

Lewis & Clark Law School

10101 S. Terwilliger Blvd.
Portland, Oregon 97219-7799
Phone 503-768-6600
Fax 503-768-6671
law.lclark.edu



On-Site & Virtual Mentor Externship Handbook

A Comprehensive Guide for On-Site, Hybrid, and Remote Attorney Supervisors

Note: this Handbook was updated using assistance from Artificial Intelligence (AI). AI was used to make the former version of this Handbook more concise and, hopefully, reader-friendly and helpful!

Welcome to the Lewis & Clark Law School Externship Program! Thank you for investing your valuable time, energy, and expertise in training the next generation of legal professionals.

Your role is much more than a standard workplace supervisor. An externship is designed to be an experiential learning opportunity that provides students with an in-depth exposure to legal practice that simply cannot be replicated in a classroom. In this program, the relationship is structured as **mentor to mentee**.

We ask that you treat your extern as a junior associate or new colleague—whether they are sitting in the office down the hall or working with you entirely via Zoom. This means exposing them to the realities of your practice, challenging them with substantive assignments, and inviting them into the day-to-day life of a working attorney. **For hybrid or remote placements, this includes inviting them to virtual client strategy sessions, online court hearings, and digital depositions.**

Part 1: Day-One Orientation & Onboarding

For many law students, this externship may be their very first time working in a formal legal environment. When a student is remote, they cannot "see" the office culture, making a structured first day even more critical to establish a standard of professionalism.

Use this suggested step-by-step checklist to structure your extern's first day:

1.1. Brief Your Staff & Set Up Remote Systems: Action before day one.

Prepare your team before the student begins. If the student is remote, make sure your IT team has shipped their equipment or set up their VPN, remote desktop, and internal communication accounts (such as Slack or Microsoft Teams) ahead of time. Clarify who can assign the student work. Discuss how your team will maintain client confidentiality digitally, especially since students write weekly reports as part of their externship experience.

2.2. Logistics, Tech Walkthrough, & Onboarding: First morning: 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM.

For On-Site: Show them their workspace, and walk them through keys, printers, and building security.

For Virtual: Schedule a 1-on-1 video call to walk through digital access, secure database logins (Westlaw, Lexis, or internal case management), and file sharing. If your office tracks billable hours or project-based time, provide the templates and show them how to log their daily activities.

3.3. Establish Communication & Work Schedules: First morning: 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM.

Formally agree on a weekly work schedule that matches their Externship Model's hour requirements.

- **The Virtual Challenge:** Remote externs cannot easily pop into your office to ask questions, and they can easily feel "forgotten." Agree on a routine. Will you use Slack for quick questions? Should they email a list of questions once a day? **We strongly recommend scheduling a recurring, 30-minute weekly video feedback meeting** to ensure remote mentorship doesn't get pushed aside by busy caseloads.

4.4. Align Goals & Work Product Standards: First afternoon: 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM.

Sit down (or hop on Zoom) to review the extern's personal learning goals, which is one of their class component assignments. Detail your expectations for finished work product: Are you looking for quick, informal email summaries, internal research outlines, or polished, court-ready briefs? If multiple attorneys will be giving them assignments, clarify the chain of command and explain how they should prioritize deadlines.

5.5. Address Ethics & Digital Confidentiality: First afternoon: 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM.

Review your office's policies on conflicts of interest, social media, use of Artificial Intelligence, and client confidentiality. Work with the extern to establish how they will write their journals (e.g., using pseudonyms or generalizing case details) to ensure attorney-client privilege and work-product confidentiality are strictly maintained. For remote externs, emphasize secure file handling and the importance of conducting confidential work and calls in a private home environment.

Part 2: Managing & Mentoring Virtual Externs

Working with an extern remotely requires shifting from *passive* supervision to *active* engagement. Without the structure of a physical office, remote students can struggle to understand expectations or feel connected to the firm. Use these best practices to bridge the physical gap:

- **Virtual "Shadowing":** Invite your extern to listen in on phone calls with opposing counsel, attend Zoom-based client meetings, and observe remote court hearings. Spend 5 to 10 minutes on a quick phone call before and after the event to brief and "debrief" them on your strategy.
- **Prevent Isolation:** Encourage other associates, paralegals, or partners to schedule occasional 15-minute virtual coffee chats with the extern. This replicates the spontaneous networking that happens naturally in an office kitchen or hallway.
- **Daily Digital Check-Ins:** A quick, 5-minute morning Slack message or email (e.g., *"Morning! What's on your plate today?"*) provides structure and lets the student know you are available.

Part 3: The Art of Constructive Feedback

The most valuable part of an externship is your feedback. To make your feedback highly instructive without consuming hours of your day, consider using the **"Describe, Ask, Suggest"** framework.

1. Shift Your Feedback Style

- **Corrective Feedback (Focus on Behavior, Not Character):**
 - *Avoid:* "This brief is too sloppy."
 - *Instead:* "The legal analysis is spot-on, but there are several grammatical errors in the statement of facts, and the citation format for the Oregon cases is incomplete. Let's look at the local rules for citation."
- **Positive Feedback (Describe the 'Why'):**
 - *Avoid:* "Nice work on this memo."
 - *Instead:* "Your integration of the *Smith* case was excellent because you anticipated the opponent's waiver defense and neutralized it in your third paragraph. That is exactly how we want to structure our arguments."
- **Prescriptive Feedback (Set the Roadmap):**
 - *Example:* "In this office, our standard practice is to draft a short 'Executive Summary' at the top of every research memo so the partner can grab the main takeaway in under 30 seconds."

2. The Five-Step Feedback Loop

When reviewing a written draft or debriefing after an event, use this collaborative cycle (ideally over video with screen-sharing active so you can look at the draft together):

1. **Describe the behavior non-judgmentally:** *"The statutory argument needs more support."*
2. **Give specific examples:** *"For instance, the reporter volume is missing on page 3."*
3. **Ask questions to understand:** *"What was your strategy when organizing the argument this way?"*
4. **Share your perspective subjectively:** *"I think the court would find the statutory argument more persuasive if we placed it before the policy argument."*

5. **Offer concrete alternatives:** *"Try rearranging the sections and let me see a quick redline of the draft tomorrow."*

Part 4: Mid-Externship & Final Evaluations

Because our externships are credit-bearing academic courses, your evaluations of the student's performance are vital. The law school relies on your expert assessment to determine whether the student has met, or is on the way to meeting, their education goals.

To make this process simpler, we recommend keeping a brief, confidential "Extern Notes" file on your desktop. Throughout the semester, jot down quick bullet points about the projects they complete, their strengths, and areas where they show improvement. This will save you significant time when filling out our evaluation forms.

What we'll ask you to evaluate at the end of the semester:

- **Substantive Lawyering Skills:** How well did they perform legal research, conduct statutory analysis, and draft legal documents?
- **Written Work Product:** Did they produce high-quality, structured, and accurate drafts? What are their writing strengths and weaknesses?
- **Ethical and Professional Awareness:** Were they alert to ethical considerations? Did they proactively initiate discussions regarding professional responsibility?
- **Professional Decorum:** How did they carry themselves in front of clients, opposing counsel, judges, or court staff (including digital courtroom decorum)?
- **Office & Workplace Skills:** Did they organize paperwork effectively, meet deadlines, communicate workload issues, and work well with administrative support staff?
- **Receptivity to Guidance:** How did they respond to constructive criticism? Did they actively seek out feedback and ask clarifying questions?
- **Overall Assessment:** If you had the budget and organizational resources, would you hire this extern as a permanent employee?

Part 5: Support & Program Contacts

We are always available if you have questions or want to discuss anything related to your extern or the Externship Program. Please do not wait for the mid-externship or the final evaluation period to address a problem. If you notice issues with attendance, responsiveness, professionalism, written work product, or communication, contact us immediately so we can intervene and support both you and the student.

Director of Externships & Practica: Libby Davis; eadavis@lclark.edu; 503-768-6610
Program Coordinator: Alyssa Salstrom; akwarren@lclark.edu

Thank you again for your dedication to mentoring the future members of our profession!