

Experiential Courses – FAQ

Introduction

All Juris Doctor students must complete one or more experiential course(s) totaling at least six credit hours. There are three types of experiential courses: 1) simulation courses; 2) law clinics; and 3) externships. To satisfy the EL requirement, a course must be primarily experiential in nature and must:

- integrate doctrine, theory, skills, and legal ethics, and engage students in performance of a professional skill;
- develop the concepts underlying the professional skills being taught;
- provide multiple opportunities for performance; and
- provide opportunities for self-evaluation.

Note that six credit hours of experiential courses is a minimum, not a cap.

Frequently Asked Questions

DO I HAVE TO TAKE COURSES FROM EACH CATEGORY?

No, the graduation requirement allows any combination of simulation courses, externships, and clinics so long as the courses total at least 6 credit hours.

DO ALL OF THE CLINICS COUNT TOWARD THE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING REQUIREMENT?

Yes.

HOW WILL I KNOW WHETHER A CLASS IS A SIMULATION COURSE THAT SATISFIES THE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING REQUIREMENT?

Consult the registration materials for each semester. If you click on “Upper Class Course List,” the next page contains a grid with information about the courses. If a course satisfies the experiential learning requirement, it will say “EL” after the name of the class. Also note that the 3-credit Legal Research, Writing, and Analysis II, which all students must take to graduate, satisfies 3 credit hours of the experiential learning requirement.

I’D LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT EXTERNSHIPS:

- DO ALL EXTERNSHIPS HAVE A CLASSROOM COMPONENT?
- IS THERE A LIMIT TO HOW MUCH EXTERNSHIP FIELD PLACEMENT CREDIT I CAN APPLY TOWARD MY J.D.?
- MAY I TAKE MORE THAN ONE EXTERNSHIP AT THE SAME TIME? OR AN EXTERNSHIP AND A CLINIC?

DO ALL EXTERNSHIPS HAVE A CLASSROOM COMPONENT?

Yes. There are four approved externship programs: Corporate Counsel Externship, Federal Judicial Externship, Government & Public Interest Externship, and Small and Mid-Size Firm Externship. Each is connected to a number of field placements. Students enrolling in the Corporate Counsel Externship, Federal Judicial Externship, and Small and Mid-Size Externship must concurrently enroll in the classroom component, and may take that externship only once. Students enrolling in the externships in the Government & Public Interest Externship must concurrently enroll in the classroom component the first time they take such an externship. If a student subsequently enrolls in another field placement in the Government & Public Interest Externship, the student will be supervised by a Faculty Supervisor but does not need to enroll in the classroom component a second time.

HOW MANY HOURS OF AN EXTERNSHIP PROGRAM COUNT TOWARD THE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING REQUIREMENT?

The hours allocated to the entire program count toward the EL requirement. In other words, the following number of hours count toward the EL requirement for each program:

- Federal Judicial Externship (3 hours);
- Corporate Counsel Externship (4 hours); and
- Government & Public Interest Externship (3-4 hours, as the case may be)
- Small and Mid-Size Firm Externship (3 hours)

IS THERE A LIMIT TO HOW MUCH EXTERNSHIP FIELD PLACEMENT CREDIT I CAN APPLY TOWARD MY J.D.?

Yes. Students may apply no more than 6 credit hours from externship field placement work toward their J.D. degree. However, the hours allocated to the classroom component don't count toward this limit. The field placement hours that do count toward the limit are:

- Federal Judicial Externship (2 hours);
- Corporate Counsel Externship (2 hours);
- Government & Public Interest Externship (2-3 hours); and
- Small and Mid-Size Firm Externship (2 hours)

Therefore, think carefully when making decisions about enrolling in externships for credit. You wouldn't want to run out of hours before enrolling in the externship of your dreams.

MAY I TAKE MORE THAN ONE EXTERNSHIP, OR AN EXTERNSHIP AND A LAW SCHOOL CLINIC, AT THE SAME TIME?

Students enrolled in the Federal Judicial Externship Course are not allowed to do so. As to the others, it is often prohibited but sometimes permitted. We strongly suggest that you not do so. If you do hope to take more than one externship, or both a clinic and an externship, at the same time, you must consult both the clinic director and externship faculty supervisors involved to get permission to do both in the same semester.

I'M ON A BOA INTERSCHOOL MOOT COURT OR MOCK TRIAL TEAM.

- **CAN I GET ACADEMIC CREDIT FOR IT?**
- **DOES THAT CREDIT COUNT TOWARD THE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING REQUIREMENT?**

Students who participate as members of mock trial and moot court teams representing the SMU Dedman School of Law may be eligible to receive one credit for each competition, up to a maximum of 2 credit hours in each category. [Note that under the ABA rules, students must work for at least 45 hours on the competition in order to earn an hour of credit.] This credit, however, DOES NOT count toward the Experiential Learning requirement.

ARE THERE ANY OTHER LIMITS I SHOULD THINK ABOUT WHEN CHOOSING EXPERIENTIAL COURSES?

1. A student may not apply more than six hours of upper-class elective courses taken on a credit/no-credit basis toward the 87 hours required for graduation. This limit includes law review hours, moot court hours, and mock trial hours. However, this six-hour restriction *does not include any hours obtained from externships* (in other words, you can have up to 6 ungraded hours *not counting* externships. Since clinics and simulation courses are graded, they also are not included in the six-hour maximum.
2. Under the ABA rules, at least 64 of the credit hours you earn toward graduation must be in "courses that require attendance in regularly scheduled classroom sessions or direct faculty instruction." Clinic credit hours count. But here's what does NOT count toward those 64 hours:
 - a. Externships
 - b. Non-Law-School Credit hours earned at SMU or other universities
 - c. Law review hours
 - d. Moot court/mock trial hours

Therefore, you should keep in mind when choosing courses that you need to end up with at least 64 credit hours toward your 87 required credits without counting hours in those categories.