Macon Externship Program
Frequently Asked Questions

(The information below applies to the regular Externship program for students who are taking their classes on the Macon campus. There is a separate FAQ for Externships in the Atlanta Program.)

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 regular class sessions. Class for Externship I meets for two hours every week. The classroom seminar includes assigned readings, weekly submission of reflective journals, and class discussion, all of which are designed to help you learn from your fieldwork experience. Students who have previously taken Externship I register for Externship II. The requirements for Externship II are similar, except that the class sessions meet every other week instead of weekly.

What kinds of placements are available?

There are a wide variety of placements available. The work must be for a governmental or non-profit employer, 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.

Examples of placements for past two to three years include: District Attorney’s Offices in Middle Georgia (Macon, Houston, and Ocmulgee Judicial Circuits); Public Defender offices in Middle Georgia (Houston, Ocmulgee, and Towaliga Circuits); Georgia Legal Services Program, Macon office; the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Middle District of Georgia; the Federal Defender Program for the Middle District of Georgia; Court Appointed Special Advocates; Crisis Line and Safe House; Macon-Bibb County Attorney; Private lawyer doing pro bono immigration work; Georgia Appleseed Center for Law and Justice; the City Attorney for the City of Warner Robins; the Georgia Department of Corrections Legal Department; Robins Air Force Base JAG office; Georgia Office of the Capital Defender, Macon office.

In other years, students have worked in other settings. If you are interested in working in a judge’s chambers for credit, you should register for Judicial Field Placement rather than Externship.
Our regular placements are in the Central Georgia area; however, we will approve placements that are not local as long as you can make it work for your schedule and the employer fits our guidelines.

If you are otherwise eligible and the fieldwork supervisor agrees, you may be certified under Georgia’s Third Year Practice Act for your externship work, meaning that you can appear in court.

**How do I get placed with an extern supervisor?**

We will place you with one of our regular externship partners or you may work with us to arrange a placement with an eligible field supervisor for whom you want to work. We will work with you during the weeks preceding registration for the semester to line up your placement, based upon your preferences and available placements. Most supervisors require an interview with students before approving a placement, and some allow us to make the decision. In either event, our goal is for all students to have lined up their placement for the fall semester by registration in April and for the spring semester by registration in November.

Before you can register for the course, you must submit an Externship Application. The link to the Externship Application can be found within the externship material on the law school’s webpage. Click on the “Experiential Education” link on the law school’s home page. Then on the left side of the screen click the “Externship” link. See, [http://law.mercer.edu/academics/experientialeducation/externships.cfm](http://law.mercer.edu/academics/experientialeducation/externships.cfm) Deadline for fall semester will be in late March and the deadline for spring semester will be in late October. The application is quite short; it asks a bit about your background and your placement preferences so that we can do the best job of matching you with the right placement. It is not onerous to apply. When your application has been approved by the externship faculty member, the Registrar’s Office will be notified that you should be registered for the class. Also, please have an updated resume uploaded in BearBoard prior to completing the application. Placements will require at a minimum a resume, and many also require a cover letter and writing sample.

**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 or either 3 or 4 hours credit. To receive 3 hours of credit, you must complete fieldwork of at least 84 hours (about 6 hours per week); for 4 hours, you must work at least 126 hours (about 9 hours per week). Students who have already taken Externship I register instead for Externship II. You can take Externship II for either 2 or 3 credits; for 3 credits, you must work a total of 140 fieldwork hours, and for 2 credits you work 100 fieldwork hours.

You will arrange a regular work schedule with your field supervisor, and your fieldwork should be spread relatively evenly throughout the semester. Most students and supervisors find that it works best to spread your fieldwork over two to three days a week so that you are working in blocks of time. Therefore, we recommend that you arrange the rest of your schedule so that you
have morning or afternoon blocks of time at least two days a week. Externship credit is “in class” credit under the Law School’s rules. You may register for Externship I and/or II even if you have taken Summer Externship.

**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, Professor Mark Jones, at jones_ml@law.mercer.edu, or Tre Dekle, at dekle_g@law.mercer.edu who can answer your questions and/or suggest students you can talk with who have completed the course.

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