resources**
  - Tell the student if there are any background resources (e.g., an employee handbook, chamber's style guide, overview of a particular area of law, a YouTube video on particular software the office uses) that you recommend they review prior to their first day.
- **Remote placements**
  - Schedule a virtual welcome meeting for the student's first day.

## **Technology & Administrative Matters**

- **Inform IT that the extern is starting**
  - Make sure that IT knows the extern is arriving so they can help the student set up any accounts or access needed (e.g., email, Teams, etc.).
- **Schedule any software demonstrations needed**
  - Do not make assumptions that the extern will come in completely comfortable with your office's software choices.
  - Tutorials on how to use more common interfaces that may be unfamiliar to the extern (e.g., Outlook or Teams) are easy enough for the extern to find online. However, if you expect the extern to use a less common program—for example an eDiscovery platform like Lexbe or Everlaw—consider setting up a demonstration that walks the extern through how to use it.
- **HR matters**
  - Think about everything you would do HR-wise for a new hire and plan to have anything applicable to the extern ready to go. For example, have any documents (e.g., a confidentiality agreement, payroll documents if the placement is paid, etc.) ready for the student to sign on their first day.
- **Student workspace & other resources**
  - Determine where the student will work and ensure that everything the student needs to work (e.g., company laptop, desk phone, office supplies) are ready for the first day.
  - Think about any other resources the extern may need, for example an office/chambers style guide, employee handbook, guide to document naming conventions, etc.

## B. Orientation: When the Student Arrives

A well-thought-out orientation is a crucial component of making the student feel welcome and ensuring the externship starts off on a good foot. Consider incorporating the following into your orientation plan:

### Navigating the Office

- **Office tour & introductions**
  - Give the student a tour of the office. Be sure to point out how to use printers, access office supplies, and what the set-up is for food storage, water bottles and restroom access.
  - Have the student meet other staff and attorneys (in person or on video conference if it is a remote placement).
  - Have the student meet any other externs or interns to encourage student cohesion.
- **Office overview and policies**
  - Give the student an overview of the office's work and structure.
  - Explain any communications or document management systems (e.g., a Teams group chat, a shared folder, etc.).
  - Calendar any standing meetings or upcoming events.
  - Identify resources for legal information and sample documents.
  - Specify where electronic documents should be saved and whether there is any naming convention that the office adheres to.
  - Are there any other details the student should know such as:
    - How do people address each other (Mr., Ms., Mx., or by first name)?
    - If the office is business casual, should the student keep a suit in the office so they can have the opportunity for a surprise meeting or court observation?
    - Does everyone in the office tend to take lunch at the same time and eat together in the breakroom?

### Ethics & Confidentiality

- **Confidentiality policy**
  - Cover any applicable office policies for protecting confidentiality with the student. Are there things that the student should not discuss in the externship class or in their ABA-mandated reflection assignments?
  - Be clear about any policies with respect to technology and data privacy, especially if remote work is permitted. Can students use their personal computers? Does your office have any VPN or other secured cloud storage protocols?
  - Does your office have any policies regarding the use of generative AI or social media?
- **Conflicts of interest**
  - Ensure that there are no conflicts of interest by obtaining from the student information on their past and present legal work.

- Update their approved time-blocked schedule, if necessary, to ensure no overlap between the externship and other work obligations.
- **Unauthorized practice of law**
  - If the student will have client contact, advise the student that they are not authorized to give legal advice unless they are simply conveying information from a supervisor.
  - Ensure the student knows who is available to answer questions if you are not available.

## **Communication**

- **Preferred methods of communication**
  - What are the preferred methods of communication for in-office and/or remote work?
  - Should the student email questions or is texting or another form of communication (e.g., Teams, Slack) better for urgent matters?
  - If you work a hybrid schedule, how will the student know when/how you are available?
- **Availability**
  - For remote work, when is the student expected to be online? What is the expected response time to emails or chats?
  - When are you available? What time frame should the student expect for a response? If the student does not hear back from you within a certain period of time, how should they follow up?

## **Structure & Workflow**

- **Assigning and tracking work**
  - Who will be assigning the work to the student? Will all assignments flow from you, or should the student expect to get assignments from other attorneys directly?
  - If other attorneys will assign work directly, will the other attorneys loop you in, or should the student update you at your weekly meeting?
  - How should the student track their work? Is there a shared spreadsheet that the student should use?
  - Does your office have a timekeeping protocol? Please be aware that students are required to keep contemporaneous time logs for their externship. You can ask the student to send you those time logs regularly so you can see how they are spending their time.
- **Other office contacts**
  - Who is the backup supervisor that the student can contact if you are unavailable?
  - Who else can the student go to for questions (e.g., informal mentors, support staff, etc.)?

## 4 | Designing a New Learning Experience for Students Already Working for You

Students cannot receive academic credit for a job they have already done or are currently doing. To qualify for externship credit, the field placement experience must be a substantively new experience that helps the student diversify their legal experiences, professional competencies, and networks.

Whether the student has just finished an internship with you and is staying on as an extern, or has been working with your organization for years, ensuring a new experience requires intentional planning. Before the externship is approved, the Director of Externships must receive and approve an Externship Educational Plan from the student. A copy of the form is available [here](#).

Below are suggestions and considerations for creating a new externship experience:

### Creating a New Experience

- Can the student work with a different department or practice group?
- If the student is going to remain in the existing practice group, what responsibilities can they take on to expand their learning? For example, if the student's regular job is as a paralegal, can you carve out time for legal research, drafting motions, or going to court?

### Planning and Communicating the Schedule

- Especially for full-time workers crafting an externship at an existing employer, organizational buy-in is essential for the externship to be successful. A student cannot successfully take on a new job on top of an existing one without some shifting of schedules and responsibilities.
- Ensure students have large blocks of time to work on their externship responsibilities. For example, if the student works for you full-time, they can devote Tuesdays and Thursday afternoons to new externship work, while retaining time to carry out their existing responsibilities during other times.
- Communicate the plan with the rest of the office and ensure the set-up is feasible and people can adjust expectations for the student accordingly.

### The Bottom Line

- Regardless of what work the student is doing, at the end of the semester, the student must have at least a few new skills or experiences to add to their resume that they would not have had absent the externship experience.

## 5 | Goal Setting with the Extern

Because externships are student-driven learning experiences, crafting concrete, realistic goals for the semester is a critical part of the educational experience. Goal setting empowers students to be proactive in guiding their externship experience and professional development. Through the goal-setting process, students are required to reflect—they must inventory the skills they already have, grapple with their growth areas, and consider their long-term career goals. When students and supervisors work together to create well-crafted goals tailored to that student, the goals provide a blueprint for the externship experience.

### A. Common Pitfalls to Avoid

Poorly crafted goals are difficult to achieve and measure and can lead to frustration and demotivation. Below are some common pitfalls to avoid in helping the student select goals for the externship.

#### **The Too Big/Overly Ambitious Goal**

Example: Draft a comprehensive policy manual for the company's entire regulatory compliance framework.

While students should push themselves in their externship, a goal like this is likely too difficult to achieve given the length of the externship and will leave the student feeling discouraged.

How to avoid this pitfall: Talk to the student about what is truly achievable during the externship and what types of goals make the most sense given the time frame, the work of the placement, and the student's goals.

#### **The Vague Goal**

Example: Get better at research.

Vague goals—while often a good start—make it exceedingly difficult to measure success. These goals also make it more difficult for field placement supervisors to give feedback on the student's progress.

How to avoid this pitfall: Talk to the student about ways to make the goal more focused on what specific skills, experiences, or outcomes they hope to achieve. Then brainstorm with the student what kinds of work product and research they can realistically undertake given the work of your organization. Your input is what allows students to ground their goals in reality and create concrete steps towards achievement.



## B. SMART Goals

The most effective learning goals are SMART goals. When students break their goals down into the five SMART components, they create a roadmap for achieving the goal. SMART Goals are: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timebound.

<u>S</u> pecific	Goals should be clear with a specific target. For example, instead of "I want to get better at communication," a more specific goal may look like "I will ask clarifying questions when I am given an assignment and update my supervisor throughout the process to ensure I am meeting expectations."
<u>M</u> easurable	Goals should be crafted in a way that allows for success to be measured. For example, instead of "Get better at research," a measurable goal may be "I will learn to incorporate AI and other resources (e.g., the courthouse's law librarians, treatises, etc.) into my research strategy to increase my knowledge and efficiency."
<u>A</u> ttainable	Goals should be ones that are achievable during the externship time frame and practical given the student's level of experience. For example, it may not be realistic for a student to see a case through from beginning to end in one semester. For students hoping to better understand litigation processes, it may be more realistic to have students work on multiple cases at various stages.
<u>R</u> elevant	Goals should be relevant to the work of the field placement and the legal education of the student. For example, if the bulk of the firm's work is estate planning, the student's goal shouldn't be to gain experience with the criminal discovery process. Additionally, some work that your office may need done – e.g. translation, website development – are not substantive legal work that the ABA will allow to be credited as part of the course of legal education.
<u>T</u> ime-Based	Goals should be specific to the time period of the externship, which is usually a semester. Even if you expect your student to stay on after the end of the semester, craft goals which your student can measure their progress on by the end of the semester.

## C. Identifying High-Quality Learning Experiences

Not all experience is created equal. If your student is new to the legal world, they may not know what types of learning opportunities are available or be able to differentiate the quality of those experiences. Students with more experience may be tempted to stay in their comfort zone, doing the kind of work that they know and are familiar with.

As their supervisor, you are their guide to creating a high-quality learning experience. The most common student learning experiences can be grouped into three general levels.<sup>1</sup>

1. **Lower-level experiences** teach students about running a law office, but they are more administrative in nature and can be done by non-lawyers.
2. **Mid-level experiences** are valuable, especially at first, but can be repetitive over time. They build your familiarity with legal practice but may not substantially build legal competence and confidence.
3. **High-level experiences** require refining legal and professional competencies and offer important insight into what lawyering looks and feels like. These gold-star high-level experiences get to the heart of lawyering and will help your student develop their identity as a new attorney.

As a supervisor, you should educate your students about the range of opportunities and cases that your office works on, and coordinate with your colleagues to help access appropriate learning experiences for your students.

For a new student in their first legal position, it makes sense to start them in lower and mid-level assignments and see how they perform. You can scaffold their work upwards during the semester based on their performance.

For a more experienced student, or one who has already worked in your office, consider what kinds of experiences the students has already had and have a conversation with them about their hopes for this semester. If the student's experience has been primarily in mid-level assignments, then this semester may be the perfect time to challenge them and aim for some of the high-level activities. These are the activities that will allow the student to really understand whether they are well-suited to the work of your office. And by succeeding in these more challenging assignments, they will grow in confidence and gain an understanding of their skills as future attorneys.

Review the list of learning experiences below and talk to your student about their experience level and goals during your first supervision meeting.

### **Lower-Level Educational Value**

- **Discovery** Completion/Review
- **Substantive Non-Legal Work** (filings, data entry, translation)
- **Pure Administrative Work** (answering phones, sorting mail)

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<sup>1</sup> This system for quantifying the quality of extern learning experiences was developed in Neha Lall's empirical research. Paying Dividends: An Empirical Examination of How Student Compensation Enhances Externships, 59 LOY. L.A. L. REV. \_\_\_\_ (forthcoming, 2026).

### **Mid-Level Educational Value**

- **Simple research** project (no formal memoranda)
- **Drafting simple or procedural pleadings**, motions, or administrative petitions not requiring significant analysis
- **Factual analysis and investigation**, witness interviews
- **Drafting legislative policy** memoranda or testimony
- **Transactional document writing** (contracts, leases)
- Participation in **Internal Office Meetings**
- **Legal or professional training** (attending conferences, CLE sessions, online training, etc.)
- **Networking Opportunities** (events, lunches, informational interviews)

### **High-Level Educational Value**

- **Drafting complex research** memoranda or briefs
- **Drafting complex pleadings**, motions, or administrative petitions requiring significant factual and legal analysis (Motions for summary judgment, complex complaints, etc.)
- **Client interviewing and counseling**
- **Observation of legal proceedings** (court proceedings, depositions, mediations, or legal hearings)
- **Observation of External Meetings** (opposing counsel, other agencies, collaborators, legislative hearings, etc.)
- **Preparation for trials**, hearings, or other legal proceedings
- **Presenting Orally at Meetings** (internal briefings, testifying at legislative hearings, etc.)

## **D. Goal Setting with a Student New to Your Office**

Goal setting with a student that is new to your office poses unique considerations. Because you have not worked with the student before, you are not aware of their strengths and growth areas, and do not know their future career goals. New students will need to get to know and understand your office culture and the work that you do and may not have enough substantive knowledge to know what is possible when crafting their goals. As their mentor, you have the power to help them navigate the goal setting process by taking the time to better understand their interests and then brainstorming ways that the office's work can support their learning.

### **Encourage Curiosity**

Thoughtful goal setting requires that the student get into the driver's seat. Encourage your student to reflect on their "what" and "why."

**What:** By the end of the semester, what would they like to do? What do they want to observe? What kind of writing do they hope to produce? What do they hope to understand?

**Why:** Why did they choose this placement? How does it align with their career goals?

Goals that are within a students' growth zones tend to provide the best learning experiences. These are areas where the student feels awkward or unfamiliar—but not panicked or overwhelmed.

Below are some suggestions on how to encourage curiosity:

<b>Model &amp; Encourage Reflective Inquiry</b>	→ Ask open-ended questions (e.g., "What are you most curious to learn during this externship?") → Share your own learning process and how you approach learning
<b>Normalize Not Knowing</b>	→ Help the student frame areas that they don't yet understand as growth areas, rather than weaknesses → Recognize and affirm when the student asks thoughtful, curiosity-driven questions
<b>Tie Curiosity to Professional Identity</b>	→ Discuss with the student how particular skills or knowledge areas fit into their larger professional goals
<b>Provide Examples of Professional Competencies</b>	→ What professional competencies make good new attorneys at your organization? What skills do new attorneys lack that may make a good goal for the student?
<b>Frame Goals Around Exploration</b>	→ Help the student understand what may be possible during the course of the externship. Goals may be framed as "I want to observe . . ." or "I want to understand . . ."

### **Align Goals with Uncertainty**

The legal field is fast paced, and things change quickly – cases settle, litigation strategy changes, and emergencies come up that require the pivoting of attention. Gaining an understanding of that reality during an externship can be an important learning experience for students. Further, the student's own goals may evolve throughout the semester as they gain more of an understanding of the workplace.

Accordingly, crafting goals that are aligned with these uncertainties can be highly effective. Consider suggesting that the student set flexible goals that can evolve with more knowledge and build in check-in points to reassess along the way.

### **Sample SMART Goals for Newcomers**

Within the first three weeks, I will schedule one-on-one meetings with at least two attorneys to learn about their roles.

By mid-semester, I will draft at least one client-facing document under supervision.

I will become more comfortable with conducting client intakes by first observing intake interviews, then leading interviews with a supervisor present, and eventually be able to conduct an interview independently.

## E. Goal Setting with a Student You Know

When the student has already worked for you, two things are likely true. First, the student has an understanding of the workplace environment at the placement. Second, you may already be familiar with the student's work, their strengths, and their growth areas. Because of this higher baseline knowledge, you and the student have the ability to realistically craft more nuanced and specific goals. Below are some suggestions for goal setting with students continuing in a placement.

### Using Insider Knowledge & Encouraging a “Wish List” from the Student

Invite the student to articulate what they hope to do, observe, understand, write, or get to know during their extended time with you. What has the student wanted to do at the office but not had the chance to do yet? This conversation will help clarify their interests and align expectations for what can be accomplished during the externship.

Below are some brainstorming questions to help the student identify opportunities to deepen existing relationships and/or tap into institutional knowledge:

- Are there certain attorneys the student wants to work with?
- Are there particular areas of the law that your firm handles that the student hasn't had exposure to yet?
- Are there certain litigation or case management tasks that the student hasn't had exposure to?

### Creating Space for Advocacy & Initiative

Foster open dialogue with the student by creating an environment where the student feels comfortable expressing their interests and asking for opportunities. The scheduled one-on-one weekly meeting will help create this space and will allow for collaborative goal setting.

### Sample SMART Goals for Continuing Students

By the end of the semester, I will gain an understanding of trial preparation by working with attorneys on preparing witnesses for testimony, drafting motions in limine, and helping to draft arguments.

I will improve my persuasive writing skills by working on a dispositive motion on a pending case.

I will understand the case settlement process by drafting settlement demand letters, working with an attorney on negotiations with opposing counsel, and observing mediation or ADR hearings.

## F. Checking In on Progress



As part of the externship, students will do a midterm self-reflection on their progress towards their learning goals. Outside of the midterm and final evaluations, encourage your students to check-in with you regularly on their progress.

**Acknowledging Challenges:** Create a space where the student can honestly reflect on challenges or roadblocks they have encountered.

**Normalize Shifting Gears:** If at any time you think the student's goals would benefit from revision or recalibration, guide the student in making the necessary adjustments.

**Recognize & Celebrate Growth:** Acknowledge *all* accomplishments—big or small. Positive reinforcement can build confidence and reinforce a sense of purpose and progress.

**Instill Reflective Career Habits:** Help the student see the goal setting, tracking, and reflection process as part of a lifelong approach to career development and self-directed learning.

## 6 | Creating an Inclusive Environment

When students feel like valued members of the team, they have better learning experiences. To that end, it is important that you foster a welcoming, supportive, and professionally enriching environment that enhances learning, builds confidence, and encourages engagement.

Consider doing the following to create an inclusive environment and help the student integrate into the team:

- **Introductions**
  - Introduce the student to team members across roles (attorneys, paralegals, administrative staff, etc.) in-person or with an email that includes the student's picture.
  - Add the student to team emails and invite them to team meetings.
- **Build a Support Structure**
  - Encourage other staff members to support the student. This shared approach alleviates the burden on you and provides the student with a broader support network and different perspectives.
  - Assign students additional mentors, especially individuals who might have similar backgrounds to the student.
- **Foster a Cohesive Culture**
  - Include the student in social activities such as team lunches and office celebrations. These settings can build camaraderie and reduce barriers between the student and full-time staff, making the student feel more connected to the placement.
  - If your organization hosts multiple externs or interns, create opportunities for them to connect and share experiences.
- **Networking**
  - Invite the student to internal or external meetings and introduce the student to participants wherever possible!
  - Introduce the student via email to team members and other colleagues and encourage the student to set up short informational interviews or coffee chats.
  - Invite the student to accompany you to bar association or other events.
- **Observations**
  - Allow the student to observe a range of legal activities: hearings, depositions, client meetings, internal strategy discussions, etc.
  - Maximize their learning by preparing them beforehand with context and debriefing afterward.
  - When appropriate, invite the student to contribute to the meetings they are observing.

- **Recognition & Visibility**

- Acknowledge the student's work in team emails, during staff meetings, or when speaking with clients (where appropriate).
- Shout out key projects or research the student has contributed to as a way of reinforcing their role and value on the team.
- Share positive feedback and learning milestones with others to support the student's reputation and confidence within your organization.
- Consider including the student in client meetings to give visibility to their contributions.

## **Special Considerations for Remote or Hybrid Placements**

Student reluctance to reach out affirmatively can be amplified in remote settings. If the student will be hybrid or fully remote, consider these strategies to create an inclusive remote work experience.

- **Inclusion in Meetings**

- Inviting students to remote meetings is great, but ensuring the student understands the meeting's purpose and is given space to talk is even better! This will go a long way in making them feel valued.

- **Facilitating Interaction**

- For hybrid and fully remote placements, chat groups (e.g., Teams or Slack) can facilitate more informal conversations that will encourage conversation and build trust.
- If you have other law students in the office, consider creating their own private chat group to get to know each other.

- **Debriefing**

- When hearings and meetings are in person, the walk out of the courthouse or conference room is always a great debriefing opportunity. When hearings and meetings are remote, that opportunity is lost.
- Consider replicating this in the virtual setting by taking a few minutes after virtual meetings to talk with the student about what happened.

- **Hybrid Schedules: Maximizing In Person Opportunities**

- If your office follows a hybrid schedule, consider how you can maximize in person opportunities when the student is in person. If the student is in the office when others are working remotely or meetings are rarely scheduled, consider moving their schedule around to foster more interactive experiences.

# 7 | Structured Supervision

## A. The Weekly Supervision Meeting

One of the most important aspects of the externship experience is the weekly supervision meeting. Supervisors are expected to have **individual meetings** with the student **at least once a week**. These meetings should be **calendared**.

Benefits of the weekly supervision meeting include the following.

- **It teaches students how to prepare for a meeting!** UBalt directs students to draft an agenda for the meeting and email it to their supervisor one business day in advance. This forces students to reflect, synthesize their questions, and be proactive in their learning.
- **It creates accountability.** Requiring weekly supervision meetings creates accountability for students and supervisors, especially for long-term assignments. By having a scheduled time to check-in each week, students will be pushed to be proactive in providing status updates on assignments.
- **It allows supervisors to monitor workflow.** The weekly supervision meeting gives you as the supervisor a designated time to review the student's progress on various assignments, assess whether the student's workload is appropriate and well-balanced, and ensure the student is receiving feedback. This is especially important when there are multiple assigning attorneys!
- **It can help the student build good timekeeping habits.** Students are keeping contemporaneous time logs for their externship. Having them send you their time logs each week with their meeting agenda is a great way to keep them accountable and drill in the importance of good timekeeping practices!

**An open-door policy or regular team meetings are not a substitute for the weekly supervision meeting!** While allowing students to pop into your office whenever they have a question is great, such an open-door policy does not provide the same benefits as the weekly supervision meeting. Many students are reluctant to ask questions and fear interfering with your time or looking incompetent. The weekly supervision meeting combats this by giving the student a designated time where they have the floor. It also ensures that the supervisor has private space to deliver constructive feedback, which cannot happen in a group meeting.

## B. Encouraging Self-Reflection

Self-reflection is a key component of professional development. It helps build the self-awareness necessary to become thoughtful and competent lawyers. While guiding student reflection is the core learning objective of the externship's curricular component, field placement supervisors are in a unique position to help the student reflect on what they are seeing and doing in real time.

Supervisors can help students understand their own strength and growth areas. Consider prompting self-reflection during the weekly supervision meeting:

- Ask the student what they think they could do to better next time.
- If the student makes a mistake, help the student reflect on how they can grow from their mistake.

Please let the law school externship faculty know if you think the student needs more support in learning from their field experience.

## C. Supervisor as Mentor and Teacher

Supervisors are trusted with teaching students what lawyering looks like. Perfection is not expected. No lawyer is perfect! Rather, as supervisor you should strive to mentor the student and provide a realistic picture of what working at your organization looks like.

### Appropriate Substantive Legal Assignments

To receive credit for their externship, students are required to turn in **10 pages of substantive legal writing** and spend a minimum of **130 hours (or 140 hours for an advanced externship) doing substantive legal work**. As explained in the [Learning Agreement](#), if a college student could complete the assignment, it is likely not substantive legal work.

If you are struggling to find appropriate work for the student, consider some of these strategies:

- Invite students to observe your team meetings, client interviews, negotiations with opposing counsel, hearings, strategy sessions, case reviews, etc. Even if there is not much for the student to do in these contexts, students often learn the most by observing legal practitioners.
- Assign the student long-term tasks that have been on the back burner. These are good tasks to help ensure that the student does not have dead time when they have completed short-term assignments.
- Ask students to update manuals, charts, bench books, fact sheets, etc.
- Turn a shorter assignment into a longer memorandum or writing sample that can be written and researched from home.
- Assign students research and writing for matters that you anticipate will likely come up in the next several months.
- Ask students to read articles, cases, treatises, etc. you have been meaning to get to and write a summary.
- Have the student draft a blog on a legal hot topic for your firm's website.
- Have the student create a substantive training/legal update for staff or community partners.
- Find opportunities for the student to communicate and correspond with clients, community partners, opposing counsel, etc.
- Ask the student to read background materials or attend CLEs. Give the student access to training materials and webinars.



- Involve students in prep and moot sessions for court or virtual hearings.
- Help the student connect with others in your practice area through networking and community events.
- Facilitate introductions with your contacts so the student can set up informational interviews for their own professional development.

### **Defining and Explaining Assignments**

When giving an assignment to a student, remember to ask yourself four key questions:

1. Am I providing the correct resources the student needs to complete the assignment?
2. Am I able to support them through the process, and if not, who can?
3. Do I know how much time may be needed to complete the assignment successfully, and have I communicated that to the student?
4. Am I creating an environment where the student can ask questions?

The Externship Assignment Checklist—a template that UBalt provides to externs—is provided on the following page. When giving the student an assignment, consider including the details contained in this checklist.

## Externship Assignment Checklist

### Due Date and Timeline

What is the exact date and time the assignment is due by?	
What is the priority level of the assignment relative to other work?	
What are your interim check-in deadlines?	

### Context for the Assignment

How does this assignment fit into the larger case or overall strategy?	
Who is the audience for the project (e.g., supervisor, client)?	

### Research Starting Points

What are some initial sources you may use to research (e.g., treatises, statutes)?	
What is/are the relevant jurisdiction(s)?	
Where can you find samples of this type of assignment to review?	

### Submission Expectations

What is the expected format of the assignment?	
What is the anticipated length of the assignment?	
Do you need to submit copies of authority with your finished assignment?	
How should the assignment be submitted (e.g., email, shared cloud space)?	

# 8 | Supporting Legal Analysis, Research & Writing Skill Development

## A. A Note on the NextGen Bar

Beginning in 2026, most law school graduates will be taking NextGen bar exam. The NextGen bar moves away from memorization of black letter law and instead focuses on testing fundamental lawyering skills, including the process for analyzing a legal issue.<sup>2</sup>

The NextGen bar will include integrated question sets with a common fact scenario along with legal resources and/or supplemental documents. Some of the questions will assess students' ability to identify missing facts from the documents provided and frame research questions to answer the relevant legal questions.<sup>3</sup>

The work students are doing in their externships will become increasingly important in helping students sharpen their legal analysis, research, and writing competencies.

## B. Demonstrating How IRAC Works

IRAC (Issue, Rule, Application of Rule, and Conclusion) analysis is a core competency that many students struggle with. They may not realize that IRAC analysis is not just for memos and motions. It applies to almost all the work that lawyers do.

During the externship, consider illustrating this to students by showing how the IRAC framework is used as a legal analysis tool in tasks other than writing. For example, discuss how IRAC works when intaking new cases or making criminal charging decisions. Explain how lawyers ascertain what important facts are missing and create an investigation and discovery strategy. In settlement negotiations, connect how the strength of a client's claim connects directly to the settlement strategy.

These real-life experiences will help students connect their classroom learning to legal practice and improve their chances of passing the bar exam in the process.

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<sup>2</sup> *About the NextGen Uniform Bar Examination*, NAT'L CONF. OF BAR EXAM'RS, <https://www.ncbex.org/exams/nextgen/about-nextgen> (last visited May 16, 2025).

<sup>3</sup> *See Sample NextGen UBE Multiple-Choice Questions*, NAT'L CONF. OF BAR EXAM'RS, <https://www.ncbex.org/exams/nextgen/sample-questions/multiple-choice> (last visited May 16, 2025).

## C. Encouraging Strong Research Skills

As part of the seminar component, students will be required to complete a legal research plan for one of the assignments they receive at their placement. While the student is required to craft their research plan on their own, consider ways in which you can promote the student's legal research skill development. For your reference, the Externship Legal Research Assignment Plan is on the following page.

### **Discuss Research Strategy & Offer Learning Resources**

- Walk the student through how you approach legal research. Where do you start? What do you do when you hit a roadblock?
- Guide the student in breaking down a legal problem into researchable components. This will also help students develop issue spotting skills and see how IRAC is utilized in any task requiring legal analysis.
- If there are materials that you recommend (e.g., legal research guides, treatises, etc.) direct the student to where they can find those materials.

### **Encourage Critical Thinking**

- Challenge the student to explain why a particular case, statute, etc. is relevant and how it supports an argument or position.
- Play devil's advocate by pushing the student to distinguish similar cases.

## Externship Legal Research Assignment Plan

*Complete this research plan within one week of receiving the research assignment. This will help ensure you are clear on the assignment and allow you to ask clarifying questions before you devote significant time to the project. The NextGen Bar Exam will test you on your ability to accurately identify legal issues and explain research strategies.*

**Student Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supervisor Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Placement Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date Assignment Received:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date Research Plan Submitted to Supervisor:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Timeline:** *Set yourself interim deadlines to keep yourself on schedule:*

→ **Preliminary Research Complete:** \_\_\_\_\_

→ **Outline or First Draft Complete:** \_\_\_\_\_

→ **Full Draft Complete (leave time to edit):** \_\_\_\_\_

→ **Final Due Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Expected Format of the Final Product:** *(Check or describe what your supervisor expects you to produce.)*

- ☐ Email summary
  - ☐ Legal memo
  - ☐ Case chart or spreadsheet
  - ☐ Talking points
  - ☐ Draft motion/pleading
  - ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- 

**Summarize the crucial facts in 100-150 words:**

**State the Research Issue(s):** *Clearly and specifically articulate the legal question(s) you are being asked to research. (e.g. Under \_\_\_\_\_ law, is \_\_\_\_\_?)*

→

**Relevant Jurisdiction(s):** *What court(s), state(s), or federal laws apply?*

→

**Applicable rule and where can it be found?** *Is it found in a statute, regulation, or common law? If you are not sure, how will you figure that out?*

→

### **Research Plan – Where Will You Start?**

**A. Secondary Sources:** *What reference tools or treatises will help you get started?*

→

**B. Databases & Tools:** *Which platforms will you use? (e.g., Westlaw, Lexis, Google, Bloomberg Law, etc.)*

→ \_

**C. Search Terms or Queries:** *Which are some terms or queries you should include in your searches?*

### **Questions for Your Supervisor:**

→

### **When You Need Help: What Will You Do?**

*Identify steps you will take and resources you will use if you get stuck or need clarification (e.g., use an AI-assisted research tool, contact a Westlaw or Lexis rep, ask your supervisor or colleague, consulting a law school librarian, reaching out to a classmate or professor).*

→ \_\_\_\_\_

→ \_\_\_\_\_

→ \_\_\_\_\_

## 9 | Giving Feedback

Feedback is an integral component of the student's learning experience. Without feedback, students cannot understand what they are doing well and what their areas of improvement are; they will continue to make the same errors. While providing feedback to students can be time consuming, it is the most valuable part of a student's externship experience. Consider the following as you provide feedback to the student.

### A. Turn Mistakes into Learning Opportunities

Because students have limited legal experience, they will make mistakes. When the student performs poorly on a task, it may feel unkind to be honest with them. But you are not doing the student any favors by being dishonest with them. And as their supervisor, you are in a unique position to help the student understand and learn from the experience.

Remind the student that a mistake does *not* make the student a failure but is a normal part of the learning process.

- Normalize learning from mistakes by sharing experiences of mistakes you made with the student and discuss how you grew from the mistake.
- Ask the student to reflect on what tactics they can use to ensure they do not make the same mistake again (e.g., if the student missed a deadline, discuss time management techniques, calendar alerts, etc. that could be used to decrease the likelihood of a similar mistake in the future).
- Encourage them to use law school resources, including externship faculty, academic support faculty/ tutors, reference librarians, and writing center fellows. Do not feel like it is your job to carry this load on your own!

### B. The Three Types of Feedback<sup>4</sup>

Professor Sheila Heen of the Harvard Negotiation Project has written extensively on the challenges of giving and receiving feedback. She explains that feedback givers and receivers often have misaligned expectations, and that can add to challenges that accompany feedback. She breaks “feedback” into three distinct categories—appreciation, evaluation, and coaching—which are each valuable but play different roles. We recommend thinking about the type of feedback that you are giving and

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<sup>4</sup> Adapted from IESE Business School, *Feedback: A Game of Give and Take with Sheila Heen*, YOUTUBE (July 4, 2014), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9uQIG7LbT\\_k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9uQIG7LbT_k). See also DONALD STONE & SHEILA HEEN, THANKS FOR THE FEEDBACK: THE SCIENCE AND ART OF RECEIVING FEEDBACK WELL (2014).

ensure that students receive all three types of feedback at different points of their externship.

## **Appreciation**

Often, when people say they wish they got more feedback, what they are really saying is that they wish someone acknowledged the value of their work. Appreciation says, "I see you. I get you. What you're doing matters." We all need appreciation in our workplaces, including students.

Make the student feel valued and seen by the team. Comment on an assignment they did a good job on at a team meeting, etc. This will help the student stay engaged and motivated during the externship.

## **Evaluation**

In most workplaces, evaluation is the most common type of feedback, often in the form of an annual performance review. Evaluation assesses or rates a person's performance based on a uniform benchmark. Evaluation is emotionally the loudest type of feedback, as it rates people on a scale. The fact that evaluation is often not accompanied by consistent appreciation and coaching can make it even harder to take.

As part of the externship program, there will be structured midterm and final evaluations of the student's performance. If you are sprinkling in other types of feedback throughout the semester, the evaluation process will likely go much smoother, even if there is significant room for improvement.

## **Coaching**

Coaching is aimed at helping the student get better at something and pushing them to learn and grow. Coaching often takes the form of: "Here's a way you could do this better."

When coaching feedback is only given during an evaluation, it loses its power. Instead, because of the emotionally charged nature of evaluations, the person being evaluated does not remember the coaching and will only remember their rating and how they felt about it.

Coaching should be given along the way, when the experience is fresh in everyone's minds. Remember that less is more. A couple of specific tips for improvement are more effective than a laundry list of problems. When giving concrete, specific pieces of feedback, consider explaining:

- **Expectations:** Was there something you expected the student to do that they didn't?
- **Integration:** How should the student incorporate the feedback in the future?

Giving one or two specific tips for the future is likely to be more effective than overwhelming the student with comments, and it will be easier to see if they incorporate that feedback moving forward.



## C. Suggestions of Things to Give Feedback On

We understand that no one has time to give specific feedback on everything, but students benefit from feedback on their writing. That feedback can be streamlined and need not be labor-intensive.

Redlining students' work is not only cumbersome, but it is also not the best way for the student to learn. Using comments in Word to provide feedback and asking the student to revise—rather than redlining and fixing the problems for them—is a better way for them to reflect and implement the feedback. We know that time does not always allow for multiple drafts, but wherever possible, building in interim deadlines to allow for multiple drafts pays off in the long run.

Your comments can be direct (e.g., "check your spelling, there are multiple errors throughout"), or framed as a question to indirectly guide the student to what the issue may be (e.g., "how do the facts of X case that you cited connect to the facts of our case?").

If you are struggling with what type of feedback to give the student, consider giving feedback on any of the following.

### Written Assignments

- **Grammar and Spelling:** If the student's writing has a significant number of errors, it's likely that they are not utilizing spelling and grammar checking tools. Sending the document back to the student to correct teaches a critical lesson – your supervisor is not your proofreader!
- **Structure & Organization:** Was the student's writing logical? Easy to follow? Clear to the reader? Concise?
- **Analysis:** Did the student use proper IRAC structure? Identify the Issue(s)? Synthesize or state Rule(s) clearly? Apply rule(s) to the facts? State a Conclusion?
- **Tone:** Was the student's writing objective or persuasive as needed? Was the tone appropriate for the assignment and/or audience?
- **Professionalism:** Was the work completed on time? Was the format what was asked for/expected?

### Oral Communications

- **Organization and Clarity:** Does the student ask questions clearly? Anticipate follow up questions or additional information you may need to answer the question? Compile their questions to be asked at once rather than having to come back multiple times to ask questions they forgot to?
- **Oral Communication Skills:** Does the student talk too fast/slow when talking in meetings? Do they make sufficient eye contact?

# 10 | End of the Externship

End the externship off on the right foot by doing an exit meeting with your student. Consider the following in your conversation:

## **Recognize and Celebrate Progress**

Help the student frame success. Even if achievement of their learning goals doesn't look or feel like what the student imagined it would, help them see the importance of what they achieved.

## **Help the Student Understand Skills Gained**

By the end of the externship, the student has undoubtedly gained skills and competencies that they did not have prior to commencing the experience. Help the student understand what they gained so that they carry them to their next legal work experience.

## **Give Final Feedback**

Be honest with the student about what their strengths are and how they can continue to play to those strengths. Similarly, if you notice skills areas where the student could use some growth, specify what areas the student should focus on in the future.

## **Get the Student's Feedback**

Ask the student for their feedback on the externship experience. How can you improve as a supervisor and better support a future student? Did they feel like a valued member of the team? Was there anything they wish they had gotten to do?

## **Discuss Any Continuing Opportunities**

Many of our students continue working for their placements either as law clerks or in post-graduate positions after their externship. If there are post-externship employment opportunities available at your organization, consider mentioning them to the student.