



**LSU Law Center  
Field Placement Program**

**Supervising Attorneys' Handbook**

Prof. Jeff Brooks  
Director of Field Placement Programs  
LSU Law Center, 1 E. Campus Dr. Rm. W155, Baton Rouge, LA 70803  
Office: (225) 578-6635  
Cell: (225) 337-6804  
Email: [jeffbrooks@lsu.edu](mailto:jeffbrooks@lsu.edu)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|      |   |    |
|------|---|----|
| I.   | Why Field Placements? .....                                 | 3  |
| a.   | Introduction .....  | 3  |
| b.   | What Is a “Field Placement”? .....                          | 3  |
| II.  | The LSU Field Placement Experience.....                     | 4  |
| a.   | Program Description.....                                    | 4  |
| b.   | The Three Program Requirements .....                        | 4  |
| i.   | The Fieldwork Component.....                                | 5  |
| ii.  | The Academic Component.....                                 | 5  |
| iii. | The Written Component.....                                  | 6  |
| III. | Arranging the Field Placement Experience .....              | 6  |
| a.   | Step 1: Student Application to Field Placement Program..... | 6  |
| i.   | Timeline for Student Applications.....                      | 7  |
| ii.  | Limitations on Enrollment.....                              | 7  |
| b.   | Step 2: Matching to the Placement Organization .....        | 8  |
| c.   | Step 3: Memorandum of Understanding .....                   | 8  |
| IV.  | Supervising a LSU Law Field Placement Student.....          | 8  |
| a.   | Orientation.....  | 9  |
| b.   | Setting Field Placement Goals .....                         | 9  |
| c.   | Active Supervision.....                                     | 9  |
| d.   | Student Involvement & Participation .....                   | 10 |
| e.   | Work Assignments .....                                      | 10 |
| f.   | Provide Feedback and Mentorship .....                       | 11 |
| g.   | If Problems Arise .....                                     | 13 |
| h.   | Wrapping Up the Field Placement Experience.....             | 13 |

## I. WHY FIELD PLACEMENTS?

### a. Introduction

Thank you for serving as a placement supervisor to one or more LSU Paul M. Hebert Law Center students as they begin the transition from the law school classroom to the practice of law. As a placement supervisor in the LSU Law Center's Field Placement Program, you play a crucial role in the development of LSU Law students as skilled and ethical attorneys. We recognize the time and effort that it takes to supervise law students, and we are truly grateful for your work with our students. We hope that your experience as a supervisor is enjoyable and rewarding. If at any time you have any questions or concerns about the Law Center's field placement program, please feel free to contact Prof. Jeff Brooks at [jeffbrooks@lsu.edu](mailto:jeffbrooks@lsu.edu).

### b. What Is a "Field Placement"?

A field placement (also known as an "externship") is a for-credit "experiential learning" opportunity offered to upper-level students enrolled at the LSU Law Center. A field placement offers law students the opportunity to work on and learn from real legal matters while carefully supervised both by practicing attorneys and judges in the field and by LSU Law faculty members on campus. This dual supervision model gives students the opportunity to reflect on their personal and professional identity and to integrate legal theory and doctrine with actual practice and professional responsibility. Field placements at the LSU Law Center are limited to three areas of experience: government agencies, legal not-for-profits, and judicial chambers.<sup>1</sup>

The student-to-supervisor relationship is best characterized as one of mentor to mentee or master to apprentice, as opposed to that of employer and employee. Critical to the field placement experience is the concept of **feedback**. The field placement experience is intended to be a training ground for students entering the professional world – field placement students grow from and learn from the feedback provided on-site by their field placement supervisor and from the feedback provided by LSU Law faculty members in one-on-one supervision meetings and in class seminars. The "compensation" provided to a student comes in the form of feedback, of mentorship, and of class credit for the educational experience undertaken by the student. The LSU Law Center does not permit students to receive financial compensation for work done at a field placement;

---

<sup>1</sup> For more information on field placement program design, visit the Clinical Legal Education Association's text *Best Practices for Legal Education*, located at: [http://www.cleaweb.org/Resources/Documents/best\\_practices-full.pdf#page=135](http://www.cleaweb.org/Resources/Documents/best_practices-full.pdf#page=135).

however, students may receive reimbursements for necessary expenses incurred (parking, etc.).

To satisfy the American Bar Association's requirements<sup>2</sup> for field placement study, a LSU Law student's field placement must be:

- a **substantial lawyering experience** that:
  - is reasonably similar to the experience of a lawyer advising or representing clients or engaging in other lawyering tasks (while respecting the limitations of the student not being admitted to practice law), and
  - engages the student in the performance of professional skills needed for competent and ethical participation as a member of the legal profession; and
- performed **on site** at the placement organization, and
- **directly supervised** by a licensed attorney or sitting judge, and
- able to provide the student with **multiple opportunities** for performance, feedback, and self-evaluation.

## II. THE LSU FIELD PLACEMENT EXPERIENCE

### a. Program Description

Each academic year, approximately 150 LSU Law students participate in a field placement experience. All LSU Law field placement students have completed at least their first year of legal studies, and they must have successfully completed the Law Center's Legal Research and Writing course. Approximately half of the Law Center's students each year participate in the Summer Field Placement program, while the remaining students split evenly between placements held in the fall and spring semesters. The Director of Field Placements, a full-time member of the Law Center's faculty, coordinates the program. The Director approves placement sites, counsels students on available field placement opportunities, matches students with field placements, teaches one or more of the seminar course components, supervises other program faculty, and provides training and assistance to placement supervisors.

### b. The Three Program Requirements

---

<sup>2</sup> See generally [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal\\_education/resources/standards.html](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/standards.html), Chapter 3, Standard 304.

All field placements are considered upper-level Law courses at LSU, and students are awarded 3 academic credits for each field placement they complete. Field placements are graded on a scaled Pass/Fail system – grades are awarded by the supervising faculty member in consultation with field placement supervisors. (Available grades are Excellent, High Pass, Pass, and Fail.) In order for a student to receive academic credit for a field placement experience, they must generally comply with three requirements: the fieldwork component, the academic component, and the written component.

*i. The Fieldwork Component*

Every student enrolled in a field placement course must complete a minimum of 135 hours of work at their placement organization (45 hours for each of the 3 credit hours they receive). The 15 hours students spend in the classroom for the “academic component” count towards this requirement, so students must complete at least **120** hours at their placement organization during the semester.

The exact placement work schedule is set by the student and the placement supervisor, but the student must be able to complete a minimum of 120 hours to satisfy the Law Center’s academic requirements. Students are required to keep track of and allocate their time spent at the placement organization and must report their time to program faculty once per week for the duration of their placement. Students are not required to have their placement supervisor “sign off” on the work performed, but program faculty may contact the placement to ensure that hours are accurate.

*ii. The Academic Component*

Every LSU Law student in a field placement must participate in a weekly seminar course at the Law Center, which is taught by the Director of Field Placements or another full-time faculty member. (For those students placed outside the greater Baton Rouge area in the summer semester, this course is offered online.) The seminar course:

- provides a foundation in ethics and professional responsibility to all LSU field placement students, with a particular emphasis on confidentiality, and
- orients students on their duties and responsibilities to their placement organization, and
- guides students in setting personal and professional goals for the field placement experience, and
- provides opportunities for critical self-analysis and reflection (while maintaining and respecting the confidentiality of participating field placement organizations), and

- allows students opportunities to develop critical lawyering skills in a simulated environment.

Students also meet individually with program faculty throughout the semester for additional individual supervisions. These individual supervision meetings allow program faculty to assess the student's learning experience, guide them through reflections based on their journal entries (see the Written Component section, below), and address any concerns raised by placement supervisors.

In order to further confidentiality of placement work and avoid conflicts of interest, LSU students are separated into different course sections based on the type of field placement organization (i.e.; all judicial students are in one course section, all prosecutorial students are in another course section, and all criminal defense students are in a separate third course section).

Course syllabi for the seminars are available for review upon request.

### iii. *The Written Component*

Every LSU Law field placement student must also complete a series of written reflection journals over the course of the semester. The first of these journals is a memorandum prepared by the student outlining the student's professional and personal goals for the semester. The remaining journals are guided reflective exercises that assist the student in critically analyzing their learning experience and help them track how they are meeting (or re-defining) their goals. All of the journals are reviewed by the Director and other program faculty, and are used during individual supervision meetings. Students are repeatedly instructed to respect the confidentiality of their work in writing their journals, and none of the journal topics ask students to reflect directly on the specifics of any assignment.

The Law Center does not require, but does strongly encourage, students to have substantial writing opportunities at their field placement, as legal writing is a core foundational skill for the successful practice of law.

## **III. ARRANGING THE FIELD PLACEMENT EXPERIENCE**

### **a. Step 1: Student Application to Field Placement Program**

Students who wish to participate in a field placement at the LSU Law Center must submit an application to the Director of Field Placements in the semester immediately

prior to the one in which they wish to participate in a placement. Every student applicant is then interviewed by the Director of Field Placements to assess that student's preliminary goals for their experience, their interest in the various placements. Occasionally, a student may also approach the Director with a specific placement relationship already pre-arranged; in such a circumstance, assuming the placement fits the Law Center's criteria for a field placement as outlined in this handbook, credit can awarded.

i. *Timeline for Student Applications*

Students typically apply for field placements in the semester immediately prior to the one in which they wish to participate in a placement, and in conjunction with LSU's course registration periods. So:

- For **Summer** Placements, students apply to the Director in March of the spring semester,
- For **Fall** Placements, students apply in mid-February of the spring semester, and
- For **Spring** Placements, students apply to the Director in October of the fall semester.

ii. *Limitations on Enrollment*

Student enrollment in any field placement course must be approved by the Director and by the placement organization, and is subject to the following Law Center-imposed limitations:

- *Family members:* Students may not work in a placement where that student's family member or relative is an attorney, judge, or staff person.
- *Repeat placements:* Students may not repeat a field placement unless they can demonstrate that the repeat placement will provide an opportunity for significant educational development through a different experience that offers greater responsibility and tasks of greater sophistication.
- *Previously-paid jobs:* Students may not, in most cases, convert a job that was advertised for pay into an unpaid field placement. Students may also not apply for field placement credit and also for funding by the LSU Law Center's Public Interest Law Society.

## **b. Step 2: Matching to the Placement Organization**

At the close of the application and student interview period, the director then matches a student to an appropriate placement, in consultation with placement supervisors and contacts. We do not ask students to apply directly to placements; instead, the Director will compile a short list of candidates that match a placement's stated expectations. Placement organizations are of course free to set base requirements for their students, request writing samples or references, conduct background checks, and interview candidates – approval of the final placement match is at the discretion of the placement organization.

Once a student has been matched to and confirmed by a placement, that student's registration in the appropriate field placement course will be confirmed by the Director.

## **c. Step 3: Memorandum of Understanding**

American Bar Association Standard 304, which governs law school field placement and externship programs, requires that all field placements complete “a written understanding among the student, faculty member, and a person in authority at the field placement that describes both (A) the substantial lawyering experience and opportunities for performance, feedback and self-evaluation; and (B) the respective roles of faculty and any site supervisor in supervising the student and in assuring the educational quality of the experience for the student, including a clearly articulated method of evaluating the student's academic performance.”<sup>3</sup>

Our program has a sample standard memorandum of understanding that we will provide upon request.

## **IV. SUPERVISING A LSU LAW FIELD PLACEMENT STUDENT**

Field placement supervisors are an essential part of the education and professional development of law students. The following requirements and suggestions are offered to assist you in carrying out your duties as a supervising attorney or judge. Because students receive academic credit for their fieldwork, it is essential that they have opportunities to observe and participate in the legal work of the placement, receive clear and challenging assignments, and be provided with ongoing feedback. Supervising attorneys, therefore, should have sufficient experience and expertise to enable them to guide and counsel law students.

---

<sup>3</sup> See [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal\\_education/resources/standards.html](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/standards.html), Chapter 3, Standard 304(c).



### a. Orientation

Supervising attorneys should conduct an introductory meeting or orientation session with students during the first week of the field placement experience. This meeting sets the tone for the semester, and it is most successful when it covers the following subjects:

- The mission and functions of the agency, organization, chambers, or office, including clients (if any), fields of practice, and other relevant background information,
- The role of the field placement student and the kinds of work that they will do,
- Ethics rules and policies, including confidentiality and any office-specific concerns,
- Relevant office policies and the chain of command,
- A schedule for regular meetings with the supervising attorney,
- The student's goals for the field placement (see section (b), below),
- The student's work schedule, which should address any office holidays, closures, or other similar scheduling matters,
- An introduction to the physical office and personnel, including the student's workspace, resources for research, support staff, and other attorneys, and
- An explanation of the student's first assignment.

### b. Setting Field Placement Goals

As discussed above, every student's first seminar course writing assignment is a memorandum outlining his or her personal and professional goals for the field placement experience. Supervising attorneys are *strongly* encouraged to collaborate with their student(s) in the development of the Goals Memorandum. The supervising attorney should make sure that the goals established by the student are realistic and, if necessary, help the student to identify activities and assignments that might help the student meet those goals. **The final version of the Goals Memorandum must be reviewed and approved by the student's supervising attorney.**

### c. Active Supervision

Supervising attorneys should be available on-site to provide and explain assignments, answer questions, and give substantive feedback on student work. If the supervising attorney is unavailable when a student is scheduled to be in the office,

appropriate assignments and instructions should be left, and alternative attorney coverage should be arranged.

Supervising attorneys should meet weekly with students to provide opportunities to discuss and reflect on the students' experience and explore issues of professional roles and responsibilities. Incorporating regular meetings into the student's time at the office promotes the mentoring relationship and creates a congenial atmosphere for delivering constructive feedback on the student's work.

#### **d. Student Involvement & Participation**

An important educational benefit of a field placement is immersion of a student into a particular law office or chambers and a particular aspect of the legal system. Students should be included in the activities of the office to the greatest extent possible. They should be invited to observe and, if appropriate, participate in meetings and consultations, client or witness interviewing, counseling, case planning, discovery, depositions, settlement discussions or other negotiations, fact investigation, and courtroom appearance. Engage the students in the full work of the office, and then guide them in drawing insights from their observations.

Students routinely report that their exposure to these sorts of activities, even as an observer, are often the most meaningful part of their field placement experience! An activity that may seem "routine" to you as a supervising attorney is typically new and exciting to a law student.

#### **e. Work Assignments**

Students should be assigned increasingly challenging, varied, and complex legal projects over the course of the semester. The assignments should be designed to expose students to the variety of legal tasks and issues that a lawyer in the practice regularly encounters in the context of actual cases and projects. The assignments should also be useful to you as a supervising attorney – if you feel that the assignments you are giving are becoming "make-work", please confer with the Director of Field Placements on strategies for diversifying the projects you assign.

Students should not ordinarily be assigned to perform routine or repetitive work, or clerical tasks such as filing, photocopying, or library updating.

An effective approach to providing work assignments includes:

- ***Defining the task:*** The supervising attorney should clearly explain what the task involves and should put the task into the context of the entire case or project. Details should include: (1) format, style, and length of the expected work product to be delivered by the student, (2) how much time the student should spend on the project, (3) how the work product will ultimately be used, and (4) applicable deadlines.
- ***Discussing methods and tools:*** The supervising attorney should provide suggestions for how the student should perform the task, including available resources and tools. We have found that experienced attorneys often take for granted knowledge and skills that a law student has yet to encounter – for example, how to organize and review case files, where to find specialized legal research materials, or how to write various types of litigation or transactional documents. Take the time to strategize with the student about how to approach the task; give the student an opportunity to develop their own plan, but vet that plan before the student gets started.
- ***Reviewing progress:*** Set a time for interim review of the student’s progress on an assignment to redirect or fine-tune the project as necessary. You cannot always anticipate all of the nuances or tangents that may tempt a student off the main course. We have also found that students are often hesitant to ask follow-up questions on an assignment – periodic meetings are useful to both the student and the supervising attorney to produce useful work product!
- ***Review final work product or performance:*** Supervising attorneys should review all work produced by the student to maximize the educational benefit of the student’s experience, and to provide a basis for fair evaluation at the end of the placement experience. While a busy law practice may sometimes require delaying review of student work, or missing an opportunity to observe student performance of a lawyering activity, the supervising attorney should always find time to circle back to the student about each assignment. Even if the need for an assignment changes or becomes obsolete (for example, if a case settles), the attorney should always review and comment on work performed by a student.

**f. Provide Feedback and Mentorship**

In order for students to progress in their placements, meet their educational goals, and develop as attorneys, it is essential that they receive detailed and constructive

feedback on their work—both written and oral. With supervising attorney guidance, students should be able to reflect on their performance, get a sense of what they did well and why, and develop strategies for improvement. Providing feedback is a skill that requires patience and practice. You may find it gratifying or uncomfortable. Some students will be receptive, others defensive. One supervision model suggests that feedback be FAST:

**F**requent – weekly meetings work well to assure the frequency of feedback.

**A**ccurate – address actions or behaviors that need correction, not the person.

**S**pecific – give specific examples of things a student should replicate or improve upon.

**T**imely – if too much time passes, students are likely to repeat their mistakes.

Using this model, we recommend a two-step approach to providing feedback to students:

1. *Student Self-Evaluation*: Ask students first to evaluate their own performance on a lawyering task. Students often realize when their work product misses the mark, or their performance is less than effective. Before you offer critique to students, allow them the opportunity to first give their assessment; otherwise, students may modify their impressions in response to yours. Ideally, while a student is offering self-critique, you would simply listen, neither agreeing nor disagreeing. Then ask what changes the student would make the next time. This type of exchange encourages a student to move through the learning process from doing a task through analyzing it and developing a plan for improved performance.
2. *Attorney Evaluation of Student Performance*: Deliver honest and constructive feedback that is detailed in terms of both substance and process by following these guidelines:
  - Plan your critique in terms of content and format; don't wing it.
  - Lead with the positive.
  - Highlight something done well so the student knows to replicate it and is motivated to improve in other areas.
  - Be selective. Select one or two points on which to offer correction and fully develop those points, without rambling on.
  - Check for understanding by posing a question or comment that allows the student to show s/he can incorporate your suggestions going forward. For example: "What alternative approaches might you try next time?"

- Remain open to the possibility of improvement. If a student's work does not measure up, you may be inclined to assign less demanding work. Instead, aid the educational mission by giving the student a chance to learn and improve.

Importantly, the fieldwork performed by the student during a field placement must comply with the applicable rules of professional conduct. The supervising attorney should be critical when a student has failed to meet applicable ethical standards, appropriately address any ethical issues, and reinforce professional behavior.

#### **g. If Problems Arise**

In the vast majority of placements, both students and supervising attorneys reap the benefits of a successful mentor-student relationship; however, there are occasional instances when a student or supervisor will have concerns about the field placement relationship. The faculty and administrators at the law school will intervene only in situations in which a supervisor and student are unable to discuss the problem or when there have been attempts to address the issues but the problems have not been resolved. If you have any concerns about a particular student and have addressed them with the student but they remain unresolved, please contact the Director of Field Placements immediately.

#### **h. Wrapping Up the Field Placement Experience**

Supervising attorneys help the field placement program verify that the student performed work necessary to receive course credit as follows:

- *Mid-Semester Progress Evaluation:* Placement supervisors will be sent a very short progress evaluation form electronically approximately halfway through the placement experience. This form is designed to help our faculty better guide the student through the experience and to help you provide constructive feedback to the student. We do not share the contents of this evaluation directly with the student absent your express permission to do so.
- *Final Evaluation of Student:* Approximately 2 weeks before the end of the semester, you will be sent an electronic final evaluation form for your student(s). This form provides feedback on the student's performance in areas such as responsibility, professionalism, effectiveness, attitude, and specific lawyering skills. We encourage you to share your evaluation with the student, and program faculty will discuss the results

of your evaluation with the student in an individual supervision meeting unless you specifically requests otherwise. These evaluations are factored into the grade students receive for the fieldwork component of the course (Excellent, High Pass, Pass, Fail.)