Exernship — Atlanta Program
Frequently Asked Questions

(The information below applies to the Externships in the Atlanta Program. There is a separate FAQ for the Macon Externship program)

What is the Atlanta Program?

The law school now offers an Atlanta program for third-year students, which began in the Spring of 2015. The Program will allow students to participate in expanded externships in Atlanta during the Spring semester, as well as take additional law courses offered on Mercer University’s Atlanta campus.

The centerpiece of the Atlanta program is an expanded Externship course. For purposes of the Atlanta program, we have increased the number of credits that may be earned in Externship in a single semester, from the current maximum of 4 to a maximum of 12 credit hours. Students may take from 4 to 12 credit hours of Externship during the Atlanta semester; additional credit hours are allocated based upon additional field work hours (the formula for computing credit hours from fieldwork hours is below.)

All students in Externship I, no matter how many hours credit they are taking, will take the same two hour per week Externship seminar (taught one evening per week on the Atlanta campus) and have the same requirements as to journals and online discussion. The Atlanta section of Externship I will meet on Mercer’s Atlanta campus one evening per week, typically from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Students who have previously taken Externship I will register for the Externship II course. That course has the same journal and reporting requirements, but students in Externship II do not attend the regular two hour per week seminar. Instead, students and the faculty member meet together for approximately seven one hour meetings over the semester.

In addition to the Externship courses, additional elective courses (some of which will satisfy the advanced skills requirement and the advanced writing requirement) will be offered on the Atlanta campus each semester. We also plan to offer a section of the Bar Preparation course on the Atlanta campus during spring semester. As a result, it will be possible for some third-year students to take their entire course load in Atlanta.
What is Externship?

Externship is designed to offer students practical work experience while providing faculty supervision and guided reflection. Students work in a law office or similar setting (what we call “fieldwork”) and attend a two-hour class every week. The classroom component includes assigned readings, weekly submission of reflective journals, and class discussion, all of which are designed to help you learn from your fieldwork experience.

What kinds of placements are available?

The work must be for a governmental or non-profit employer, for an in-house corporate legal department, or for a private law firm if your work is limited to that firm’s governmental or non-profit clients (for example, working with a private law firm on its representation of a school board, its pro bono clients, or court-appointed criminal cases). Our rules, consistent with most law schools, do not allow us to give class credit if you work for paying clients for private law firms. If you are otherwise eligible and the fieldwork supervisor agrees, you may be certified under Georgia’s student practice rules for your Externship work, meaning that you can appear in court.

There is a wide variety of placements available. Indeed, many law offices throughout the Atlanta area have been enthusiastic about partnering in this new program. Typically, over 70 offices agree to consider Mercer students for externships.

How do I apply for the Externship Course?

A student must have a minimum GPA of 83.0 at the time of pre-registration in order to take an externship in Atlanta.

There are two phases of the application process you should be aware of for this program. Phase 1 involves a list of Atlanta externship placements that participate in a consortium of the Georgia law schools; you may apply through our Career Services Office in BearBoard, you would select which offices you are interested in applying to. Then, within a week or two, Phase 2 of the application process involves you applying to the offices you selected in Phase 1 in BearBoard. The deadline for those applications for fall is typically near the end of February, and for the spring is near the end of September. You may not register for the Externship course in Atlanta unless you have secured a field placement.

How much do I work at my placement site and what does that mean for the rest of my schedule?

You can take Externship I for anywhere from 4 hours credit to 12 hours credit. The fieldwork hours requirement is as follows:

- 4 credits requires 126 total fieldwork hours (approximately 9 hours per week)
• 5 credits requires 168 total fieldwork hours (approximately 12 hours per week)
• 6 credits requires 210 total fieldwork hours (approximately 15 hours per week)
• 7 credits requires 252 total fieldwork hours (approximately 18 hours per week)
• 8 credits requires 294 total fieldwork hours (approximately 21 hours per week)
• 9 credits requires 336 total fieldwork hours (approximately 24 hours per week)
• 10 credits requires 378 total fieldwork hours (approximately 27 hours per week)
• 11 credits requires 420 total fieldwork hours (approximately 30 hours per week)
• 12 credits requires 462 total fieldwork hours (approximately 33 hours per week)

Externship credit is “in class” credit under the Law School’s rules. You may register for Externship I even if you have taken Summer Externship.

Externship II is for students who have previously taken Externship I during a fall or spring semester. It may be taken for up to 10 credits. The fieldwork hours requirements are as follows:

• 3 credits requires 140 total fieldwork hours (approximately 10 hours per week)
• 4 credits requires 182 total fieldwork hours (approximately 13 hours per week)
• 5 credits requires 224 total fieldwork hours (approximately 16 hours per week)
• 6 credits requires 266 total fieldwork hours (approximately 19 hours per week)
• 7 credits requires 308 total fieldwork hours (approximately 22 hours per week)
• 8 credits requires 350 total fieldwork hours (approximately 25 hours per week)
• 9 credits requires 392 total fieldwork hours (approximately 28 hours per week)
• 10 credits requires 434 total fieldwork hours (approximately 31 hours per week)

Is Externship valuable only for students who want to work in public service fields?

No. The Externship course allows you to work with lawyers and to experience what it is like to work as a lawyer. You will build skills that are transferable to all kinds of legal work. Many
students who have taken the course in the past have gone into practice areas quite different from the offices in which they were placed. Yet, they consistently report that the placement was valuable for them. Some students use the experience to try out fields they might be interested in for their careers; others use it to experience something different from what they will be doing after they graduate.

**Why should I take the Externship course?**

- It is a great learning experience, letting you apply the knowledge you’ve learned in law school to actual practice settings.
- It gives you practice at being a professional within a support structure of both a fieldwork supervisor and a faculty member.
- It is a great way to try out a field that you may or may not want to work in later. You learn about your own placement and also about those of your classmates, through classroom discussion.
- It creates networking opportunities. Some students have secured temporary or permanent jobs at either their placement sites or through contacts developed during the placement.
- It enhances your resume, giving you a list of specific skills and experiences that you have gained through the fieldwork.
- It also demonstrates initiative and that you are eager to supplement your classroom learning with legal work. Prospective employers are impressed to see Externship on your resume.

**What do I do if I want more information?**

Contact Professor Tim Floyd, at floyd_tw@law.mercer.edu, who will be glad to answer your questions.

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