UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA LAW SCHOOL
RULES FOR INDEPENDENT FIELD PLACEMENTS (IFPs)

Revised August 26, 2016

All enrolled students, faculty supervisors, and field supervisors must review these Rules. The Rules contain important information designed to ensure an appropriate educational experience and compliance with ABA accreditation requirements.

Note to Field and Faculty Supervisors: The most important part of these rules for you are sections 6 and 7, which discuss responsibilities for supervisors.

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1. Credits

A student may enroll in one IFP per semester for a maximum of 3 credits per semester. Students should also be aware of the aggregate cap on non-classroom credits in Academic Rule 3.1(b).

At least 50 hours of law-related activities are required per credit, including time spent: (a) working at the placement site; (b) performing assigned work off site; and (c) documenting and reflecting on the placement experience.

Permissible credit-earning activities are:
- fact gathering;
- research and writing;
- document drafting;
- attending court appearances or conferences with a supervising attorney;
- observing law-related activities within the placement organization;
- appearing in court or otherwise representing clients if the placement structure satisfies Minnesota’s Student Practice Rule; and
other activities at the discretion of the field supervisor and faculty supervisor if the activities are related to the host organization’s mission of providing legal advice or legal services.

2. Grading

The default grade basis is S/N. If the faculty supervisor will have sufficient information to assess the student’s performance, including access to the student’s work product (redacted as necessary), then the course may be approved for grading on the A/F or H/P/LP/F scales.

3. Eligibility for Experiential Learning Credit

A student may earn experiential learning credit for an IFP if the student, faculty supervisor, and field supervisor certify at the time of registration that:

1. The placement is primarily “experiential,” as defined below. The placement may include non-experiential components that are incidental to the primary focus on experiential learning.

2. The placement may be deemed “experiential” if it:

   (a) includes substantial lawyering experience under the direct supervision of the field supervisor who in turn consults with the faculty supervisor about the student’s performance;

   (b) integrates doctrine, theory, skills, and legal ethics;

   (c) engages students in performance of at least two of the following professional skills needed for competent and ethical participation as a member of the legal profession: problem-solving, interviewing, counseling, negotiation, fact development and analysis, trial practice, appellate practice, regulatory practice, document drafting, conflict resolution, organization and management of legal work, collaboration, and cultural competency;

   (d) develops the concepts underlying the professional skills being taught;

   (e) provides multiple opportunities for performance; and

   (f) provides opportunities for feedback from the field supervisor and for self-evaluation.

Note that most placements include some experiential elements. But the placement may count toward the experiential learning requirement only if it is primarily experiential. Students may not seek experiential learning credit unless they can demonstrate compliance with the “primarily” element.
4. IFP Educational Objectives and Comparison to Other Forms of Field Work

The Law School has several courses that enable a student to earn credit for an externship or field work (e.g., Judicial Externship, Immigration Field Placement). The IFP course supplements these other courses by enabling students to create a credit-earning program tailored to their particular goals and interests.

The Independent Field Placement program is designed to help students accomplish the following objectives:

- Apply knowledge and skills gained from academic studies to the practice environment.
- Learn new aspects of substantive law related to the practice area.
- Develop and improve legal skills, especially those specific to the practice area.
- Learn to be a reflective professional—to self-assess performance, to learn from experience and observation, and to comprehend and integrate new knowledge for future actions.
- Develop understanding of professional responsibility demands and challenges, especially those specific to the practice area.
- Develop legal problem-solving skills and learn to exercise professional judgment.
- Define career goals and create professional networks.
- Gain skills and knowledge necessary to work with individuals with life experiences different than the student’s own.
- Identify and pursue individual learning goals.

The student should keep the program objectives and the student’s individual learning goals in mind when identifying an appropriate placement. The student should also work with the faculty and field supervisors to ensure that the placement provides an opportunity to accomplish those objectives and goals.

Students and supervisors should consult that Law School’s Learning Outcomes to see where the placement might fit in the student’s overall program. The Learning Outcomes are at this link: https://www.law.umn.edu/sites/law.umn.edu/files/learning_outcomes_as_approved_by_faculty_5.5.16.pdf

5. Student’s Responsibilities

A. Set goals and identify field activities to achieve those goals. Each student should prepare a written statement of preliminary goals to help guide discussions with both the field and faculty supervisors. The educational objectives listed above can be a helpful starting point. Students should communicate those goals to the supervisors and work with them to identify appropriate activities and learning opportunities for the placement.

When evaluating potential placement sites, students should consider the following questions:
Will a placement help you in acquiring knowledge in a relevant practice area, acquaint you with the range and nature of work done by lawyers and other professionals in the practice area, and provide you an opportunity to perform a variety of relevant professional skills?

Have you had an enjoyable prior experience that you would like to continue as an IFP?

Is there a practice area you would like to explore?

Is there a different unit/department in an organization with which you have already worked that you would like to explore?

B. Find a Field Supervisor. The student must find a qualified supervisor who is willing to fulfill the duties specified in these Rules.

Several resources are available for locating placement sites. Organizations will often post openings for IFPs in Symplicity or PSJD. Even if an organization does not list a placement, students can often work with organizations to create new opportunities. Students can also work with the Career Center and the Minnesota Justice Foundation to identify organizations that can help achieve the educational goals.

When contacting an organization, students should be familiar with its basic operations and should be interested in learning from and contributing to the organization’s mission and clients. Applications should generally be sent by email. The email text should include a condensed version of the cover letter, and should attach PDFs of the full cover letter and a resume. Emails typically are similar to the following: “I am a ___ year student at the University of Minnesota Law School and I am interested in working with [NAME O ORGANIZATION] during the [fall/spring/summer] semester for XX hours per week as part of my school’s Independent Field Placement Program. My skills in XX and XX, as well as my experience in XX, will allow me to contribute to your work. I have attached my resume for your convenience. I can follow up via email, phone, or in person to answer your questions about the program and to explain my interest in your work. I understand that you are busy, so I will follow up in a week with a phone call.”

At an appropriate point in discussions with potential supervisors, students should send a copy of these Rules.

C. Find a Faculty Supervisor. The student must find a supervisor who is willing to fulfill the duties specified in these Rules.

Students should identify a site placement before reaching out to potential faculty supervisors, although in some instances a faculty member might be able to help find a site for a student. Information about faculty members’ areas of interest is contained in the faculty directory on the Law School’s website. When contacting potential faculty supervisors, students should explain the nature and objectives of the proposed placement.
D. Complete the Independent Field Placement (IFP) Enrollment Form. The IFP form asks for (1) a statement of the student’s specific learning goals for the placement, (2) a description of the student’s expected activities that will help accomplish those goals (including opportunities for observation and discussion as well as performing law-related tasks), and (3) identification of the arrangements for providing feedback and instruction from the field supervisor and others. The information on the form should be as specific as possible.

The student should explain on the IFP form, and discuss in detail with the field supervisor, the arrangements to provide educational value to the student, including but extending beyond feedback on written or other performance. Examples of such arrangements, to be identified on the IFP form, may 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. Placement activities may vary over the term, and additional opportunities for engagement may emerge, but it is important that the student and field supervisor at the outset identify a suitable range of activities that they expect will be included.

E. Written Reflections. The student must keep a contemporaneous journal or otherwise regularly reflect upon and evaluate the placement experience in response papers or other written product. The written reflections are reviewed by the faculty supervisor on a schedule agreed upon by the student and faculty supervisor. The reflections/journal are intended to be a confidential communication between the student and the faculty supervisor; they may be shared with the field supervisor only by agreement of the student after consultation with the faculty supervisor. Written reflections are a crucial mechanism to ensure attainment of the program’s educational objectives. It is through thinking and then writing that the student will effectively process the experience, recognizing what has been learned and incorporating that learning into the student’s professional development. The faculty supervisor may suggest particular topics for the student to address in the journal to ensure consideration of relevant and important matters.

F. Time Sheets. The student is responsible for keeping a contemporaneous log of all time spent in the IFP and submitting the log to the faculty and field supervisors on a regular basis. The log must document the hours required to earn the credits for which the student is registered. The schedule for submission may be set by the faculty and/or field supervisors. The log should identify briefly how the time was spent, consistent with the need not to disclose confidential information. Time devoted to written reflections and response papers as well as on field activities count toward the required number of hours per credit.

G. Certification. All students enrolled in an IFP will be required to certify that the following statements are true:
1. This IFP Enrollment Form is accurate in all respects.

2. I have read the Rules for Independent Field Placements and will comply with each provision.

3. I am responsible for any applicable tuition and I cannot change the number of credits for which I am registered after the end of the drop/add period.

4. I may enroll in no more than one IFP in any semester and the total number of non-classroom credits I may earn is governed by Rule 3.1(b)).

5. If I seek experiential learning credit for this placement, then I will comply with the additional expectations for experiential learning credit explained in the Rules for Independent Field Placements.

6. The IFP completion deadline, including field hours and documentation, is no later than the last day of exam period for the semester, unless an extension is granted under the Academic Rules.

7. The IFP will be evaluated on a Satisfactory/No Credit basis unless an alternative is approved by the faculty supervisor and Associate Dean. The grade basis cannot be changed after the add/drop deadline.

8. I agree to work with professionalism and integrity in the field placement, to follow appropriate directions, and to seek clarification and advice in a timely fashion. I understand that my work in the field placement does not take priority over my other academic obligations, including class attendance.

9. I agree to comply with the Law School’s rules regarding compensation for credited work.

6. Field Supervisor’s Responsibilities

A. Eligibility. The field supervisor should generally be a licensed attorney; in rare instances, and depending on the nature of the placement, a law-trained person with appropriate legal knowledge and expertise may be able to provide the required guidance and evaluation. Students must consult with the proposed faculty supervisor before selecting a field supervisor who is not a licensed attorney.

B. General Responsibility. The field supervisor is responsible for working with the student to ensure that the placement is an educational experience that warrants an award of credit for the time and effort spent. These Rules outline Law School and ABA expectations and offer suggestions to help make the experience successful and rewarding for both the field supervisor and the student.
C. Specific Responsibilities.

i. Review student’s goals & help identify field activities to help achieve those goals. Before the placement is submitted for approval, the student and supervisor should discuss the student’s learning goals for the placement, identify opportunities for the student to meet those goals through field activities, and discuss arrangements for providing feedback and other instruction during the placement. Based on this discussion, the student will complete the IFP enrollment form, which must be reviewed and approved by the field supervisor, the faculty supervisor, and the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.

ii. Orientation. To help the student have a successful start to the placement and to lay a foundation for an effective supervisory relationship and a rewarding experience, we suggest arranging orientation discussions between the student and the field supervisor, and perhaps others in the office. An orientation before or at the beginning of the student’s placement should address the following issues:

- **Confidentiality and Professional Responsibility.** Discuss professional obligations such as confidentiality, conflicts of interest, and permissible communications with those outside the office. If there are particular ethical policies that govern the office, please share them as well. It is also helpful for the student to know the title to use on communications, e.g., “law student extern” or “legal intern.”

- **Conflicts Check.** Review the student’s previous/current employment, clinical work, and affiliations that might potentially implicate the organization’s conflicts policy.

- **Function of the Office.** To help orient the student to the work environment, discuss with the student the services provided by the office and who the organization’s clients are (if there are clients), as well as the particular substantive areas of law on which the office focuses.

- **Introductions.** Please provide a brief overview of the office space, information about where resources for research are available, and introductions to attorneys and other staff with whom the student will interact.

- **Relevant Office Policies.** Please share with the student the relevant office policies, such as any dress code and the use of office equipment.

- **Schedule of Meetings with Student.** It is important to plan early for both formal and informal communications with the student. We encourage you to have regular meetings with the student, during which you can review work and discuss other matters. If appropriate, you may include (or temporarily delegate such meetings to) others in the office who supervise aspects of the student’s work for part of the term.

- **Workspace.** Each student should be provided some form of workspace, whether allocated to her/him individually or shared with others.
• **Work Schedule.** Together with the student, develop a schedule of the specific days and times for the student to be on site and discuss time the student may spend working off site on placement-related tasks. A set schedule provides the student with an opportunity to develop a sense of commitment and responsibility and also allows you to better plan for the student’s involvement and to set appropriate deadlines for work assignments.

• **Concerns.** Make sure that the student knows who to contact about any problems encountered during the course of the placement.

**iii. Ensure the student is involved, assigned meaningful projects and provided critical feedback.**

• **Involvement & Assignments.** Please include the student as much as possible in the full range of activities of the office. As appropriate, invite the student to attend (as observer or active participant) client meetings, conferences, administrative or court hearings and trials, negotiations, settlement conferences, and other opportunities to engage with the legal work in your practice area. Substantive tasks may include appropriately-supervised involvement in activities such as drafting of documents and policies; conducting legal research; interviewing and counseling clients; participating in negotiations; responding to government agencies; writing letters to constituents; and providing advocacy in court proceedings. Students should not be asked to perform more than a minimal amount of clerical duties such as photocopying, filing, and phone coverage.

• **Inform the student of the chain of command for assignments,** i.e., from whom the student should accept work. It is always best if assignments go through the field supervisor, even if a student will work with others in performing some tasks. Inform the student about the review process for the student’s work, as well as whether there are any tasks the student may carry out without a supervisor’s review or approval.

• **Oversight of Assignments.** It is always helpful to explain assignments thoroughly and ensure that the student understands what is expected. Especially at the outset, the student may be unfamiliar with the protocols and expectations surrounding work product in your office. Provide context for each assignment, i.e., how the work product will fit into the larger picture. Inform the student of available resources that might be helpful, particularly those resources with which the student might not be familiar. Set a deadline for each assignment to help the student plan ahead.

• **Encourage the student to ask questions,** both at the outset and while performing an assigned task. Letting the student know that questions are welcome will ensure that the work fulfills expectations and that the task becomes a learning experience. For relatively complex assignments, please ask the student to check in early and regularly to report on progress on the assignment and identify any questions that have arisen.

• **Feedback.** Field supervisors are expected to meet with each student on a regular basis to provide feedback on specific assignments and overall performance. It is important
to identify those aspects of the student’s work that are effective, as well as those aspects that require improvement. At the end of the term, the field supervisor will be asked to complete and submit a written evaluation to the faculty supervisor.

iv. Submit written evaluation(s) of the student’s performance and experience as requested by the faculty supervisor.

7. Faculty Supervisor’s Responsibilities

A. Eligibility. The faculty supervisor may be a Law School faculty member, a full-time Law School staff member with teaching responsibilities at the Law School, or another instructor (including an adjunct faculty member) with approval of the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. The faculty supervisor cannot also be the field supervisor.

B. General Responsibility. The faculty supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the student makes appropriate arrangements for an educational experience in the placement, receives adequate field supervision, and makes good progress toward achieving the stated learning goals.

C. Specific Responsibilities.

i. Review the student’s goals and help ensure that the field placement will achieve those goals. Before the placement is submitted for approval, the student and faculty supervisor should discuss the student’s learning goals for the placement and arrangements with the field supervisor to identify appropriate activities and provide feedback. The faculty supervisor should help the student plan for conversations with the field supervisor and/or communicate directly with the field supervisor to ensure that the placement is designed to fulfill the program’s educational objectives and the student’s specific learning goals.

ii. Review and approve the IFP Enrollment Form completed by the student, ensuring that appropriate arrangements have been made for an educational experience with adequate oversight and mentoring. The faculty supervisor should also ensure that the student has taken sufficient prior coursework or will receive sufficient contemporaneous training to ensure that the placement will provide an appropriate educational experience.

iii. Oversight of the placement. The faculty supervisor should set a regular schedule for reviewing the student’s time logs and written reflections and communicating with the student about the student’s experience, performance, and progress. The student should be encouraged to reflect on his/her goals and how well they are being achieved, and to identify any concerns about the placement, assignments, or feedback, or about relationships with the field supervisor or other personnel at the site. If concerns develop, the faculty supervisor may work with the student to brainstorm appropriate responses, and may work with the field supervisor to help resolve any difficulties.

Reflections and logs should be submitted at least monthly. Weekly or bi-weekly submission may be appropriate and will keep the faculty supervisor informed about the student’s experience. Logs and reflections should include information about the range of assignments received, opportunities
for learning through observation or other activities, and the nature and adequacy of feedback received on written or other work.

The faculty supervisor should also establish a schedule for regular contact with the field supervisor to ensure the quality of the student’s educational experience, including the appropriateness of the supervision provided and the assignments given to the student. A mid-term check-in about the student’s progress is advisable so that any concerns can be addressed in the semester’s remaining weeks.

The questions below can be helpful. You may wish to provide this or a similar list to the student at the beginning of the term and ask him/her to address these issues in the reflective journal, or you may wish to ask individual questions as the placement progresses, including by email.

**Substantive Learning:**
- What areas of law are you focusing on during your placement? What new aspects of law have you learned about? What area(s) of law have you identified in which you will need additional training or experience?
- What connections, similarities, and differences have you seen between what you learned in your classes and what you are experiencing in your placement?
- What is the most important substantive insight you gained in the placement (in the past week, in the past month, in the placement as a whole)?

**Workplace Observation and Issues:**
- Describe the work culture at the placement site. What are the expectations for attorneys and others? What have you observed about the interactions between attorneys, and between the attorneys and others at the work site?
- How does your experience assist you in defining the type of work environment that you will seek after graduation?
- What observations have you made about professionalism? Who are your role models and why?
- Have you encountered any ethical issues in your work or as you have observed the work of others? What were the implications and how would you have handled them? How were they resolved?
- Have you had the opportunity to work or interact with people who have different life experiences than yours? What have you learned from those experiences?
- What has surprised you in your placement?

**Career:**
- How has this experience assisted you in evaluating your abilities and your potential career path?
- Have you been able to establish professional connections at or through the placement that will help you move forward with your professional objectives? What additional networking opportunities can you take advantage of?
Final Meeting:

- Did you achieve your learning goals? Why or why not?
- How will you describe what you have learned from this experience at your next job interview?
- What additional skill sets and experience will be necessary for you to move forward with your career goals? How can I and/or others assist you to get to this next level?

iv. Conflicts of Interest. The faculty supervisor should be alert to and take steps to prevent any conflict of interest between the faculty member’s employment, consulting work, and affiliations and the work supervised through the placement (especially if the faculty supervisor will be reviewing written work or otherwise be privy to non-public information incorporated in the student’s work).

v. Grading. The faculty member is responsible for submitting a grade at the end of the term. The faculty member will evaluate the student’s performance in the placement and whether the student achieved his/her learning goals through: (1) review of the student’s time logs and written reflections, (2) regular contact with the student and field supervisor, (3) review of a written final evaluation from the field supervisor, and (4) for A-F or H/P/LP/F grading, review of the student’s written work product (redacted as necessary).

A grade of S (Satisfactory) indicates acceptable performance through completion of the assigned work. Grades on the scales of H/P/LP/F or A/F evaluate the quality of the work done, not simply the effort expended, as described in the Law School Academic Rules:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A- to A+:</td>
<td>Excellent to outstanding performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B- to B+:</td>
<td>Substantially better than adequate through very good performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C- to C+:</td>
<td>Minimally acceptable through adequate and somewhat above adequate performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D:</td>
<td>Inadequate performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F:</td>
<td>Failing performance</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Honors:</td>
<td>Excellent performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pass:</td>
<td>Adequate performance or better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Pass:</td>
<td>Minimally acceptable performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fail:</td>
<td>Failing performance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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8. Associate Dean’s Responsibilities

The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs must approve all IFP applications. Registration cannot occur until the application is fully approved.

The Associate Dean will ensure compliance with the requirements in these Rules, which in turn implement the Law School Academic Rules and American Bar Association Standards and Rules of Approval of Law Schools. While primary responsibility for oversight of a particular field
placement belongs to the faculty supervisor, the participants are encouraged to contact the Associate Dean to resolve any concerns that arise. Such concerns, as well as general questions about the IFP Program, may be directed to: law-ad@umn.edu. Questions about registration logistics can be sent to lawcurr@umn.edu.

9. Non-Discrimination Policy

The University of Minnesota requires IFPs to comply with the following non-discrimination policy:

**Equal Opportunity.** The University of Minnesota shall provide equal access to and opportunity in its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

10. Fair Labor Standards Act Compliance

The Department of Labor has provided guidance to identify when an intern may work without compensation, especially in the “for-profit” private sector. The following six criteria are applied to determine that an intern is not an “employee” and therefore need not be paid:

a. Even though it includes performance of tasks supporting the employer’s operations, the internship is similar to training which would be given in an educational environment;

b. The internship experience is for the benefit of the intern;

c. The intern does not displace regular employees, but works under close supervision of existing staff;

d. The employer that provides the training derives no immediate advantage from the activities of the intern, and on occasion its operations may actually be impeded;

e. The intern is not necessarily entitled to a job at the conclusion of the internship; and

f. The employer and the intern understand that the intern is not entitled to wages for the time spent in the internship.

The Law School’s IFP Rules are designed to be consistent with the Department of Labor standards by requiring that all IFPs be arranged for the benefit of the student and with a focus on educational value. Supervisors must ensure compliance with the Department of Labor’s guidance.

11. Rules Governing Compensation

Note: This rule is under review in light of recent changes to ABA accreditation requirements. The Law School may revise its policy about compensation for the spring semester.

A student may not receive academic credit if the student also receives compensation for the same work, although the student may receive reimbursement for reasonable out-of-pocket costs.
specifically tied to the placement. In addition, the employer must not be paid for the student’s time.

Students may earn IFP credit for work with an organization that also pays them (or has paid them in the past) if there is a clear separation between the paid work and credited work. None of the paid time can earn credit. The IFP application must disclose any compensation that students have received or will receive from the host and explain what steps will be taken to ensure that paid work does not earn credit.

If the student expects to receive reimbursement (whether from the placement host or another entity), the student must keep records of the associated expenses. Examples of various types of reimbursable and non-reimbursable expenses are listed below.

Local transportation
- The cost of getting to and from the placement including bus fare, subway fare, parking, or mileage is reimbursable.
- The general cost of owning a car, such as depreciation, license registration fee, etc., is not reimbursable.

Travel to non-local field placement
- The cost of airfare or other transportation to the field placement location is reimbursable.

Housing
- The cost of housing over and above the cost of reasonable accommodations at the student’s home location is reimbursable.
- If an employer provides housing for employees, the student may live in that housing.
- Reimbursement may not take into account any ongoing housing expense the student claims at the student’s law school home location.

Food
- The cost of food over and above the cost of food at the student’s home location is reimbursable.

General
- Stipends from employers are not permissible.

12. Compliance with Rules

A student’s failure to comply with these rules may result in denial of credit for the course and depending on the circumstances may be treated as an Academic Rules violation that can result in sanctions, including dismissal from the Law School.