

Brooklyn Law School Externship Program: COVID-19 Update

March 17, 2020

Dear Mentor Attorneys,

We hope you are faring well under the stress of the Covid-19 situation. Thank you for your efforts to continue mentoring and educating BLS student externs.

Attached are Dean Michael Cahill's messages sent to the BLS community this week regarding the law school's plans to address Covid-19 concerns. Basically, the law school will start spring break early, as of this evening, and when school resumes on Monday, March 23, it will do so remotely. Students will not have to return to campus and will attend classes by video conference for at least a week, and possibly longer.

This plan, and any contingency plans your workplace has implemented, obviously raise concerns regarding our students' ability to work the required hours for externship credit. While we want to remain flexible as the situation evolves, we know you would appreciate some guidance here, and so have adopted the following policy to cover any situation in which you and/or student externs are unable to come to the workplace this semester:

Working Remotely

- The usual requirement for student externs to complete work while present at the placement site is waived.
- Placement sites are requested to make accommodations to allow students to work remotely to perform externship assignments. If your workplace does not permit students to work on current matters outside of the placement site, please try to assign research projects unrelated to current matters that students can complete off site.
- Work with students now to ensure that they have the technological capacity and information necessary to work remotely should that need arise.
- Ask students who are working remotely to work the same days/times as originally established at the placement. If illness, quarantine, or family care responsibilities necessitate some changes, ask them to send you an updated schedule.

Providing Supervision and Checking In

- If you or student externs are working remotely, please set up regular check-in phone calls, ideally with video (e.g., Skype, Zoom, or Facetime).
- Students will continue to submit timesheets on CORE, and we appreciate you reviewing them with an eye to providing feedback on how they can maintain their productivity under the circumstances.
- If you are unable to continue to supervise students due to illness, quarantine, or caretaker responsibilities, please provide the Externship Program with contact information for an alternate supervisor. If there is no alternate supervisor available, please let us know so we can work with students to help them complete course requirements.

Learning Plan Modification

- As circumstances require, students and Mentor Attorneys are welcome to modify the Learning Plan goals established at the beginning of the semester, including adding the goal: “learning the skill of effectively working remotely.”
- Frontload work assignments and observation opportunities to get ahead on externship goals and fieldwork hours while the opportunity is still available.
- For students working remotely, help them design ways to continue to learn effectively in a virtual office, including your professional tips for staying focused, preventing a feeling of isolation, and creating a supportive remote work environment.

Externship Fieldwork Credit

If circumstances interfere with students completing the required fieldwork hours by the end of the semester, we will assess each situation on a case-by-case basis. Credit may still be awarded if a student has substantially completed course requirements. Alternatively, we may ask you to permit students to continue working at the placement site beyond the semester to afford additional time to complete fieldwork hours.

Please contact me or the program administrator Alisa Adolph if you have any questions or need further information.