

## 1 INTRODUCTION

2 On behalf of the University of Mississippi School of Law, thank you for accepting students as  
3 externs in your office or chambers. I am Professor Hans Sinha, and I direct our for-credit  
4 externship program.

5 Our externship program has grown into a vibrant bridge between the academic and the actual  
6 practice of law. As we seek to educate the next generation of attorneys, we are acutely aware  
7 that we could not provide them a true introduction to the practice of law without your help.

8 For the time and effort you devote to training, supervising, and mentoring our students, we are  
9 truly grateful.

10 We recognize that as our program has grown, so have the parameters surrounding it. This short  
11 video is designed to introduce you to the program, provide answers to questions you may have,  
12 and assist as best we can, as you mentor our students.

## 13 PROGRAM OVERVIEW

14 Our externship program is a for-credit component of our law school curricula. As such, it is both  
15 guided by the overall law school goal of providing a comprehensive legal education to our  
16 students, and governed by the American Bar Association Standards pertaining to field  
17 placement programs. As part of this credit-earning program, students can be placed in public  
18 service, not-for-profit, and government offices, as well as state and federal judicial chambers.

19 We do not place students in for-profit law firms or organizations. All of the matters I will cover  
20 in this video, are also explained and discussed in our *Externship Manual and Field Placement  
21 Supervisor Handbook*.

22 ***Cover of Externship Manual***

## 23 **SELECTION PROCESS**

24 Students seeking to participate in our externship program typically begin the selection process  
25 by submitting an application to me. I review such, and then have a face-to-face meeting to  
26 discuss possible and suitable placements for the student. Sometimes the student knows  
27 precisely what office he wants to extern in; other times the student may only have a general  
28 idea, or a geographical setting in mind. Typically, however, after our meeting, we jointly identify  
29 a suitable potential office placement. I say potential because the final say in whether a student  
30 externs in an office, always lies with the office.

31 Once an office has been identified, the student drafts a cover letter introducing himself to such  
32 office and expressing his interest in being placed there as an extern. I forward such cover letter  
33 and resume to the office for review, and if the office informs me the student is preliminarily  
34 acceptable, I ask the student to contact the office in order to schedule a formal interview. Once  
35 the interview has taken place, and the office lets me know the student is welcome to extern in  
36 such office, I coordinate with the student to get him registered for the externship course.

37 Sometimes a student may contact an office or judicial chambers directly, and be pre-approved  
38 for such placement. If that is the case, and assuming it is an office where we can place for-credit  
39 students, I will confer with the student, and confirm with the placement office or chambers,  
40 and then coordinate with the student in terms of the course registration.

41

## 42 **PLACEMENT OFFICES**

43 Considering that we have had a robust externship program for some time now, most of our  
44 placements are offices or chambers where we have placed students on an ongoing or regular

45 basis. In such offices, there usually is one person who serves as the contact person with the law  
46 school. However, every semester we typically place a couple of students in new placements. In  
47 such a case, I will confer with the student, and then talk with that office's designated person in  
48 charge of their externship program, or if they have not had externs in the past, the person who  
49 will serve as the student's on-site supervisor. Often times I also visit the placement office as  
50 part of this initial coordination. I have found that face-to-face meetings go a long way in  
51 establishing a working relationship.

52 We welcome new offices to our placement list. Besides the public service, governmental, or  
53 judicial component, what we look for are offices that have the resources, time and desire to  
54 teach, supervise and mentor our students. Should you wish to host students and be placed on  
55 our list of approved placements, please contact me and we will begin the process.

56

#### 57 **MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

58 Once a placement for a student has been confirmed, I draft a proposed Memorandum of  
59 Understanding to be executed by the placement office, the law school externship program, and  
60 the student extern. This MOU outlines the parameters of the placement, as well as the  
61 responsibilities and expectations of all three parties, including the nature of the work the  
62 student is expected to perform. An example of an MOU can be found in the Externship Manual.  
63 Once the MOU has been drafted and reviewed by the placement office, I circulate a copy for all  
64 three parties to sign.

65 ***MOU***

66

**67 OFFICE SUPERVISION**

68 Typically, each office has one person who serves as the designated extern coordinator. In larger  
69 offices students often work with and under the supervision of several attorneys in addition to  
70 the office extern coordinator; in smaller offices, the extern coordinator may be the actual on-  
71 site supervisor for the student. Regardless of whom the student works with, the key is for the  
72 students to be engaged in, as the ABA terms it, substantial lawyering work. We have never  
73 found this to be an issue, with offices and chambers consistently providing excellent work  
74 assignments and supervision of our students. The ABA in using this terminology is simply  
75 making the important point that there is a distinction between a paid law clerk who can be  
76 assigned non-educational and tedious tasks potentially lacking an educational benefit, and for-  
77 credit externs whose overall goal should always be for them to further their legal education.  
78 Thus, as much as possible, we ask that our students' work and assignments be geared towards  
79 substantial lawyering tasks.

80

**81 TIME LOGS AND EVALUATION FORMS**

82 Recognizing that supervising and mentoring our students takes time and effort, and genuinely  
83 being grateful for such, we seek to streamline and make any paperwork associated with the  
84 program as minimal and non-onerous as possible. That said, there are two categories where we  
85 ask the on-site supervisor to complete certain forms. The first involves the student's initial  
86 Placement Plan and Weekly Time Logs, the second consists of a Mid-Term Evaluation and a  
87 Final Evaluation. Both these set of forms can be completed using digital on-line documents.

**88 PLACEMENT PLAN AND WEEKLY TIME LOGS**

89 At the outset of an externship placement, the student is asked to author a Placement Plan  
90 wherein she puts down what she wants to accomplish during her externship placement. The  
91 student is asked to review this plan with her on-site supervisor at the beginning of the  
92 placement. The goal and hope is that this will permit the student and the supervisor to be on  
93 the same page in terms of the student's aspirations, and if appropriate, for the supervisor to  
94 further guide the student in terms of what can be accomplished and what may not be realistic,  
95 as well as to provide guidance regarding additional goals. Once the student and supervisor has  
96 reviewed the student's Placement Plan, the student signs and the supervisor initials in the  
97 appropriate place. The student is asked to review her plans mid-way throughout her externship  
98 placement to see if she is meeting her goals, and to make any necessary adjustments going into  
99 the second half of the placement

#### 100 ***Placement Plan***

101

102 The student completes her Placement Plan using an on-line Google Document shared between  
103 the student, the office supervisor and myself, providing all access to such document. This  
104 Google Document also contains a configured Weekly Time Log wherein the student keeps track  
105 of the work she does. In our accompanying seminar class, we discuss the importance of  
106 accuracy in time record keeping, as well as confidentiality in terms of the students not  
107 disclosing confidential matters in the time sheets. Once the student completes her time log for  
108 one week, she will ask her supervisor to review such, again using the on-line Google Document,  
109 and initial the form indicating that the noted hours are accurate. The review by the on-site  
110 supervisor should ideally be done on a weekly basis. However, we recognize that there are

111 times this may not happen, and as such ask that the time logs be reviewed on a regular and  
112 frequent basis. I likewise review the weekly time logs on a regular basis both to ascertain what  
113 the student has been working on, and to gauge their path to a successful completion in terms  
114 of required on-site hours.

### 115 ***Weekly Time Log***

116

#### 117 **Credit hours and On-site hours**

118 With regard to the latter, students have to complete a certain number of on-site hours  
119 corresponding to their selected and enrolled number of academic credit hours. A typical  
120 externship course enrollment is between three and six law school academic credit hours, which  
121 equates to 135 and 270 on-site hours. In certain cases, and after approval by me, students may  
122 enroll in as many as twelve credit hours, which equates to 540 on-site hours. High credit  
123 placements, are unusual, need pre-approval, and entail additional requirements for the  
124 student, such as the selection of an outside text reading and enhanced learning objective. As  
125 such, they are evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

126

#### 127 **Feedback, Critique and Evaluation forms**

128 The third and final category of forms we ask our on-site supervisors to complete consist of a  
129 mid-placement and a final evaluation pertaining to and of their extern's performance. Both of  
130 these evaluation forms can be completed on-line. As a whole, one of the main benefits  
131 students get from externing in a real-world environment, is the opportunity receiving critique  
132 and feedback from practicing lawyers and judges. Students tend to take such feedback to heart,

133 more so than they would critique or suggestions at, for example, law school sponsored  
134 competitions. In other words, your suggestions truly matter to our students, and are much  
135 appreciated. With this in mind, please seek to provide feedback and critique to our students as  
136 they perform different tasks throughout their externship placement.

137 The mid-evaluation form is designed to provide a formal opportunity for the on-site supervisor  
138 to provide an evaluation in the middle of the placement when there is still time for the student  
139 to adjust in order to get the most out of the placement. This form is succinct, the main intent  
140 being to provide an avenue for formal evaluation, ideally in addition to the continuous critique  
141 and feedback provided to the student throughout the placement. The final evaluation provides  
142 an opportunity for the on-site supervisor to provide a more extensive evaluation of the  
143 student's overall performance. Please seek to provide as much information as possible in both  
144 of these evaluations, and if possible, use the completion of such forms as a jumping off point  
145 for a sit-down meeting with the student to discuss how he is doing, and or did, as well as – and  
146 more importantly, how he can improve going forward. Both of the evaluation forms are on-line  
147 and accessed through a link that your student will provide you.

148 Feedback, critique, and constructive suggestions how to improve, are both critical to a budding  
149 neophyte attorney's development, and something students crave and appreciate. I cannot  
150 emphasize enough how important this is to our students.

151 ***Mid and Final Evaluation forms – first pages of each***

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153

154

155 **Seminar class component**

156 Contemporaneous with our students spending time learning the actual practice of law through  
157 their externship placement, the students are also enrolled in my seminar course. In such course  
158 we study various concepts associated with experiential learning, ethics, and other related issues  
159 and topics. As part of the seminar course, the students do readings, author several short essays  
160 on assigned topics, and keep a contemporaneous journal of their externship experience. With  
161 regard to the latter, one of the ethical issues we discuss in depth, is the concept and  
162 importance of confidentiality. In light of the ubiquitousness of social media today, we  
163 specifically read about and discuss the importance of confidentiality in all aspects of life,  
164 including journaling and social media.

165 Our seminar class is scheduled for Wednesday afternoons during the fall and spring semesters.  
166 If a student is placed locally or close to Oxford, MS, she attends the class live; if the student is  
167 placed away from Oxford, she may attend the class via an internet based meeting program.  
168 Similarly, in the summer term, while all students attend the seminar class live, they do so  
169 through a webinar presentation program.

170

171 **SITE VISITS**

172 Finally, as our regular placement offices know, I seek to visit our placements each semester. I  
173 do so to check-in, not check-up, and find this is great time to exchange information regarding  
174 our students' performances, as well as for me to gain insight from you in terms of what works  
175 and may not work with our program as a whole. I am always seeking to improve upon and  
176 make ours the best possible for-credit law school externship program. That, of course, could



177 not be possible without your time, help, supervision, mentorship and guidance. For this, and for  
178 everything you do, I and the law school remain grateful.

179

180 **Conclusion**

181 These are just some of the major points pertaining to our for-credit externship program. Again,  
182 a more detailed look at our program, including suggestions for supervision and mentoring, can  
183 be found in our *Externship Program Manual and Field Placement Supervisor Handbook*, a copy  
184 of which is provided to each of our placement offices. That said, should you at any time have  
185 any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to me at any time.

186

187 Again, thank you for all you do for our students.