To apply for a UCDC Law externship, follow these steps.

1. Determine whether you satisfy the basic eligibility requirements, which are closely similar at all four participating law schools: Berkeley, UCLA, Davis and Irvine. Your transcript must show you’re in good standing. The away term must be second semester 2L or first semester 3L (for Davis, first or second term 2L or first term 3L), or second semester 3L by permission of your law school’s dean of students. Typically you apply in any given term for the following term. There are no binding course prerequisites, but you should consider waiting to do UCDC Law until you have taken some relevant upper-year courses, e.g., for a litigation placement, evidence, federal courts, advanced civil or criminal procedure and the like; for a Congressional placement, legislative process or drafting; for an administrative agency externship, administrative law; for an international organization, international law; and some course preparation or extracurricular experience in the subject matter area of the externship. The Program and your participating school can advise you about any aspect of your decision whether and when to apply.

2. Fill out the UCDC Law application and submit it to the Program and your participating school. Attach a resume, unofficial transcript, and any other materials you’d like us to see in confidence. Students from all four participating schools complete virtually identical versions of this form. Right now the Program has no cap on enrollment, so this application is informational: it helps us to know you and to advise you effectively. One of our commitments is to work closely with each UCDC Law applicant to secure the best match possible between student and placement, taking into account the student’s background and interests and the needs of the host office. Shortly after applications are received, we typically write each student with initial advice on placements based on what we see in the application. We continue our individual help, through correspondence and conversation, until the student is placed or runs out of time (see below).

3. Prepare a resume and tailored cover letter and send them, yourself, to each placement host office or organization you wish to approach. Look for an externship unique to Washington, which typically will be federal, national or international in scope. Explain that you’d be coming through the UCDC Law Program, 40 hours a week for 14 weeks; we can help you with that language, and you can refer potential placement hosts to a snapshot of the Program at www.ucdclaw.blogspot.com. Placements at for-profit entities, and monetary compensation from the placement host, are prohibited, but that leaves a huge array of government and non-profit opportunities. You’re not limited to placements we have used in past semesters—our aim is to find you a placement highly apposite to your interests and aspirations, even if you’re the first UCDC Law student to go there. Don’t apply just to come to D.C.; consider the trade-off with the curricular riches available at your home school.
4. Start applying to placements immediately, even before you submit your UCDC Law application or receive our first post-application advice. A placement has to be willing to give you substantive legal work under a lawyer’s supervision, with regular feedback, mentorship, and insulation from purely clerical or administrative work that’s incommensurate with law school credit. You may apply to as many placements as you want, although we suggest applying only to placements from which you’d have a hard time turning down an offer no matter what other opportunities you’re also pursuing. The Program will help you figure this out. We can’t guarantee that a host office will take you on as an extern—that is the office’s decision—but we make every effort to promote you to placement hosts of your choice, whether or not we enjoy an existing personal connection with the office or agency you want.

5. Some offices or agencies have well-established externship programs, and some have virtually none. Don’t be deterred by either; just investigate and plan accordingly. Use your school’s career services office and your own contacts, and of course seek the Program’s advice. If you learn that a security clearance is part of the externship application process, apply with as much lead time as possible to let the agency complete that, even if there’s no stated deadline. We will work with you down to the wire, which technically is the course registration deadline for the away term at your school of origin, but as a practical matter has to be early enough to give you time to move to Washington. When you get an offer, you let the Program know so the placement can be approved on the criteria above. You can’t accept any offer without this step.

6. Placement start and end dates normally track the start and end of classes at our participating schools, but a number of factors can somewhat alter that timetable. You and your host will work out dates after you’ve received an offer, but consult the Program about non-conforming dates before you agree to them. Our once-a-week companion course at the UC Washington Center normally begins a week into your home school’s semester, and ends the week your home school’s classes end. We meet from 6 to 9 p.m. (which night depends on final enrollment and classroom availability). Ordinarily you shouldn’t make any elective plans that call for you to miss any of our 14 lively course meetings, many of which have fabulous guest speakers and all of which start with time to get to know one another over free food and drink.

7. Plan your D.C. logistics, including housing in California and D.C. We don’t provide or arrange for housing, but we can advise you on neighborhoods, transportation and some nuts and bolts of D.C. life. We try to let each term’s UCDC Law cohort know one another’s non-privileged contact information early enough to be useful for roommate searches and co-transportation. Plan on arriving a week before the companion course or placement begins, whichever is earlier, and staying until the end of the term. You’ll have a final paper for the companion course, likely on a topic growing out of your externship, and you may prefer to finish the paper while still in D.C. Keep your travel arrangements as flexible as you can. Expect to have to change a return flight, for instance, depending on circumstances that arise once you’re in Washington.

8. Ask questions and seek advice from the Program or from your participating school. It’s normal not to know much about how this works when you start. Treat every aspect of the externship process as a learning experience, perhaps an important or even life-defining one. Welcome!