

Course Requirements and FAQs

Basic course requirements for the Externship Program:

An externship in the Externship Program requires students to complete fieldwork hours, which vary depending on the credit hours sought, and participate in a corresponding seminar, which is not separately graded.

1. Credit – Students may earn six (6) credit pass/fail hours (4 credits through the field placement and 2 through the seminar) through their externship in a single semester.
 - a. Students may earn up to twelve (12) credits in externships; these credits are applied toward the total number of pass/fail credits students can apply toward their degree, which is ninety (90).
 - i. Note: At TMSL, this means that students may complete a *maximum* of two (2) externships.
 - ii. Note: TMSL students may only participate in each type of externship *once*. Thus, if a student has completed the Civil Externship and they want to participate in a second, *they may only participate in the Criminal Law Externship or Judicial Externship*.
2. Experiential Credit Requirement – All externships can count toward satisfying the school's six (6) credit experiential learning requirement.
3. Field Hours & Length –
 - a. Civil, Criminal, and Judicial Externship students: students in either externship must complete at least **200** field work hours.

The externship course is not complete until the end of the regular semester. It is expected that the fieldwork hours will be spread out over the duration of the entire semester, although the hours need not be equally distributed per week.

For fall and spring semesters, students must work a minimum of ten (10) weeks. For summer, the minimum is five (5) weeks.

4. Work – Students must engage in legal and law-related tasks. These tasks vary with supervisor and assignment, but usually include legal research, writing briefs and memoranda, drafting pleadings, investigating cases, interviewing clients/witnesses, planning or implementing case strategies with supervisor, observing legal proceedings, and assisting with depositions, hearings, or trials.
5. Seminar – The seminar, for the Civil, Criminal, and Judicial Externships, is an opportunity for students to critically reflect on their experiences, explore their professional development, and discuss issues to help them succeed at their placements. The seminar is

part of the externship course and not separately graded. During the term, students set goals, keep a record of hours, submit reflective journals, and engage in self-assessments.

6. Compensation – Students *may* receive both compensation and academic credit upon documented pre-approval by the Director of Experiential Learning (“Director”). See the FAQs section below for further guidelines.
7. Supervised Practice Card – Externship students who have completed sixty (60) hours may apply for a Supervised Practice Card from the State Bar of Texas, which allows a student to practice law and appear in court under attorney supervision, with client consent. Each student must have a licensed attorney to sponsor the Bar Card. The rules pertaining to Supervised Practice (including how to apply for a Card) can be found [here](#).
8. Timesheets – Students shall complete **timesheets** signed by their placement supervisor on a weekly basis. Once signed, the student extern shall tender the completed and signed time sheet to their externship professor by no later than the end of the following week. As part of their timesheets, students must also document contemporaneous reflections of their week’s work. Such reflections should include the tasks they enjoyed, the tasks they found difficult, and how these tasks are likely to help them in their careers as attorneys. No late time sheets will be accepted; thus, requiring the student extern to make up any missing time.
9. Enrollment Limits – In the fall an spring, enrollment in the Civil, Criminal, and Judicial externship classes is capped at fifteen (15) students *per class* (45 total). In the summer, such enrollment is capped at twenty (20) students per class (60 total). If you are seeking to enroll in an externship class after the cap has been met, you may only do so after you receive written permission from the Director.

FAQs

Q: Can a student satisfy their pro bono requirements through the externship?

A: Possibly. If the placement is a qualifying pro bono placement, then any hours the student completes exceeding the minimum hours required for the number of credits in which the student is enrolled may be applied toward meeting the pro bono requirement.

Q: Can a student participate in two externships?

A: Possibly. Students may participate in two externships in separate semesters through the TMSL Externship Program so long as one is Civil and the other is Criminal or Judicial. *Students may not participate in two of the same type of externship, even if they are different offices or different divisions of the same office* (IE, a student may not extern for a district attorney’s office in the fall and then for a criminal defense firm in the spring).

Q: Can a student extern where there is a familial relationship?

A: Students *may not* receive credit if the field supervisor is a family member or a direct supervisor of the proposed field supervisor. If there is a family relationship between the student and someone at the placement, the student and/or field supervisor must disclose this.

Q: Can a student enroll in more than one externship in a semester?

A: **No.** The potential for conflicts of interest issues is present in addition to concern of students overcommitting their time.

Q: Can a student take a clinic and externship in the same semester?

A: Generally, no, for the same reasons above. Students may petition the Director for permission to waive this prohibition.

Q: Can a student work at a job/volunteer and extern at the same time?

A: Generally, yes. However, students must recognize the potential for conflicts of interest issues. Students must disclose the intention to work/volunteer to the Director. The student must get approval from the field supervisor, the work supervisor, and Director of Experiential Learning. Failing to disclose and obtain necessary approval would be considered a violation the Thurgood Honor Code Rules and Procedures.

Q: Can a student receive both compensation and academic credit for an externship?

A: **Yes.** Students may receive both compensation and academic credit for an externship only after receiving documented pre-approval from the Director.

Paid externships, just like unpaid, must be pre-approved by the Director before a student can be enrolled in the course. See **Application Process/Apply**. Field supervisors of paid externs, just like those of unpaid externs, must agree to fulfill all the responsibilities and requirements of the program. See **Field Supervisor Responsibilities, & Field Supervisor Eligibility and Application Process**.

When receiving pay, the student must notify the Director of this fact at the time of applying for approval to enroll in the course. If, after approval, the student's status changes from unpaid to paid, the student must immediately notify the Director.

If a student is currently working at an externship site, the student cannot receive credit for work that is like what s/he has been doing. At the time of application, the student must submit a statement detailing the scope of current duties, and outlining proposed new goals and tasks which demonstrate how the student will be engaged in work that can increase the student's knowledge, skills and ethics through this placement.

Externship sites are under no obligation to pay for a student's time on an externship. Payment is completely determined by the externship site and the individual student. The law school will not

get involved in any negotiation or dispute about payment or the amount thereof. Please consult Career Services for guidance on typical pay for law clerks at the placement type.

An externship is a class for which students pay tuition and receive credit. The law school's foremost concern is to ensure a structured educational experience that allows students to gain additional skills and knowledge during their externship. The goals of the externship program do not change if students are paid for their work.

Q: Can a student convert a current paid/volunteer position to an externship and receive credit?

A: Generally, yes. The field supervisor/organization must provide assurances that the student will be engaged in a significantly different learning experience and outline the work the student will be doing. If the organization is not a currently approved placement, the placement must apply for approval. Then, upon approval of the Director of Experiential Learning, the student may complete an additional semester at the same placement.

Q: Can a student get credit retroactively for an internship in which they are currently working or have completed?

A: **No.** All externships must be pre-approved, and credit cannot be awarded to hours completed before approval and enrollment in the course.