

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Faculty, Students, and Independent Placement Field Supervisors  
FROM: Carol Chomsky, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs  
RE: Structuring Independent Field Placements

This memo is designed to give guidance to all those involved with designing, approving, and implementing independent field placements for law school credit pursuant to Law School Academic Rule 10.5(b). It outlines the requirements for such field placements imposed by the Law School academic rules and by the American Bar Association, the Association of American Law Schools, and the U.S. Department of Labor. We encourage students to arrange and engage in independent field placements, which can provide outstanding opportunities for hands-on experiences with lawyering skills and provide a bridge between law school and law practice. This memo is designed to ensure the educational quality of the field placements for which we allow academic credit, as well as ensuring compliance with the governing rules. It also is meant to satisfy the AALS Executive Committee requirement that law schools offering field placements “ensure the academic value of the program by setting out the goals and explaining how the program’s structure is designed to achieve those goals” and the ABA accreditation requirement that a law school with a field placement program “develop, publish and communicate to students and field instructors a statement that describes the educational objectives of the program.” The formal interpretations of the standards note that field placement programs present “unique challenges for the maintenance of educational quality” so they require “particular attention from the law school and the Accreditation Committee.”

The basic requirements for an independent field placement are set out in Law School Academic Rule 10.5:

- The student must engage in a minimum of 50 hours of work and/or observation for each credit earned, with a maximum of 3 credits allowed per field placement and no more than one field placement in any semester.
- The student must complete an Independent Field Placement Enrollment Form on which the student must describe the field placement project and the “educational objectives and how the placement is designed to accomplish them.”
- The student’s placement must be approved by a field supervisor and by a faculty supervisor; the faculty supervisor must be a full-time faculty member at the Law School.
- The field placement is to be graded Pass/Fail unless the supervising faculty member has sufficient direct observation and review of the field placement work to provide a letter grade. Pass/Fail is the norm.
- The student must keep a contemporaneous journal or otherwise reflect upon and evaluate the placement experience in response papers or other written product, to be reviewed by the faculty supervisor (not necessarily the field supervisor).

- The Field Placement Enrollment Form has space on it to specify how the faculty supervisor will evaluate the field placement work, as required by the Academic Rule.
  - Some kinds of supervision are required: The faculty supervisor must review timesheets reflecting dates and hours of field placement activities and the student's written reflections kept in a contemporaneous journal and submitted periodically to the faculty member.
  - The field supervisor must provide a written evaluation of the student's work, which must also be reviewed by the faculty supervisor.
  - The Enrollment Form should also specify any additional oversight by the faculty supervisor. The form lists review of written work completed by the student in the field placement, suitably redacted and regular communication with the student, beyond submission of the contemporaneous journal. Other methods of oversight may be added.

Under ABA rules as well as our own, the student may not receive academic credit for work for which the student receives compensation, though the student may receive reimbursement for reasonable out-of-pocket costs related to the placement (that is, extra out-of-pocket expenses incurred). In addition, the employer must not be paid for time worked by the intern. The student and field supervisor approval of the form indicates understanding of and compliance with those constraints. If the student expects to receive reimbursement (whether from the field placement host or a third party), the student must indicate that expectation on the IFP form and keep records of the associated expenses.

To ensure that the placement will fulfill academic and educational goals and satisfy Department of Labor guidelines, a field placement should be designed for the benefit of the intern, not for the benefit of the employer, and the field placement experience should be similar to training that would be given in an educational environment. The educational value should be documented on the IFP form, which asks for a description of the field placement, the specific educational objectives of the student, and the arrangements made for feedback and instruction from the field and faculty supervisors. The student should identify what the student expects to learn from the placement with respect to substantive law, legal skills, and professional values and describe how the placement activities will connect to those goals and produce the desired outcomes. The student should explain what arrangements have been made to provide educational value to the student. Examples of such arrangements include opportunities to observe hearings, to shadow lawyers in practice, to attend seminars or continuing education programming, to get individualized feedback on written or oral performance, and to meet regularly with attorneys in the office to learn about the broad array of responsibilities undertaken by them in their practice. It is not enough simply to identify substantive work activities and indicate that the student will learn from doing that work; feedback and instruction from the field supervisor and other attorneys must be part of the experience and should be described on the enrollment form.

In order to ensure that each field placement fulfills the educational requirements, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs will review each Enrollment Form and will approve the placement only if it satisfies the requirements described here. Field and faculty supervisors also have a responsibility to shape, or help the student to shape, the field placement experience to ensure a focus on education.

Please feel free to contact me for additional information or for clarification of these requirements. I can be reached at [choms001@umn.edu](mailto:choms001@umn.edu) or 612-625-2885.

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