

## **Vermont Law School's Externship Work Commitment to Earn JD Credit**

Externs are required to meet the following work requirements to earn JD credit:

### For Full-Time Externship:

15 calendar weeks of work on a full-time basis is required. The course offers a total of 13 credits toward your JD degree. 11 credits are for the work on site (“practicum”), and are referred to as “experiential credits,” for purposes of the VLS experiential credit requirement. Those credits are graded on a pass-fail basis. Two additional credits are earned for a companion academic component. These two credits are letter-graded, and they are referred to as “classroom credits.”

1. How many hours must a student work to earn 11 pass-fail credits for a full-time externship?

Full-time externships are designed to simulate the demands of a legal professional’s work load and regular schedule. The practicum work requirement is based on “calendar weeks,” and students must work the full-time weekly work schedule of the office in which they are placed for 15 calendar weeks. That may mean more than 40 hours a week at the work site in any one, several, or all of the 15 calendar weeks of the externship semester. It may also mean that some students in each semester work substantially more or less than their classmates while earning the same number of credits.

If the office in which a student works is closed for a federal or state holiday or other reason, the student does not have to make up that day or those days that occur during the semester. We count “calendar weeks,” not hours or days, in determining whether the 11 credits for a full-time externship have been earned.

That same approach allows for a reasonable amount of time out of the office due to illness, as well as to participate in activities qualifying as “professional development,” such as a reasonable number of educational conferences, or job interviews. Time devoted to the more regular law review or journal tasks in a given semester, AAA briefs, or extracurricular activities for a VLS or other organization does not qualify as “professional development.” A key role in a law review or journal symposium may qualify as “professional development,” but a student serving in such role should get approval to count days spent on campus during symposia from their externship faculty supervisor. The same rule applies to participating in team competitions for AAA or other similar courses or extracurricular team or individual pursuits.

Students must have approval of their supervising attorney or judge, along with approval from their faculty supervisor for any days spent out of the office during the regular work schedule of the site in order for those days to count toward the externship work commitment. An extra week or number of days extending your externship end date may

be added if total absences, including those for illness, are determined by your faculty supervisor to have had a negative effect on your externship experience.

“Telecommuting” time does not count toward the earned credit total. The only limited exceptions may be where weather conditions make travel to the work site impossible or unsafe. Approval to work off-site due to other unforeseen circumstances is at the discretion of your faculty supervisor.

2. Does work on assignments for the “classroom component” count toward the work commitment to earn credit in a full-time externship?

Classroom component assignments requiring conferences with your supervising attorney/judge, your faculty supervisor, or any conference calls/skypes for that component scheduled during the regular work day by your faculty supervisor “count” toward the full-time work commitment to earn 11 credits.

Time spent writing journals and a final paper, drafting evaluation paperwork for the externship, work on other course work for VLS or another institution, law review/journal work, AAA briefs or preparation for any competitions does not count toward that work commitment.

You are expected to work on assigned legal work from the externship work site while in the office on a full-time basis in order to earn the practicum credits. If you do not have enough work to do at your externship site, you should ask your supervising attorney for assignments and/or consult with your faculty supervisor about how to approach your supervisor for additional assignments.

3. Can I take time out of the regular externship work week to attend or participate in the work and assignments of a regularly scheduled class at VLS, at another law school, or online?

No. Your externship “practicum” work is a regularly scheduled class, and you are required to work at your externship site on a full-time basis for 15 calendar weeks. You may not enroll in a course, on campus or otherwise, that conflicts with the regular work schedule of your externship. If you enroll in a course in addition to your externship course, you may not work on the work of that additional course during the regular work week of your externship. This restriction applies whether the course is a distance learning or residential course at VLS or another institution.

4. Can I “make-up” time I miss by during the regular work week by working at home on nights, weekends, or holidays?

Many lawyers and legal professionals work at home on nights, weekends, and holidays, and that is in addition to a regular work week. While you are not required to work those days (or nights) during your externship, you may not “make up” missed regular business

days at your externship site by working extra hours, weekend days, or holidays. Again, the program seeks to simulate, within reason, the professional and other demands of those engaged in the profession with a law license and/or JD.

#### For Part-time Externship:

A part-time work schedule in a professional office under the supervision of a lawyer, JD (where permitted) or judge in judicial chambers is required. Students may earn 4, 5, or 6 credits depending upon how much time they spend at the work site during the semester. The credits are all graded on a pass-fail basis. There is a classroom component, but no additional credits are awarded.

1. How many hours must a student work to earn credits for a part-time externship?

Each credit requires the student to spend 3 hours per week, on average, over the 15 week semester. That translates to 12 hours per week, on average, for 4 credits, 15 hours per week for 5 credits, and 18 hours per week for 6 credits. Work on site must span the 15 week academic calendar, although time worked in any given week may vary.

Students register for the desired number of credits, but cannot change that total after the drop-add deadline for the semester of the externship. It is important to plan carefully to avoid the possibility of not meeting the credit requirement. While 4 and 5 credit externships may be workable with a schedule allowing for only two full days per week at the work site, 6 credits is not always possible with just two full work days open on the student's course calendar for the semester.

2. What does not count as time spent toward the work commitment for my externship?

No credit is given for sick time requiring you to be out of the office. Only the total number of hours working on site will be counted toward the credit total for which the student enrolls.

Time commuting to and from the worksite does not count toward the part-time externship work commitment.

Telecommuting is not permitted in a part-time externship. The only limited exceptions may be where weather conditions make travel to the work site impossible or unsafe. Approval to work off-site due to other unforeseen circumstances is at the discretion of your faculty supervisor.

3. Does work on assignments for the "classroom component" count toward the work commitment to earn credit in a part-time externship?

Time spent writing journals, a final essay, or preparing evaluation paperwork does not count toward the work commitment for your part-time externship. Conferences with

your attorney/judge supervisor that are required by the externship course do count toward the work commitment. And, any required conferences with your faculty supervisor, whether done electronically or on-campus, count toward the work commitment.

The work of the classroom component should take no more than one hour per week, on average, to complete.

4. Can I “make-up” time by working at home on nights, weekends, or holidays?

No.

5. What days of the week must I work for my part-time externship?

Your work schedule is between you and your attorney/judge/professional supervisor in the field. Whatever works for you is likely acceptable to your attorney/judge supervisor. However, some works sites such as prosecutors and public defenders have regular court days each week that offer students the opportunity to observe and possibly stand up in court under a student practice rule. It would be advisable to schedule externship days (and classes on campus) to offer the best opportunity possible to participate in those court days. Similarly, the Vermont Legislature is in session during spring semesters. But the Legislature is not in session on Mondays.