

PORTLAND IN-HOUSE EXTERNSHIP GUIDE

Overview

The Portland In-House Externship Program offers Oregon Law students a number of externship opportunities located in the Portland metro area , spanning a wide variety of legal fields, including:

- Business & Corporate;
- Contracting;
- Intellectual Property;
- Environment & Natural Resources;
- Employment & Labor;
- Immigration;
- Real Property; and
- Many others practice areas.

Participating in the Portland In-House Externship Program enables Oregon Law students to gain practical, real-world experience by working at some of Oregon’s most well-known businesses, non-profits, public interest organizations, and governmental agencies.

In-house externships are unique in that very few in-house legal departments hire attorneys straight from law school. Instead, almost all in-house lawyers had distinguished careers in private practice or government before going “in-house.” As a result, in-house externships provide participating students with the extraordinary opportunity to gain the experience of working in-house, among top-notch attorneys, at an unusually early stage in their professional development.

Prof. Mohsen Manesh is the faculty supervisor of the Portland In-House Externship Program. If you have any questions about the Portland In-House Externship Program, you may contact Prof. Manesh by email (mohsen@uoregon.edu).

In addition to Portland In-House Externships, several other Oregon Law faculty and staff supervise Portland-based externships not covered by this Guide. If you are interested in an externship in any of the following areas, please contact the relevant faculty or staff person:

Externship Type	Supervisor	Email
Criminal Law	Carrie Leonetti	leonetti@uoregon.edu
Judicial	Mindy Witkopp	mindyw@uoregon.edu
Family Law	Leslie Harris	lharris@uoregon.edu
ENR	Heather Brinton	hbrinton@uoregon.edu
Bankruptcy	Andrea Coles-Bjerre	acoles@uoregon.edu

Professional Development and the Portland Connection

Because all externships offered through the Portland In-House Externship Program are located in Portland (and many are located a short distance from UO Law's White Stag campus in Portland), if you are intending to participate in one of these externships, you should also be planning to participate in the [Portland Program](#). If you have not already applied to participate in the Portland Program during your 3L year, you should apply before or at the same time as you apply for a PDX Externship. The Portland Program application is located at **MyLaw > Registrar > Portland Program**.

A Portland In-House externship in many ways complements the manifold professional development opportunities available to students through the Portland Program. An externship offers skills-based training and enhances your practical experience while adding a distinctive line item to your resume. Moreover, working in an externship enables you to build connections with practicing attorneys and learn about key industries and organizations within the Portland area. Some students have even found full-time employment through connections made in their Portland externship or through recommendations from their externship supervisors.

Academic Credit

In an externship, you earn 1 unit of academic credit for every 4 hours per week that you work on-site at the field placement or in the course component (see the table below). For example, a 10-credit hour externship requires 40 hours per week over a 14-week term.

Portland In-House externships range from 3 credits to 10 credits, depending on the needs of the particular organization. The number of hours that you will work at a field placement each week, and therefore your total academic credit from an externship, is something that you and your supervising attorney will agree upon after you are offered the externship.

Academic Credit	Weekly Hours Commitment (over 14 weeks)	Total Hours Required
3	12	168
4	16	224
5	20	280
6	24	336
7	28	392
8	32	448
9	36	504
10	40	560

Grading

All externships are graded pass/fail. Upon successful completion of your externship (including the course component), you will be awarded the total hours of academic credit pre-approved by the faculty supervisor.

Course Component

Like all externships, externships offered through the Portland In-House Externship Program have two components: (1) work performed at the field placement and (2) a course component. The course component of the externship, which is required by both ABA and Law School rules, provides a process for you to engage in periodic self-reflection on your externship experience. More information about the course component is included in the course syllabus provided to you prior to the beginning of your externship.

Student Eligibility

To be eligible for a Portland In-House externship, you must meet all of the following requirements:

- (1) Be a rising or current 3L participating in the Portland Program;
- (2) Be in good academic standing with a grade point average of at least 2.0; and
- (3) If you are in the bottom quartile of your class at the time of you apply, you must consult with and obtain permission from the Director of Externships prior to enrolling.

Application Process

The application process for all Portland In-House externships begins in January of your 2L year. In January, all externship opportunities offered through the Portland In-House Externship Program for the following academic year (i.e. your 3L year) will be posted to Symplicity. All student applications must be uploaded and submitted through Symplicity. If you are interested in multiple organizations, you must submit separate, tailored applications for each organization. Your application materials **for each organization** must be submitted as **a single PDF**.

The faculty supervisor will compile applications from all students and forward them to the supervising attorney at each organization for review. Some organizations review applications right away; others may take several weeks to review applications and schedule interviews.

Application Materials

Different organizations require different application materials, so please review the application instructions on Symplicity **carefully**. All organizations will require a cover letter. Your cover letter should be proofread, typo-free, and tailored to demonstrate your sincere interest and effort to learn a

bit about the organization to which you are applying. In addition, your cover letter should specify **in the first paragraph** the semester(s) for which you would like to be considered.

Interviewing

Almost all organizations will want to interview an applicant before offering an externship. Many organizations will request an in-person interview, in part so that the applicant can also see the organization's workplace and offices. Some organizations, however, are also willing to interview by phone, Skype, or other online video-conferencing. If you are invited to interview with a particular organization, but you are unable to travel to Portland for the interview, you may politely request a phone or Skype interview instead. Please note, however, not all organizations may be amenable to a phone or Skype interview.

Selection Criteria

Like a job search, securing an externship involves a competitive application process. Many organizations recruit students from multiple law schools and are highly selective based on grades, previous job experience, and other qualifications. Accordingly, you are **strongly advised to work closely with the Career Center** to develop polished application materials in advance of the application period. As noted above, all application materials should be proofread, typo-free, and tailored to the organization to which you are applying.

Offers, Acceptances, and Registration for Credit

If you are offered and accept an externship placement, you should promptly notify the faculty supervisor, Professor Mohsen Manesh (mohsen@uoregon.edu), with the following information: (i) the name of the organization, (ii) the semester during which you will be externing, and (iii) the number of hours you and the organization have agreed upon (if known). To register for the externship to earn academic credit, you will also need to complete a registration form on MyLaw. You may find the registration form at **MyLaw > Registrar > Field Placement Information > Student Application**.

Upon accepting an externship placement, your application to extern with any other organization during that same semester will be automatically withdrawn. Once you have accepted an offer for an externship, you may not under any circumstances subsequently renege your acceptance to pursue some other opportunity, so be deliberative and strategic before applying for or accepting an externship.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: *How do I obtain a Portland In-House externship?*

As described above, securing an externship is just like a job search: it involves a competitive application process. Many organizations also recruit students from other law schools and are highly selective based on grades, previous job experience, and other qualifications. Accordingly, you are **strongly advised to work closely with the Career Center** to develop **polished application materials** in advance of the applicable application period.

Q: *What do you mean by “polished application materials”?*

All application materials should be proofread, typo-free, and tailored, demonstrating your sincere interest and effort to learn a bit about the organization to which you are applying. This point cannot be overstated. Attention to detail—*every single word, every single sentence*—in everything you write demonstrates your diligence and competence to be entrusted with important matters.

To emphasize this point and provide some real-world context, consider the advice of one in-house lawyer, a loyal Oregon Law alumni and occasional externship supervisor:

“While grades and GPAs are what they are and cannot be massaged for a job application, a resume is much more malleable and a cover letter is under the complete control of the applicant. Therefore, it is a bit disconcerting to see cover letters and resumes that do not appear to have been proofed carefully or which reflect little (if any) investigation into the position being applied for. In the case of externs, our scrutiny isn't too high. However, in a real job setting, these problems are deadly. While I am a bit forgiving in this area, my boss (who is ultimately responsible for our hires) is extremely tough. Our most recent vacancy opened up a few years ago, well before the current economic unpleasantness hit the law job market. Even so, we received well over 100 applications for the position from all over the country and we eventually hired a woman away from a national health law firm based in Manhattan. I saw my boss toss aside applications from seemingly well qualified applicants who simply made silly mistakes in their cover letters and resumes. Letters and resumes need to be carefully proofed, not only by the applicant, but also by another party (or two). Having someone else read the letter will often uncover mistakes that the applicant has glossed over because he or she has read the letter so many times. I understand that some students might be a bit self-conscious when having a peer review their correspondence but they need to get over it. They aren't trying to get a job from their friends.

On a similar note, cover letters are much more effective when it is clear that the applicant has made at least some attempt to learn something about the place where he or she wants to work. I cannot emphasize this enough. We recently put all of our employment benefits work out to bid for law firms and the dark horse candidate ended up getting the work in large part because it was clear that they had really done their homework before coming in to give their presentation. They had downloaded and reviewed all of our IRS and DOL filings so they had a very good idea of what our plan structure looked like even though we had never gone to them for any benefits advice. This allowed them to ask very insightful and relevant questions during the interview process.

For the extern candidates (and any third years looking for real jobs), doing some amount of online investigation into a potential employer is so easy that any obvious failure to do so should make most employers wonder how interested the candidate really is. For example, it is not unusual for extern candidates to profess little knowledge [about my organization]. A five minute review of our website will show [what we do]. I think I can recall just a single interview in which a candidate expressed this minimal level of knowledge. Even better would be some communication with a prior extern at the same employer. Almost everyone we have interviewed for the program confessed to not having had any communication with the current or prior externs about their experiences. The results can sometimes be a bit embarrassing, such as when candidates talk about a desire to get into [areas of the law unrelated to our organization].

I don't mean to sound unduly harsh. However, the latest round of extern applicants is by far the most qualified in terms of GPA and grades in applicable classes and these problems are still evident. Unless these superior applicants address these issues when they apply for real jobs, they risk getting turned down for jobs they should easily be able to get."

Q: *My application materials are supposed to be submitted a single PDF. How do I combine multiple documents into one PDF?*

If you are unable to combine your cover letter, resume, and other applications materials into a single PDF, contact or stop by the Career Center office (lawcareer@uoregon.edu) for assistance.

Q: *Are rising 2L and current 2L students eligible to participate in a Portland In-House externship?*

No. Externships offered through the Portland In-House Externship Program are intended for rising or current 3L students who have completed their 2L year of law school and have moved to Portland to participate in the Portland Program during their 3L year. Note, however, that although only a rising or current 3L student may participate in a Portland In-House externship, the **externship application process takes place during your 2L year**, as described above under 'Application Process.'

Q: *Can I apply for a Portland In-House externship if I do not plan to live in Portland?*

No. All Portland In-House externships are located in the Portland area (and many are located a short distance from UO Law's White Stag campus in Portland). As a consequence, it is impractical to work at a Portland externship if you do not also plan to live in the Portland-area.

If you are intending to participate in a Portland In-House externship, you should also be planning to participate in the Portland Program. If you have not already applied to participate in the Portland Program during your 3L year, you should apply before or at the same time as you apply for a Portland In-House externship.

Q: *Can I do more than one externship in a semester? Can I do different types of externships – e.g. a business law externship and a immigration law externship?*

Students are strongly advised against working at more than one externship during a single semester. In extraordinary circumstances, a student may be permitted to extern at more than one placement during a single

semester, but only if the student obtains the advance permission of (i) the Director of Externships and (ii) the field supervisors at each placement.

A student may work at different externships during different semesters; however, a student may not take more than 12 externship credits during his or her tenure at the Law School without the advance permission of the Director of Externships. The Director will only grant permission if the student does a degree audit with the Registrar and can demonstrate the educational appropriateness of additional externship opportunities beyond the 12-credit limit.

Q: *Can I do an externship at the same placement over two semesters?. For example, can I do a fall semester externship and continue on with that same externship in the spring semester?*

Yes, but only if approved in advance by the Director of Externships. A student may work at a same placement for externship credit for more than one semester only if s/he can demonstrate, through a written memo to the Director of Externships, that the work s/he will be doing in that placement in one semester is substantially different from the work that s/he has previously done in the placement and provides increased educational value. For example, if the student spends one semester focused on litigation matters and the next semester on transactional work, then externship credit may be approved for both terms.

Q: *How do I maximize my chances of securing a Portland In-House Externship? What if I do not get offered an externship?*

Aside from preparing proofread, typo-free, and tailored application materials, you will maximize your chances of securing an in-house externship by applying to multiple externships, including ones that you suspect may be less popular among your peers and therefore less competitive. Like a job search, however, securing an externship involves a competitive application process and, therefore, no student can be guaranteed an externship. The Portland Program offers a sufficient number of courses for you to take in your 3L year to still graduate on time.

Q: *What if I don't see an organization or business listed in this Guide that interests me? Can I do a Portland In-House externship with other organizations?*

Yes. Portland is home to many national and international corporations, nonprofits, and governmental agencies with legal departments. If you do not see the industry sector or organization that interests you, then you may develop your own externship opportunity.

First, you must identify and contact the legal department at the organization that interests you. Quite often, it is difficult to find contact information for in-house counsel, so use the resources available to you, including professors, alumni, and personal contacts, to connect with potential field supervisors.

Next, you must obtain permission from the field supervisor to gain work experience in their legal department, including agreement to follow the Law School's Externships Program guidelines. Finally, you must follow the Law School's internal approval process for a new externship, which involves preparing and submitting a Field Placement Application (available on MyLaw's Registrar page). Please note that the Law School will not approve an externship application at a for-profit organization unless the for-profit organization (i) agrees that it will not bill student time to its clients or customers and (ii) provides a list of the kinds of tasks that the organization expects the student-extern to perform and an estimate of the percentage of time the student will spend on each kind of task.

Please contact the Director of Externships if you have questions about creating your own externship opportunity.