

UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON SCHOOL OF LAW

**POLICY ON FIELD PLACEMENTS
(Superseded effective January 2007)**

A. REQUIREMENTS

Standard 305 of the ABA Standards for Approval of Law Schools sets limits on the awarding of academic credit for "participation in studies or activities away from the law school or in a format that does not involve attendance at regularly scheduled class sessions...." Standard 305(d) provides that the "studies or activities shall be approved in advance and periodically reviewed following the school's established procedures for approval of the curriculum." The purpose of this periodic review is to ensure that the educational experience is of high quality, that it is meeting its stated goals, that the students are being properly evaluated in terms of their academic achievements, and that they are being adequately supervised by qualified persons. [ABA Standard 305(e).]

Interpretation 305-4 directs that law schools to "develop, publish and communicate to students and field instructors a statement that describes the educational objectives of the program." That is the purpose of this paper.

B. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES - ENROLLMENT/CREDIT HOUR LIMITS

The successful practice of law demands the application of a variety of skills. Offering every student an opportunity to develop all of those skills in the traditional law school setting is effectively impossible. Nevertheless, permitting students to take part in the operation of the legal system in a setting outside of the law school is one way to introduce different material as well as new environments in which to observe and take an active role in the delivery of legal services to clients and the legal system generally.

Field placements offer an opportunity for students to develop writing skills, additional knowledge of specific areas of the substantive and procedural law, professional responsibility and ethical sensitivity, and to enhance their personal skills in dealing with a wide range of persons involved in the legal system. These skills are essential to a successful lawyer, and field placements often are the only opportunity for a student to develop and employ these skills. Therefore, it is essential that these skills be in the minds of the students, the field placement supervisors, and the faculty in authorizing, participating and evaluating these placements. Since each placement will differ from every other in a number of ways, it is especially important that the participants in the programs understand the expectations of performance that underlie the approval of field placements.

Students may receive credit for participation in a field placement course only if the course meets the requirements of this Policy Statement and the Approval and Evaluation Policies set out below. No more than three credit hours may be awarded for any one field placement, and no more than four credit hours may be credited toward the total credit hours required for graduation.

C. APPROVAL

Credit for field placements is available only to students who have successfully completed the first year of law school. If a student enrolls in a summer session field placement at the

conclusion of their first year, and thereafter they are placed on academic probation as a result of their performance in the first year, they will be removed from the field placement and receive a refund of any tuition paid for that course. Any student on academic probation is ineligible for a field placement.

All courses involving field placements will be reviewed by the Academic Affairs Committee at least every three years. Approval of the course depends on its continuing compliance with the requirements of these policies.

D. FACULTY/SUPERVISOR COMMUNICATIONS

Field placements are most valuable as an adjunct to and enhancement of the educational program conducted within the law school. The success of these placements, therefore, requires that the students' activities be monitored by the full-time faculty to ensure that the programs complement each other. Thus, all field placements must include regular communication between the full-time faculty member and the field placement supervisor throughout the semester. Regular communication should involve at least four significant communications between the faculty member and the supervisor regarding the course and the student's performance in the course. One communication should occur prior to the commencement of the course, and another should occur after the conclusion of the course. The faculty member and the supervisor should communicate at least two other times during the semester of the placement, and at least one of these meetings should take place at the location of the field placement. The faculty member should ascertain during these communications that the student/s are or will be actively engaged in the workings of the office of the field placement, paying particular attention to the skills that the student/s may be developing as a part of the placement.

The faculty member, in communicating with the supervisor, must determine that the student/s is/are devoting sufficient time to the field placement, that the tasks performed by the student are appropriate, and that the field placement supervisor is evaluating the performance of the student/s on an ongoing basis. Continuing evaluation of student performance is particularly significant, and the supervisor should be communicating throughout the semester concerning that performance. Preferably, a written report to the faculty member from the supervisor detailing the ongoing evaluation should be submitted at least once during the semester. The supervisor must submit to the faculty member a final written evaluation of the student's performance by the earlier of ten days after the end of the semester or twenty days after the student's final visit to the placement site. This evaluation will include a statement regarding the time spent by the student at the placement site, a description of the tasks performed by the student, and a statement regarding the quality of the student's work performed as a part of the placement.

E. FACULTY/STUDENT COMMUNICATION

The faculty member overseeing any field placement should meet with the students enrolled in the course at least four times during the semester. At least one meeting should take place prior to the commencement of the field placement, and at least two other meetings should take place prior to the twelfth week of the semester (or its equivalent in a summer session). The initial meeting between the student/s and the faculty member is intended to permit a discussion of the professional and ethical responsibilities of the student/s and to address issues of substantive and procedural law relevant to the placement. Among the matters to be addressed at the remaining meetings are: the time devoted by the student to the placement, the tasks performed by the student, and a review of a sample of the student's work product in connection with the field placement. The concluding meeting

between the student/s and the faculty member also should include an evaluation of the field placement and the quality and extent of the guidance and evaluation of the student by the supervisor.

