

The University of Chicago Law Review

Writing Competition and Membership Fact Sheet

This fact sheet addresses several common questions about the Writing Competition, membership on the *Law Review*, and the benefits of joining the *Law Review*. If you have additional questions or concerns, please reach out to the *Law Review* recruitment team: Emilia Porubcin (porubcine@uchicago.edu), Kelsey Roberts (kroberts@uchicago.edu), and Laura Shannon (laurashannon@uchicago.edu).

I. THE HONOR CODE

First, let's talk about the *Law Review* Honor Code. Current *Law Review* members are bound by an Honor Code and have agreed not to discuss substantive elements of the Writing Competition with 1Ls. This is not intended to obfuscate the Writing Competition process. It is meant to (1) ensure that prospective staffers have a level playing field when going through the Writing Competition; (2) safeguard our impartiality throughout the process; and (3) prevent the (unintentional) spread of misinformation by directing participant questions into official channels.

The Honor Code creates two distinct time periods. **Between now and May 15th**, *Law Review* members can discuss all things journal-work-related, including how much time they spend on *Law Review* work and what their responsibilities are. They may not discuss personal strategies for approaching the Writing Competition or substantive information about the Competition. **After May 15th**, *Law Review* members may encourage 1Ls to participate in the Writing Competition but may not discuss substantive aspects of journal membership.

II. JOINING THE *LAW REVIEW*

A. The Writing Competition

1. **The Writing Competition.** The Writing Competition is the primary means by which all four journals fill their staffer classes. The Writing Competition is a writing and editing assignment that begins Saturday, June 3rd at 9 a.m. and ends Sunday, June 11th at 11:59 p.m. CDT.¹ You will receive instructions about how to complete the Writing Competition shortly in advance of June 3rd, but you will receive the packet itself by 9 a.m. on Saturday, June 3rd. The *Law Review* evaluates Writing Competition performance when extending membership offers to rising 2Ls.

The *Law Review*, *Chicago Journal of International Law*, *Legal Forum*, and *The University of Chicago Business Law Review* all use the same Writing Competition. The topic is selected by the *Law Review*, and all relevant materials are provided in a packet that the *Law Review* provides. Your performance on the Writing Competition will be used to evaluate membership for all four journals.

2. **Basic rules.** You may not discuss the Writing Competition with any other person from June 3rd to June 11th. This is grounds for immediate disqualification. The Writing Competition is not designed to fully occupy students for the duration of the nine days it runs; participants

¹ Regardless of your physical location during the Writing Competition, submissions are governed by Central Time Zone. This is a hard deadline, so we encourage you to submit your materials early in case of any technical difficulties.

should have more than enough time to comfortably finish the Competition alongside necessary travel or the start of summer jobs.

B. Becoming a *Law Review* Staffer

1. **Admission criteria.** Thirty staffers will “write on,” and twenty staffers will “grade on.” Neither current board members nor new staffers will know who wrote on or graded on to the *Law Review*.
 - a) **Grade on.** Twenty applicants are eligible to join the *Law Review* by grading on. Students with first-year cumulative grade point averages in the top percentage of their class are subject to a different threshold for Writing Competition performance. Students who grade on must still complete the Writing Competition, and all students² are automatically considered for grade on. If a candidate’s grades qualify them for grade on, their topic analysis and editing sections are weighed by the Registrar as follows: 60% topic analysis and 40% editing. If the candidate’s scores fall within the top 60% of competitors or the top 60 submissions, whichever criteria is more generous, they will receive an offer.
 - b) **Write on.** Thirty applicants are eligible to join the *Law Review* by writing on. Scores on each are normalized and weighted: 50% topic analysis, 30% editing, and 20% personal statement. All submissions are blinded, and different groups grade each section, so no section is associated with either the student or their score on any other section. Scores are sent to the Registrar, who removes the students who have “graded on” and returns a list of the top thirty scores from the remaining pool of candidates.
2. **Topic access process.** Students who do not participate in or who are not offered a spot on the *Law Review* after the Writing Competition can join the *Law Review* via the Topic Access program. Topic Access candidates go through a Comments process that is similar to staffers’ in order to be considered for admission to the *Law Review*. More information on Topic Access will be made available in the summer, after the completion of the Writing Competition.

III. WHAT TO EXPECT AS A *LAW REVIEW* STAFFER

The *Law Review* is a student-run journal of legal scholarship that publishes eight issues each year. We publish articles, essays, and book reviews submitted by law professors, judges, and practitioners, as well as Comments written by the *Law Review*’s student members. In addition to serving as a forum for legal scholarship crucial, the *Law Review* is committed to providing its staff with valuable training in legal research and writing, a robust community at the Law School, and a wealth of professional resources. Staff members also learn a great deal of substantive law by writing Comments and editing scholarship.

² Students taking Comparative Legal Institutions with Professor Ginsburg **must** take the exam option to be considered for grade-on. If you choose to write a paper for Comparative Legal Institutions, you will be ineligible to grade on regardless of your class standing. Students who write a paper for Comparative Legal Institutions must qualify via the write-on process.

1. **Main responsibilities.** There are three main categories of work that you will do as a staffer on the *Law Review*: editing pieces for publication, writing a Comment, and working on Online projects.
 - a) **Cite checks.** Editing assignments are known as cite checks and help ensure the substantive and technical accuracy of the *Law Review*. Staffers will review each citation in a Comment, Article, or Book Review and edit the piece for style and technical errors. Each piece published in the *Law Review* receives four staffer edits. Each cite check lasts for five to eight days, depending on the type of cite check assigned. Generally, staffers will do three cite checks over the course of their 2L year. These cite checks are scheduled at the beginning of the quarter, so students are on notice for when they will take place.
 - b) **Comments process.** Completing a Comment is a requirement of journal membership. Each *Law Review* staffer will write an original piece of legal scholarship of about 10,000–13,500 words. Typically, this Comment satisfies the Law School’s Substantial Research Project (SRP) credit, meaning staffers do not have to satisfy this requirement through a separate class. Before writing a Comment, staffers will propose two topic ideas and work with other staffers to analyze topic suggestions and determine if they are suitable for a Comment. After choosing a topic, staffers work with *Law Review* editors and faculty advisors to draft and improve their Comment throughout the Fall and Winter Quarters. Several Comments are then selected for publication in the *Law Review*.
 - c) **Online projects.** The Online team publishes shorter case notes and essays, which have a length minimum of about 1,500 words, in an online-only format. Case notes and essays can come from a variety of authors, including from faculty and from student members of the *Law Review*. Staffers participate in the Online publication pipeline, including drafting an essay or case note for publication.

Staff members also participate in the articles selection process by performing preemption checks on articles we consider for publication, evaluating their novelty, impact, and eligibility for publication. Staff members can also contribute to a variety of other essential production tasks throughout the year. *Law Review* membership is a two-year commitment for all members, regardless of whether they choose to join the Managing Board. Staff members who do not join the Managing Board will continue to help edit the *Law Review* during their second year of membership.

2. **When work starts.** *Law Review* membership kicks off with a virtual orientation in mid-July. The Comments process begins shortly thereafter, with staffers proposing their own topics and reviewing others’ proposals. The first cite checks begin in mid-August and continue on a rolling basis throughout the school year. Preemption checks and Online projects are similarly spaced throughout the year on a more infrequent basis. In addition to the first virtual orientation introducing Staffers to the *Law Review*’s teams and timelines, there will be a second in-person orientation in Chicago on the weekend of September 23rd. Both orientations are mandatory, as we will be providing essential training to prepare students for their first year as staffers.
3. **Involvement in other organizations.** While journal membership is a significant time commitment, members of the *Law Review* are active participants in the broader Law School

community. Current staffers and board members are involved in Moot Court and various clinics, including the Police Accountability Project, the Supreme Court and Appellate Clinic, and the Federal Criminal Justice Clinic. Additionally, many members serve on the executive boards for various law school organizations and maintain outside hobbies. If you are curious about how staffers have balanced particular activities, please reach out to Emilia, Laura, or Kelsey prior to May 15th and we can connect you with a staffer who has participated in the same activities.

III. WHAT YOU'LL GAIN FROM JOINING THE *LAW REVIEW*

Beyond three guaranteed pass/fail credits, joining the *Law Review* provides staffers with a uniquely well-structured and supportive environment to explore novel solutions to problems in the law; contribute to legal scholarship; and develop legal research, writing, and reasoning skills. The *Law Review* is a rewarding experience for both litigation- and transactional-oriented students: staffer work builds an attention to detail that benefits students regardless of future profession. Members join a long line of alumni who have gone on to pursue wide-ranging careers in academia, private practice, and the public sector.

The work we publish directly affects the composition of the legal academy. Because the *University of Chicago Law Review* is one of the highest-ranked flagship law reviews in the nation, our publication decisions significantly impact the careers of the scholars we publish, particularly those who are young or emerging in their fields. Staffers play a crucial role in moving selected pieces through our publication pipeline, meaning that staffers' work on the *Law Review* enables our commitment to the expansion and enrichment of the legal academy. Staffers who choose to join the Managing Board in their second year on the *Law Review* will enjoy even greater insight, responsibility, and authority concerning the development of the processes that we use to select articles and shape the staffer experience.

Most importantly, joining the *Law Review* is a fantastic opportunity to build community with classmates who share a range of scholarly, personal, and professional goals. We spend an enormous amount of time working toward a very important mission, and we believe that fostering the relationships we build through that process is as valuable as completing the work that we do. We are a family far beyond the walls of the journal office. We're excited to welcome you, too.