

MEMORANDUM

To: Class of 2025
From: Kelsey Roberts and Laura Shannon,
Topic Access & Recruitment Editors, *The University of Chicago Law Review*
Date: May 1, 2023
Re: Candidacy for v91 *Law Review* Membership via Topic Access

Thank you for your interest in the Topic Access Program! The Topic Access Program offers an alternative path to membership on the *Law Review* for students who did not participate in the Writing Competition or were not offered membership through that process. Students selected through the Topic Access Program will have the same responsibilities as their peers accepted through the Writing Competition. It is the goal of Topic Access to help qualified candidates join the *Law Review* (and to have some fun along the way!). **If you have questions, please contact the Topic Access & Recruitment Editors (TAEs), Kelsey Roberts (kelseyroberts.chicago@gmail.com) and Laura Shannon (laura.shannon.c@gmail.com).** Should you wish to consider or begin the process, either Kelsey or Laura will be assigned as your primary contact and will work closely with you as you complete the process.

The Topic Access Program consists of two parts that aim to measure candidates' readiness to carry out the duties of a staffer on *Law Review*. Staffers on the *Law Review* contribute to the Journal via two main functions: 1) producing high-quality student scholarship and 2) supporting academic authors via substantive cite checks. First, candidates in the Topic Access Program illustrate their ability to produce high-quality student scholarship through the development of a Comment. Second, candidates in the Topic Access Program demonstrate their ability to support academic authors by successfully completing a cite check. Candidates are also asked to submit a short Personal Statement. The following memorandum describes each of these parts, the program timeline, and a few additional bits of important information. Please be aware that the following process is subject to some modification.

I. THE COMMENT PROCESS

Candidates who seek to join *Law Review* through the Topic Access Program undergo much of the same Comment process as new *Law Review* staffers. Comments are substantial pieces of legal writing that perform critical evaluation or innovative reevaluation of a legal issue and provide a creative or novel approach to the problem. They go beyond research papers, which simply analyze the existing issue, and litigation briefs, which merely take a position on an existing legal debate. The Comment process is an iterative process. It consists of 1) selecting a viable topic, 2) providing peer feedback on proposed topics, 3) developing an outline, and 4) completing a written Comment. Topic Access Program candidates will undergo the first three parts by producing Topic Proposals (TP), a Topic Analysis (TA), and a Comment outline. Before starting a Comment outline, the *Law Review* Comments Team must approve the Topic Access candidate's topic as presented in the TP and TA. What each of these submissions entails is described briefly below, and more information can be found in the Comments Manual. Kelsey and Laura will provide detailed instructions, guidance, and feedback to candidates at the start of and during the Topic Access process.

In addition to topic approval, candidates are evaluated for membership based on the quality of their work product during the Comment development process. **Importantly, offers for *Law Review* membership via the Topic Access Program are made after Comment outlines are submitted.**

Thus, candidates in the Topic Access Program are not required to submit a completed Comment unless they accept an offer of membership.

- **Topic Proposal:** A TP is a 4 to 7-page memorandum that states a candidate’s proposed topic, provides a brief discussion of the topic and existing commentary, and concludes with a bibliography. Each candidate has the opportunity to submit two TPs proposing topics they generated. Should a candidate fail to get a topic approved after two high-quality submissions, candidates may have the opportunity to work with Laura and Kelsey to find a suitable topic in some cases.
- **Topic Analysis:** If a TP is approved, it will be peer reviewed by a *Law Review* staffer or Topic Access candidate to determine its viability as a Comment topic. A TA is a 4 to 7-page memorandum that serves as a more thorough assessment of a proposed topic. Each candidate will complete at least one TA on a different TP than their own. The TA includes a detailed preemption check, a critical second look at proposed solutions, and perhaps additional or alternative paths to resolving the issue. Each topic is again subject to approval after the TA process. If approved, the candidate will begin to develop their Comment outline.
- **Outline:** If a TA is approved, candidates must write a 5 to 10-page Comment outline. An outline should state a clear thesis and be detailed and thorough. The TAEs should be able to track all of the arguments, evaluate their support, and understand the direction in which a candidate wishes the Comment to go.

II. THE CITE CHECK

Candidates in the Topic Access Program demonstrate their ability to support academic authorship by successfully completing a cite check. Cite checks typically span seven to eight days, during which candidates work to ensure the accuracy of each citation in a Comment, Article, or Book Review, while also editing for style and technical errors. Tasks include reading the piece, collecting cited sources, verifying the accuracy of citations, adding pincites, and completing other substantive or technical edits. Candidates are evaluated based on the quality of their cite check. More detailed guidance regarding cite checks is available in the Editing Manual, and Kelsey and Laura will provide further information to candidates at the start of and during the Topic Access Program.

III. TIMELINE

The following is a tentative timeline of the 2023 Topic Access Program. Please keep in mind that the following deadlines are subject to change before the start of the Program. Kelsey and Laura will communicate any changes to those who express interest in the Program. While we expect no material changes to the dates below, please do not hesitate to reach out directly with any questions about the timeline.

It is important to note that Topic Access candidates are expected to turn in submissions by the relevant due date. Membership on a journal frequently entails strict deadlines, and this process is representative of the staffer experience. In an effort to provide structure and meaningful feedback to candidates, the Topic Access Program sets firm deadlines for submissions that closely mirror those given to staffers.

Date	Event
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Mid-July	Sign-Up Form for Topic Access Opens
Sunday, July 30th	Deadline to Sign-Up for Topic Access
August (exact dates TBD)	Complete and Submit Topic Proposals to TAE for Approval
September (exact dates TBD)	Complete and Submit Topic Analysis to TAE for Approval
September (exact dates TBD)	Receive and Complete Cite Check
Sunday, October 1st	Finalize Comment topic with TAE
Sunday, October 8th	Personal Statement Due to TAE
Sunday, October 15th	Comment Outline Due to TAE
Late October (exact date TBD)	Offers for Membership Extended to Selected Candidates

IV. OTHER INFORMATION

A. Personal Statement

Topic Access Candidates are also asked to write a statement of no more than 500 words explaining how their life experiences, background, skills, professions, or interests would enable them to make a valuable contribution to the *Law Review*. Alternatively or in addition, candidates may explain why they are particularly interested in serving on the staff of the *Law Review*.

B. Confidentiality

Participation in the Topic Access Program is confidential. Candidates' work in the Comment development process is made anonymous and will be evaluated by the v91 Board as such (with limited exceptions, such as your communications with Kelsey or Laura). To maintain that anonymity, we discourage people from talking to their peers about their participation in the Topic Access Program or otherwise making public their participation unless they are accepted on to the *Law Review*, but, of course, candidates are more than welcome (and are, in fact, encouraged) to talk about their Comment topics with professors and other advisors in their lives.

C. One Journal Only

An individual cannot be both a staffer on the *Law Review* and a member of another journal simultaneously. As a result, anyone who is interested in participating in the Topic Access Program and is a member of another journal should talk to that journal about their participation to let them know of their interest in joining the *Law Review*.

Those who have questions about either the substance or timeline of the Topic Access Program should not hesitate to reach out to either Kelsey or Laura. Thank you for your interest in joining the *Law Review*. We look forward to working with those of you who embark upon this process!