

# 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: Katrina Goto (kgoto@uchicago.edu), Marta Krason (mkrason@uchicago.edu), and David Wang (dwang@uchicago.edu).

### I. THE 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. The Honor Code is meant to (1) ensure that prospective staffers are on a level playing field when participating in the Writing Competition; (2) safeguard our impartiality throughout the process; and (3) direct participant questions through official channels to prevent the (unintentional) spread of misinformation.

The Honor Code functions over two distinct time periods. **Between now and May 22nd**, *Law Review* members may 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 22nd**, *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 7th at 8 a.m. and ends Sunday, June 15th at 11:59 p.m. CDT.<sup>1</sup> You will receive instructions about how to complete the Writing Competition shortly in advance of June 7th, and you will receive the packet at 8 a.m. on Saturday, June 7th. The *Law Review* extends membership offers to rising 2Ls based on Writing Competition performance.

The *Law Review*, *Chicago Journal of International Law*, *Legal Forum*, and *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 compiled by the *Law Review*. 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 7th until membership calls are made in mid-July. Discussing the Writing Competition with another person during this period is grounds for immediate disqualification. The Writing Competition is not designed to fully occupy students for the duration of the ten days it runs;

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

participants 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 based on their first-year cumulative grade point averages. Students who grade on must still complete the Writing Competition, and all students<sup>2</sup> 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. All submissions are anonymized. Different members grade each section so that a candidate’s score on one section does not influence their score on any other section. If the candidate’s scores fall within the top 50% of competitors or the top 50 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 are normalized and weighted as follows: 50% topic analysis, 30% editing, and 20% personal statement. All submissions are anonymized. Different members grade each section so that a candidate’s score on one section does not influence 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 did not participate in the Writing Competition or who were not offered a spot on the *Law Review* through the Writing Competition may join the *Law Review* via the Topic Access Program. In order to be considered for admission to the *Law Review*, Topic Access candidates participate in a Comments process that is similar to the Comments process that staffers participate in during the summer. While the Topic Access Program is highly competitive, all candidates receive feedback and mentorship from the *Law Review*’s Topic Access Editors throughout the process. Selected candidates will finish the program with a detailed outline of their Comment, which will be ready for full drafting and revisions during the Fall and Winter quarters. Candidates selected through the Topic Access Program will be invited to join the *Law Review* with the same status and responsibilities as staffers selected through the Writing Competition. Additional information about the Topic Access Program will be made available in the summer, following 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

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<sup>2</sup> To be eligible to grade on, you may need to take the exam option, as opposed to the paper option, for certain 1L electives.

as a crucial forum for legal scholarship, 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 engage with and learn from a great deal of substantive law by writing Comments and editing scholarship.

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, known as cite checks, help ensure the substantive and technical accuracy of pieces selected for publication in the *Law Review*. Staffers review each citation in a Comment, Article, Essay 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 five to eight days, depending on the type of cite check assigned. Generally, staffers complete three cite checks over the course of their 2L year. These cite checks are scheduled months in advance, so students have significant notice of when they are expected to conduct a cite check.
  - b) **Comments.** Completing a Comment is a requirement of journal membership. Each *Law Review* staffer writes 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 propose topic ideas and analyze the proposed topics of their peers to determine if those topics are suitable for a Comment. After choosing a topic, staffers work with *Law Review* editors and faculty advisors to draft and revise their Comment through the Fall and Winter Quarters. Several Comments are then selected for publication in the *Law Review*.
  - c) **Online projects.** The *University of Chicago Law Review Online* publishes shorter case notes and essays, which have a minimum length 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 have the opportunity to participate in other parts of the *Law Review* throughout the year. For example, staffers assist the articles selection process by performing preemption checks which involve submitting memoranda that evaluate an article’s novelty, impact, and eligibility for publication. Staff members may 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 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 27th. Both orientations are mandatory because we will provide 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 Federal Criminal Justice Clinic, the Employment Law Clinic, and the Criminal and Juvenile 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 Katrina, Marta, or David prior to May 22nd, and we can connect you with a staffer mentor.

### III. WHAT YOU WILL 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 critical 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 pursued 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 a significant 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 are excited to welcome you.

Sincerely, The Volume 93 Executive Board

Miranda Coombe, *Editor-In-Chief*

Katrina Goto, *Executive Membership, Diversity & Scholarship Editor*

Jackson Cole, *Executive Managing Editor*

Taylor Guthrie, *Executive Articles Editor*

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