Cornell Law School  
Frequently Asked Questions about Clinical Selection Process

Clinic Enrollment System

Enrollment: All clinic offerings are instructor-selected.

1. Students will be able to clearly identify clinical priorities.
2. Teachers will be able to easily identify those students most eager to take that particular clinic. This should help students planning for a particular career.
3. Teachers will be aware of students who have had no prior clinical experience. All other things being equal, teachers are asked to give priority to these students in choosing enrollment.

If students with no prior clinical experience are given priority, won’t students who are planning a public interest career path be hurt by this system?

This is unlikely. Remember that each teacher is allowed to emphasize many factors in the selection process. Chosen career path is one such legitimate factor. For instance, in the Externship - Full Term, by faculty policy the instructors will use the following specified priorities.

In case of excess demand, a student’s application for placement will be given final approval based on the placement’s relative capacity to fulfill appropriate and unmet educational and career goals and further based on the following preferences: first, to those students whose placement has been identified as “approvable” based on the Law School’s past student experience at that placement; and, second, to those students whose placement will be in cities with multiple students during that semester. (Approved at faculty meeting, October 6, 2004.)

Therefore, in certain classes, such as the Externship - Full Term, lack of a prior clinical experience is unlikely to play any role at all. However, assuming all other factors are equal, the teachers would be encouraged to use the factor as a “tie-breaker”.

What if I do not get into my first choice clinic?

It would be ideal if we could guarantee every single student admission to the clinic of his or her choice, but this is unrealistic.

By definition, clinical courses are “teacher intensive” with a very high ratio of faculty to student compared to more traditional classroom courses. So it would be wise to plan in advance for “back-up” choices, or to plan in advance a flexible approach to when you would work in a particular clinic.

How do I find out why I was not chosen for a clinic?

Because each clinic is now instructor selected, you should direct your questions regarding selection to the individual instructor.

Why can’t I take more than one clinic in a given semester?

You can. You just can’t take up two slots if a student with no prior clinical experience at all wants your second slot (and the instructor is willing to take that student). Again, we hope this system
will spread entry level clinical opportunities as fairly as possible among all students, not just those who, under the former system, which included lotteries, happened to “luck out.”

**Why are Externships - Full Term limited at all? I am worried that I won’t get to go at all and my career plans depend on going.**

The primary reason for any limitation on the number of students is teaching time. Under ABA regulations, placement sites must be inspected regularly and each student must receive intense supervision and feedback from a regular member of the law school faculty. Allowing approximately twenty four (24) students in the fall and sixteen (16) in the spring to do an Externship – Full Time generally meets student demand. Furthermore, in the case of demand exceeding the student numbers cap, faculty policy allows additional externships outside of the course with the approval of the Academic Dean.

**Where can I find out more information about an externship, and when should I start thinking about it?**

There are several externship courses: Externship – Full Time; Externship – Part Time, Neighborhood Legal Services; Externship – Part Time, Judicial; Externship – Part Time, Other Local. All of them have Blackboard web sites with complete course information. Since all externships use the Externship – Full Time materials and activities, that website is the primary resource. To review specific information about placements used in the past, you should see the externship binders in room 148. And you may also contact Clinical Professor Glenn Galbreath (ggg2@cornell.edu) if you have additional questions.

Externships may be done starting the spring semester of a student’s second year and the application process starts a full semester in advance of the semester of the externship.

**Preference Option.**

You cannot use the preference for clinics or externship courses, because they are instructor-selected courses. The preference is for seminar and problem courses only.