

CRIMINAL LAW EXTERNSHIPS SPRING 2024

UCLA SCHOOL OF LAW

CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROGRAM * CJP@LAW.UCLA.EDU

DOES UCLA LAW OFFER EXTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES IN CRIMINAL LAW?

Yes!

UCLA School of Law's Externship Program allows J.D. and LL.M. students to earn academic credit while gaining criminal law experience in an externship. Students may pursue either a full-time or part-time externship. Students also participate in a corresponding seminar or faculty tutorial that guides students through supplements the placement with review of relevant areas of criminal law and practice, application of legal ethics rules to criminal practice, and reflection on the diversity of criminal law practice settings and client work.

Externships in criminal law are an important way to gain hands-on legal skills. Externships also offer valuable networking opportunities and enhance your professional marketability.

More information on UCLA Law's Externship Program is [available here](#).

HOW DO I FIND A CRIMINAL LAW EXTERNSHIP?

You must apply directly to the office offering a criminal law externship. Deadlines vary, but in general for spring externships you begin looking no later than October 1, and for fall externships you should begin looking no later than March 1. Some programs listed here have even earlier deadlines. This handout contains information about common externship placements, including the type of work you would do, how to apply, and applicable deadlines.

I HAVE AN EXTERNSHIP OFFER! WHAT DO I DO NEXT?

After receiving an externship offer from a placement, apply to the externship program at UCLA Law. For spring semester, the application deadline is around the last day of classes for the fall semester. For the fall semester, the application deadline is in early August. More information is [available here](#).

HOW MANY HOURS A WEEK IS A CRIMINAL LAW EXTERNSHIP?

Part-time externships range from 2-8 fieldwork units. Each fieldwork unit requires 52 hours in the placement over the course of the semester, or 4 hours a week over the course of the 13-week semester. For example, if you would like to earn 4 fieldwork units you would need to work 16 hours a week in the placement, which is roughly a two-day-a-week commitment. Students will also enroll in the companion [Criminal Practice Externship Seminar](#).

Instead of up to two part-time externships, JD candidates may complete one full-time externship. This requires a 40-hour-a-week commitment plus engagement in a faculty tutorial or seminar.

AS AN EXTERN, CAN I BE CERTIFIED TO APPEAR IN CRIMINAL COURT?

Yes!

Students enrolled in criminal law externships that practice in California state courts may qualify to be a certified to appear in state court under supervision of a practicing attorney. In order to qualify, students must be enrolled in their second or third year of law school and either have completed or be currently enrolled in Evidence and Civil Procedure. LL.M. students can also qualify for certification if they satisfy the applicable rules. More information on how to apply for State Bar certification is [available here](#).

Students enrolled in criminal law externships that practice in federal courts may also qualify to appear in court. To do so, students must have completed at least half of law school and completed courses in Evidence, Criminal Law, and Criminal Procedure. More information regarding the rule for certifying students to appear in the Central District of California is [available here](#).

CRIMINAL LAW EXTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES IN LOS ANGELES

What follows is a list of common criminal law externship placements located in Los Angeles. This is not an exhaustive list but should be enough to get you started in your search. These placements are suitable for full- or part-time externships.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE

The Los Angeles County Public Defender's Office offers externship opportunities that expose students to misdemeanor and felony trials and juvenile adjudication, as well as other specialized units such as the office's immigration advising unit. The Los Angeles County Public Defender's office is the largest and oldest criminal defense agency in the country. Externs participate in client interviews, case strategy meetings, and court proceedings. Externs may complete research and writing projects, including briefs, investigative requests, and motions to be filed in court. In addition, externs that earn State Bar certification will have opportunities to appear on the record under the supervision of an experienced attorney.

The application period for spring externships is from May 1 to November 30. For fall externships the application period is from December 1 to June 30. More information on how to apply is [available here](#).

LOS ANGELES COUNTY ALTERNATE PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE

The Los Angeles County Alternate Public Defender Office has an externship program designed to provide law students with a real-life experience of what it is to be a public defender. The Alternate Public Defender was established in 1993 to serve as the appointed attorney in cases where the Los Angeles County Public Defender's Office has a conflict of interest. Externs assist with intake interviews in misdemeanor and felony cases, interview witnesses and family for bail review hearings, review and organize discovery, research legal issues, and prepare legal memoranda. Certified externs may appear in court under supervision.

Students interested in a spring externship should apply as close to October 1 as possible and students interested in a fall externship must apply before March 31. More information is [available here](#).

ACLU OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, CRIMINAL JUSTICE & JAILS PROJECTS

The ACLU of Southern California offers externships for students interested in working on abolition and criminal legal system issues. Externship opportunities exist in several projects, including the Criminal Justice Project and the Jails Project. Opportunities for externs include legal research, drafting, and analysis. Externs may also work on public education and advocacy and assist in the activities of the Jails Project. More details are [available here](#).

Students are advised to apply as early as possible for ACLU externship opportunities. Applications formally close on December 6 for spring externships and August 2 for fall externships. More information is [available here](#).

FEDERAL PUBLIC DEFENDER, NONCAPITAL HABEAS UNIT

Externs with the Federal Public Defender's Office gain hands-on experience advocating for indigent criminal defendants in habeas corpus proceedings. Habeas corpus is often the last opportunity for someone convicted of a crime to obtain relief from an unconstitutional conviction or sentence. Students in this externship will work with the Office of the Federal Public Defender's Noncapital Habeas Unit that handles the habeas cases of individuals convicted in state and federal courts and sentenced to terms up to and including life without parole. The Noncapital Habeas Unit represents clients before state courts, federal district courts, the Ninth Circuit, and the U.S. Supreme Court. As part of their fieldwork, students will be assigned to one federal habeas case that has an important litigation event scheduled during the externship. Students enrolled in this externship will also participate in a specialized companion seminar taught by one current and one retired, long-time public defender that introduces students to how criminal cases move through state and federal courts and what habeas lawyers do to advocate for clients who are wrongly convicted and sentenced.

Decisions on admission are made on a rolling basis and spaces fill up quickly, so students should apply as soon possible by sending a resume and cover letter explaining their interest to externshipprogram@law.ucla.edu.

LEGAL AID FOUNDATION OF LOS ANGELES, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CLINIC

Students engaged in this special fieldwork placement at the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles (LAFLA) will assist domestic violence survivors in the Domestic Violence Restraining Order walk-in clinic at the courthouse. Students will support pro per litigants to complete petitions for civil restraining orders. Students also represent clients in civil hearings before Los Angeles Superior Court. In addition to the field placement at LAFLA, students attend a two-credit seminar (known as a “practicum”) focused on topics such as best practices in serving clients, laws governing families and child custody, and trial skills.

Students may enroll through the UCLA Law clinic application process. This course is only taught in the spring semester. More information about this opportunity is [available here](#).

LOS ANGELES COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY’S OFFICE

The Los Angeles District Attorney’s Office allows law student externs to present in the courtroom in criminal cases, under the supervision of an attorney with their office. The types of cases dealt with by the District Attorney’s Office range from misdemeanors, including petty theft and reckless driving, to felonies, including sexual assault and murder. As certified externs, 2Ls, 3Ls, and LL.M. students can conduct preliminary hearings, evidence suppression hearings, and in some offices, even a trial. Students must be available to attend a one-day training on how to present evidence in a criminal proceeding and how to conduct a preliminary hearing or juvenile adjudication.

Students must apply between September 1 and November 15 for a spring externship and between May 1 and July 15 for a fall externship. More information and the application packet is [available here](#).

CALIFORNIA ATTORNEY GENERAL’S OFFICE, CRIMINAL LAW DIVISION, APPEALS, WRITS & TRIALS SECTION

The California Attorney General’s Office offers externships in its Criminal Law Division. Assignments involve representing the People of the State of California in post-conviction felony proceedings. This includes working on writs and appeals in the California Court of Appeal, California Supreme Court, Federal District Court, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, and United States Supreme Court. Certified externs in Los Angeles are given the same responsibilities as a first-year Deputy Attorneys General and may appear for oral argument in the California Court of Appeal (under the supervision of a Deputy Attorney General) to represent the People of the State of California in a felony appeal.

Opportunities for spring and fall semester externships are very limited and only offered on a case-by-case basis. More information on how to apply is [available here](#).

UNITED STATES ATTORNEY’S OFFICE FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

The United States Attorney’s Office for the Central District of California offers externships in its Criminal, Civil, National Security and Tax Divisions. Assignments may include assisting with legal research, writing pleadings, trial preparation, completing appellate briefs, and responding to habeas corpus petitions. Externs are also encouraged to observe trials and other court proceedings in cases on which they have worked or in cases of general interest in the office. Externs who qualify to practice under the district court’s student practice rules may also handle some misdemeanor and petty offense hearings.

Deadlines for externships with the US Attorney’s Office are very early because of the background checks that are conducted. For spring externships, you must apply by September 15 and for fall externships you must apply by April 15. More information is [available here](#).

LOS ANGELES CITY ATTORNEY’S OFFICE

The Los Angeles City Attorney’s Offices handles violations of the city municipal code and misdemeanors that occur within the city’s limits. The Los Angeles City Attorney’s Office requires externs to commit a minimum of 16 hours a week up to a full-time schedule of 40 hours a week. Externs at the City Attorney may also qualify to become certified and appear in court under attorney supervision.

Only the fall externship opportunity works for the law school’s calendar. Opportunities are limited and students should apply as early as possible. More information is [available here](#).