

Southwestern Law School  
Excerpts from Externship course goal-setting and self-assessment at  
the start of the fieldwork and at the end.

**Your Specific Goals; Action Plan; and Self-Assessment**

Identify 3-5 specific goals that you have for your particular externship and include them on the table on the next page. Identify goals that generally fall under one or more of the below three categories – but definitely pick goals that would fall under “legal skills” and/or “professionalism” because externships are an ideal setting to learn and improve in these areas.

- Legal knowledge (e.g., learning a specific area of law)
- Legal skills (e.g., factual investigation; drafting contracts; interviewing clients)
- Professionalism/character (e.g., improving time management; exercising more initiative; improving work ethic; improving attention to detail)

The following points will help you identify desirable and realistic goals.

1. Why are you in law school? How does the externship fit with your educational/career/personal goals? Consider your likes/dislikes, your values and priorities.
2. Take stock of the feedback you’ve received so far about your legal knowledge, skills, and professional competencies. Which areas need further practice and improvement?
3. Have a good grasp of the nature of work your placement performs and the opportunities available to externs.
4. Based on above, sketch out 3-5 specific goals – e.g., not a general goal like “gaining experience” but specific goals like “finding out how prosecutors make judgment calls whether and how to prosecute a case”; “becoming more efficient with research skills”; “gaining experience in factual investigation”; “balancing work with family.”
5. Meet with your supervisor early on to discuss your goals and this learning plan so you can have your supervisor’s support to reach your goals.
6. Recognize that it’s fine to amend, abandon, or add goals, based on your supervisors’ advice, and what you learn from our class as well as your experience at the placement.

**Complete the table on the next page and bring to individual meeting with externship professor at the outset of the externship. Take as much space as needed. Here’s an example:**

<u>Specific Goals</u>	<u>Action Plan</u>	<u>Self-Assessment: at the start</u>
1. Improve negotiation skill	-Observe more than one attorney (if possible) negotiate one or more deals/points. Debrief with the attorney following the observation. -Get familiar with helpful readings, practice guides, or other resources that my supervisor recommends about effective negotiating. -Prepare an outline for myself of what contributes to effective negotiation. -If possible, participate in at least one negotiation.	I rate myself at 2 based on my LAWS negotiation round (add specific evidence to support the rating)
2. Network and learn about the profession (e.g., being a DA, immigration lawyer, etc.)	-At least every other week, have coffee/lunch with one of the attorneys in the office and ask them about their path to get to current job; what they love about it; what they find challenging; how they take care of their continued prof development; their guidance about landing a job in x area. Keep notes/journal. -Accompany supervisor to at least one prof’l event (CLE or bar mixer), with plan to meet several attorneys; have a plan to stay connected with the prof’l org and people I meet –I’ll email them at end of externship to share highlights and thank them for guidance. -By end of externship, (1) I’ll have list of contacts and a plan to stay in touch periodically and (2) have at least one prof’l org I’ll join to advance my career.	I rate myself at 1 based on my general shyness and feeling that busy attorneys don’t have time to talk with me and I don’t want to impose on their time.

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\_\_\_\_\_ **In the first couple of weeks of the externship, I will share this plan with my supervisor.**  
 (please initial)

<b>My Specific Goals:</b> improve in 3 to 5 specific areas by the end of this externship	<b>Action Plan: specific steps, assignments, and experiences that will help me attain each goal</b>	<b>Self-Assessment: at the start of the externship, I would rate my ability for each of these goals as follows:*</b>
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

**\*Self-Assessment Scale** – Should be able to support your self-assessment with evidence. Examples of evidence are the following: feedback you’ve received from professors or prior externship/job supervisors; being entrusted with more advanced work, more client contact, etc. in an externship/job; assignments/tasks of similar difficulty are less daunting and you’re able to complete them more accurately, efficiently, and independently. For simplicity, all goals relating to knowledge, skills, and professionalism/character are referred to as attributes/skills.

<b>1: Beginning:</b> Rarely demonstrate the skill/attribute at the level expected from a legal extern (i.e., a law student being entrusted with legal work in a real/live professional setting)	<b>2</b>	<b>3: Developing:</b> Usually demonstrate the skill/attribute at the level expected from a legal extern (i.e., a law student being entrusted with legal work in a real/live professional setting)	<b>4</b>	<b>5: Exemplary:</b> Consistently demonstrate the skill/attribute at the level expected from a legal extern and acceptable for a first-year attorney (being entrusted with legal work in a real/live professional setting)
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**Note to Externship Supervisors:** At the end of the term, students are asked to revisit the goals and again self-assess. We also ask supervisors to assess students on the goals that students had identified at the start.