

**Spring 2020 Externship Courses—Fieldwork Requirement in
Covid-19 Crisis
March 25, 2020**

We are deeply grateful to our Mentor Attorneys and field placement sites as they continue to mentor and teach Brooklyn Law School externs during the Covid-19 pandemic, to our students who are showing much resilience and fortitude in these uncertain times, and to our seminar faculty who are stepping up to support our students while remote teaching.

With the government-mandated shut-down of New York State as of March 22, all Brooklyn Law School student externs are now performing fieldwork remotely, likely for the remainder of the spring semester. As previously communicated, under the circumstances the law school is waiving the usual requirement for student externs to perform their fieldwork while present at the placement site. For suggestions for alternative work assignments that can be performed remotely, please see the attached document.

We are now further adjusting the SP20 Externship Course fieldwork requirement as follows:

Fieldwork Requirement/Accommodations

1. Reduction in Hours. The SP20 Externship Course fieldwork requirement is reduced from 168 hours to 127.5 hours to earn 3 credits, based on the ABA minimum for awarding credit of 42.5 hours/credit. (Seminar credit and requirements are unchanged.) The new requirement of 127.5 hours is a floor, not a ceiling. Students are permitted, indeed encouraged, to continue working through the end of the semester if circumstances allow, including working remotely on any projects the placement site deems of value.

2. Professional Responsibility. As always, students must exit professionally from their placement sites (see *Externship Student Manual*, p. 23). Students and Mentor Attorneys should coordinate to ensure completion and/or transition of any ongoing projects and fulfillment of professional responsibilities.

3. Fieldwork Hours Accommodations. For students whose circumstances will interfere with completing 127.5 fieldwork hours by

the end of the spring semester (April 24) we will make the following accommodations:

- Students may continue to perform fieldwork for the placement site beyond the end of the semester, subject to Mentor Attorney consent, setting an end date, and consultation with the externship faculty director.
- Students may propose a plan, subject to externship faculty director approval, to perform faculty-supervised research/writing assignments that occupy additional hours sufficient to substantially satisfy the fieldwork requirement.
- If a student is unable to continue working at all, e.g., due to illness or caregiver obligations, the student should promptly contact the Mentor Attorney and externship faculty director to discuss other possible accommodations.

4. Notice to Externship Faculty. As soon as possible, students who anticipate needing one of the fieldwork hours accommodations listed above, should email the appropriate externship faculty director with the **subject line: FIELDWORK ACCOMMODATION:**

- Prof. Jodi Balsam: Civil Practice, Criminal Practice, Judicial, and Sports Law Externships
- Prof. Debbie Bechtel: Corporate and Real Estate Externship
- Prof. Minna Kotkin: Employment Law Externship
- Prof. Karen Porter: Health Law Practice and Policy Externship

Also as previously communicated and with some elaboration here, the Externship Program offers the following guidelines to facilitate successful remote completion of the fieldwork requirement.

Working Remotely

1. Students and Mentor Attorneys should establish a plan for remote work that:

- Ideally enables students to continue working on ongoing matters, logging the recommended 14 fieldwork hours/week.
- Alternatively, if the Mentor Attorney determines that a student may not work on ongoing matters outside of the placement site,

assigns students research projects unrelated to ongoing matters that can be completed off site.

- Provides guidance about confidentiality and other ethical/policy concerns.

2. To the extent possible, students should work the same days/times as originally established at the placement. If the Covid-19 pandemic necessitates changes, students should provide their Mentor Attorneys with an updated schedule.

3. Students and Mentor Attorneys are welcome to modify Learning Plan goals established at the beginning of the semester to accommodate the current situation, including adding the goals: "learning the skill of effectively working remotely"; "understanding and learning to use to support crisis management"; "building personal resiliency, fortitude, and flexibility."

Providing Supervision and Checking In

1. Students and Mentor Attorneys should set up regular check-in phone calls, ideally with video (e.g., Skype, Zoom, or Facetime).

2. Students should continue to submit timesheets on CORE, and Mentor Attorneys should review them with an eye to providing feedback on how students can maintain their productivity under the circumstances.

3. Mentor Attorneys should help students design ways to continue to learn effectively in a virtual office, including professional tips for staying focused, preventing a feeling of isolation, and creating a supportive remote work environment.

4. If a Mentor Attorney is unable to continue to supervise students because of the Covid-19 pandemic, 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 identify alternative fieldwork opportunities.

[View Attachment: Covid19 Remote Work Assignment Ideas.docx](#)

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