



Best Practices for Remote Externships

Due to COVID-19, Colorado Law externs are working remotely, which means many supervisors are also teleworking and remain responsible for overseeing extern engagement. While it is becoming more common for lawyers to telework, it is uncommon for newer lawyers (let alone students) to have this option. While this may be great practice for externs' future careers, for many externs and perhaps some supervisors, this is a major adjustment.

Even though they will be working remotely, students are still required to work a minimum number of hours (depending on how many credits the student is earning), keep a timesheet, set learning goals, complete a series of reflective exercises, submit an end of semester writing sample, and have periodic check-ins with the externship faculty. We also continue to ask you as the supervisor to confirm your extern's learning goals and complete an end of semester final supervisor evaluation.

If you have questions, concerns, or need help navigating the remote externship, please contact us at lawexternships@colorado.edu.

To help externs be as successful as possible and to help support you as their supervisor during this challenging time, we share the following tips and best practices for working with remote externs.

• **Before Externship Starts:**

- Supervisors should **preplan at least one long-term research assignment**. This is helpful if the student completes work on a short-term assignment and does not have another short-term assignment lined up. This will keep the student engaged in meaningful work.
- Supervisors should **preplan at least one training or CLE that the student can participate in**. This can help the student accomplish networking goals and student may find it useful in developing formal skills in a particular area of law. This is also a good way for the student to stay busy.
- Students should have a *detailed externship work schedule*. Ideally, this schedule was discussed with the supervisor when completing the externship agreement.

• **Day 1 of Externship: Orientation**

- Orientation via **video conference** with supervisor and student.
- Student should share *detailed externship work schedule* with supervisor.
- Student should review externship program requirements with supervisor.
 - These requirements include:

- Writing sample to be submitted to externship program director at end of semester (student)
- Timesheet (student)
- Mid-semester evaluation (student),
- Reflective exercises (student),
- Goal setting (student and supervisor),
- Final evaluation (student and supervisor each submit a different final evaluation form)
- **Communication is key!**
- Supervisor should share their work and personal schedule/obligations to **set expectations** about when the student should expect to get a hold of supervisor.
 - Does the supervisor have access to email and phone all the time, or only certain days and times?
 - Supervisor should tell students how to get a hold of them. Email? Phone? Text? Microsoft Teams?
 - We encourage supervisor talking to students about how the COVID situation has affected the supervisors work and personal life. Does the supervisor have young kids at home?
 - Supervisor should ask the student how this experience has affected the student. Is the student doing ok? How did the experience of finishing classes remotely go?
 - This conversation humanizes the supervisor and student to one another.
- **Set up standing meeting with supervisor and student. *At least once per week for one hour, but ideally twice per week for at least 30 minutes.***
- If the supervisor has multiple student externs over the summer, we suggest setting up *additional* check in meetings every other week with all students, which helps foster a sense of community.
- If organization is has multiple student externs over the summer, we suggest virtual networking opportunities for students and attorneys.
 - Ideas: virtual trivia, virtual coffee breaks, virtual lunches, guest speakers, and including students in office-wide staff meetings and CLE's.
- **Assignment of Work & Logistics** – Supervisor should lead this part of the meeting
 - *Who will primarily assign student work? Who else in the organization may assign work to the student? What is a student to do if they have a question about an assignment, but can't get a hold of the attorney who assigned the project?*
 - *Do all assignments have to go through the supervisor, or can the attorney assigning the work approach the student directly?*
 - *How do students submit assignments? Email? Shared Drive?*
 - *Will students have an organization email account, or should they use their law school or gmail account for email correspondence?*
- Supervisors should discuss **Ethical considerations** with externs (focusing on issues that are more likely to come up when working remotely).
 - **Rule 1.6 (Confidentiality):** what does a student's physical workspace look like? Can they make calls in a confidential place? Do students have access to your organization's VPN? Do they have access to encrypted email? Do students have a place to securely store confidential files and work? Do students have access to a printer/shredder at home?

- **Rule 1.7 (Conflict of Interest)**
 - **Rule 5.5 (Unauthorized Practice of Law)**
 - Supervisor should ask student to **track assignments in detail** (this will help facilitate weekly or bi-weekly meetings).
 - Supervisor should share with students if/how the COVID situation has changed the nature of the work that agency is focusing on. Did priorities change? Did the workflow change?
 - Supervisors should tell students that **it is ok to take breaks during the day**. Students want to make a good impression, and it can be harder to do this in a remote setting. Some students have reported feeling guilty taking short breaks during the day. Please tell them it's ok to go for a walk, etc.
 - Supervisors should acknowledge the difficulty that this situation has caused all of us, and that they are committed to making sure the student has a great externship experience, nonetheless.
- **Standing weekly or bi-weekly meetings**
 - At least once per week for one hour, but ideally twice per week for at least 30 minutes.
 - These meetings are in addition to day-to-day correspondence between supervisors and students about assignments.
 - Highly recommend using **video conference software** for the meeting.
 - Students have access to Zoom through University, so you can empower the student to set up the meeting on Zoom and share the link with the supervisor.
 - **Who sets the agenda?** At the beginning of the semester, we recommend the supervisor set the meeting agenda, but we hope that over time the *supervisor will encourage the student to set the agenda*.
 - Discuss:
 - **Personal:** how are things going with the student in their personal life? Are they doing ok? Supervisor can share how things are going in their personal life.
 - **Professional:**
 - **Status of Assignments:**
 - Although supervisors hesitate to give students strict deadlines, research shows that students do well with structure and guidance. Therefore, we recommend you give the student a **deadline**, even if it's a soft deadline that can be adjusted if needed.
 - Make sure the student has enough work to do, but not so much that they are feeling overwhelmed.
 - Give the student an opportunity to ask follow-up questions about an assignment he/she/they are currently working on.
 - If it looks like the student is near the completion of an assignment, discuss plans for giving the student the next assignment.
 - **Feedback on assignments:**
 - While you might have made and sent edits to a student assignment in the document itself or via Track Changes, we recommend reviewing the suggested edits and giving students

feedback over a video call. The weekly or bi-weekly meeting is a good time for this!

- Give the student an opportunity to ask follow-up questions.
- Think about which completed assignment the student can use as a writing sample for submission to the externship office.
- **General Engagement and Opportunities:**
 - What upcoming CLE and networking opportunities are there for office staff? Are these CLES and meetings that the student can be a part of?
 - Are there areas of the law that a student was hoping to learn about or do research on, but has not had a chance? Is there someone in the office who is working on a project that the student may be interested in working with?
 - Supervisor and student can discuss ways that the student can network (virtually) and begin thinking about ways to land a full-time postgraduate job in this area of law. How did the supervisor end up in this field? Are there professional organizations that the supervisor recommends the students join?
 - Is there a junior attorney at the agency that the student can talk to about navigating a job search in this area?
- **Final tip:** If working in different time zones, try to avoid early morning and late afternoon meetings. However, if there is a remote guest speaker or a remote training very early or very late that the student can participate in, please suggest it and give student the option to participate.

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