



HARVARD LAW SCHOOL

GRADUATE PROGRAM & INTERNATIONAL LEGAL STUDIES

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS FOR VISITING SCHOLAR/VISITING RESEARCHER PROGRAM (2025)

The information and instructions below are for applications to the Harvard Law School Visiting Scholar/Visiting Researcher ("Visitor") program only. If you wish to apply to the LL.M. or S.J.D. program, please return to the [application home page](#) and select the appropriate program.

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1. APPLICATION CYCLES AND DEADLINES

The Visitor Program has two application cycles per year. Visitors may be appointed for one semester or two consecutive semesters; extensions beyond the second semester are rarely granted and only with the explicit support of the faculty sponsor.

Fall semester begins September 1 and ends January 31; Spring semester begins February 1 and ends June 30. Please note that the program dates are not flexible. While there is no Visitor program in July and August, applicants who are admitted for two semesters beginning in the Spring may remain at Harvard to work on independent research during the summer months (July and August).

If you are interested in gaining access to the Harvard Law School Libraries for periods shorter than one semester, please consult the [library's website](#) or contact Library Access at access@law.harvard.edu.

Application Deadlines:

- *September 15, 2024* for applicants wishing to commence research beginning in February 2025
- *April 15, 2025* for applicants wishing to commence research beginning in September 2025

IMPORTANT: Deadlines will be strictly observed. It is your responsibility to make certain that all application materials (e.g., official transcripts, TOEFL reports, and recommendations) reach the Graduate Program office by the deadline.

Please do not call or email us about the possibility of submitting materials after the deadline. If you have completed and submitted your online application by the deadline, we will not disqualify your application if some of your supporting documents (e.g., official transcript, recommendations, TOEFL report) have not been received by the deadline. However, we will begin our review process once the deadline has passed, even if some of your supporting documents are missing. Therefore, you will be at a competitive disadvantage when compared to other applicants whose files are complete.

2. ADMISSIONS CRITERIA

Each year the Graduate Program typically hosts approximately 25 to 30 Visitors from around the world. A Visiting Scholar (someone who received their highest law degree ten or more years ago) is generally a professor of law at another institution or a senior member of the legal profession; a Visiting Researcher (someone who received their highest law degree within the last ten years) is generally a person who is working towards a graduate degree, doing postgraduate work at another institution, or a junior member of the profession. Please note that "Visiting Student" status is not available at Harvard Law School.

Because of the substantial number of applications we receive each year, the Graduate Program is unable to accommodate all those who express interest in visiting for research purposes. In selecting applicants for Visitor status, the Committee on Graduate Studies considers the applicant's background, field of interest, scholarly achievements, research proposal, availability of Harvard Law School faculty for consultation in the proposed research area, and English language proficiency.

Applicants should have completed their basic legal studies with high academic standing.

Prospective applicants interested in an affiliation with a specific research program at the Law School (e.g., the East Asian Legal Studies Program, the Human Rights Program, the Institute for Global Law and Policy, etc.) should contact that program directly for application information and procedures. For information on specific research programs, please go to the [Harvard Law School Research Programs and Centers website](#). Please note that each research program conducts its own admissions process for Visitors; admission to the Graduate Program as a Visitor does not constitute admission to any of the other research programs, and vice versa.

3. ENGLISH PROFICIENCY/TOEFL REQUIREMENTS

A high level of English language proficiency is a requirement for admission. All applicants from non-English-speaking countries who did not complete their basic legal education entirely in the English language must take the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) within two years prior to submitting their applications. The Harvard Law School Graduate Program requires a score of at least 100 on the Internet-based test (IBT), with at least 25 in each of the four subsections.

We will accept scores from the *TOEFL iBT*® Home Edition, but reserve the right to condition admission on an in-person test. We do not accept *MyBest*™ TOEFL score reports or the TOEFL® Essentials™ test. If your TOEFL score does not meet our minimum required score, your application will still be reviewed; however, you will be at a competitive disadvantage when compared to other applicants.

The TOEFL is offered by the Educational Testing Service at locations around the world. For more information, visit the [ETS website](#). **Harvard Law School's TOEFL Institution code is 3457.**

Please arrange to have an official TOEFL score report sent directly to the Graduate Program by the application deadline. Faxes or photocopies of score reports are not acceptable as official reports, nor are scores that are more than two years old.

TOEFL Waivers

Applicants with near-native English fluency and at least two consecutive years of full-time university education conducted entirely in English may request a waiver of the TOEFL; however, such waivers are very rare, and are granted at the sole discretion of the Committee on Graduate Studies, whose decision is final.

To submit a TOEFL waiver request, select "I am requesting a TOEFL waiver" on the English Proficiency/TOEFL page of the online application and complete the TOEFL Waiver Request within the application. **NOTE:** If you have not completed at least two consecutive years of full-time university education conducted entirely in English, your request for a TOEFL waiver will be automatically denied. The Committee on Graduate Studies will not make a decision on your TOEFL waiver request until all transcripts have been received.

NOTE: Applicants to the Visitor program who are currently enrolled in the Harvard Law School LL.M. or S.J.D. program, or who received their degrees from Harvard Law School within the previous three years, are not required to submit a new TOEFL score report.

4. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

To apply for the Visitor program, carefully complete and submit the online Application for Admission. The application requirements include the following checklist items.

Checklist of application materials:

- Online application form
- CV/résumé
- Cover letter
- Research proposal
- Letter of support from Harvard Law School faculty supervisor
- Transcript(s)*
- Two letters of recommendation**
- Official TOEFL report (if applicable)
- Application fee of US \$85

*Applicants to the Visitor program who are currently enrolled in the Harvard Law School LL.M. or S.J.D. program, or who received their degrees from Harvard Law School within the previous three years, need only submit their Harvard Law School transcripts.

**Applicants to the Visitor program who are currently enrolled in the Harvard Law School LL.M. or S.J.D. program, or who received their degrees from Harvard Law School within the previous three years, are not required to submit two letters of recommendation. They only need to provide a letter of support from their Harvard Law School faculty supervisor.

You will need to upload your cover letter, research proposal, and CV/résumé and pay your application fee in order to submit the online application form. Please follow the instructions below regarding submission of your letter of support, transcripts and diplomas, and recommendations.

You are responsible for assembling and submitting all of the credentials necessary for evaluating your application, and for making sure that all materials are received by the deadline.

We cannot accept application materials sent by fax or e-mail. No exceptions will be made.

5. ONLINE APPLICATION FORM

Please complete this form carefully. You will not be able to access or change any part of the form after you have submitted it. Please **do not** use ALL CAPS to complete the form (other than for acronyms such as UNICEF, etc.).

A note about names: Please include your full name exactly as it appears on your passport in the application and on all documents, but do not write it in ALL CAPS. Failure to submit your name exactly the way it appears on your passport will cause delays in reviewing your application and may compromise the issuance of your visa documents should you be admitted to the program.

To determine how your name is listed on your passport, look at the bottom of your passport biographic page.

- Your Surname is listed at the bottom of your passport biographic page **before** the "<<" sign.
- Your Given Names are listed **after** the "<<" sign. Include any middle name(s) in the Given Names field.
- For example, if your passport says P<xxxTORRES<SANTIAGO<<PABLO<LUIS<MANUEL<<<<<<, then you should list "Torres Santiago" as your Surname and "Pablo Luis Manuel" as your Given Names, even if you write your name differently in your home country.

Do not use nicknames, except in the Preferred First Name field. Please notify us of any legal name variations that may appear on requested documents.

6. COVER LETTER

This letter should summarize your research plans, indicate whether you wish to commence research beginning in September (fall cycle) or February (spring cycle), describe the source(s) and amount of funds available to cover your expenses, and should include the name of the Harvard Law School faculty member who will be supervising your research project. You should also explain how the research period at Harvard Law School fits into your career goals.

Please follow the instructions on the [Material Uploader](#) page of the online application to upload your cover letter. Note that your cover letter must be uploaded and submitted with the rest of your application.

NOTE: We will not accept a cover letter sent to us separately from the online application.

7. RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Each applicant must submit a 3 to 5 page research proposal describing the specific project they propose to undertake as a Visitor.

Please follow the instructions on the [Material Uploader](#) page of the online application to upload your research proposal. Note that your research proposal must be uploaded and submitted with the rest of your application.

NOTE: We will not accept a research proposal sent to us separately from the online application.

8. LETTER OF SUPPORT FROM HLS FACULTY

Each applicant must submit a letter or an email from a Harvard Law School faculty member indicating their willingness to supervise the proposed research project for the length of the Visitor's proposed stay. **Please note:** You may have more than one faculty supervisor, but you may submit only one letter of support.

Please follow the instructions on the [Material Uploader](#) page of the online application to upload your letter of support from HLS faculty. Alternatively, the Harvard Law School faculty member may send a letter of support directly to the Graduate Program Admissions Office (GPQuery@law.harvard.edu).

9. TRANSCRIPTS AND DIPLOMAS

Please note that these are the requirements for submitting transcripts and diplomas in support of a Visitor program application only; the requirements for the LL.M. and S.J.D. applications may differ.

You must submit an official transcript **and** diploma (i.e., certificate of degree conferral) for every university or law degree you have received. (Applicants who have received a degree from a U.S. educational institution are not required to provide a separate diploma for that degree unless the transcript lacks a clear indication of degree conferral.) **If you have a diploma supplement, you must submit both a transcript and diploma supplement (not just the diploma supplement).**

If you are enrolled in a degree program that is still in progress, you will need to submit a current transcript for that program. If your school is unable to provide a transcript, you must provide an enrollment letter from your school's registrar. In such cases, your application will not be complete without an enrollment letter.

To submit your transcripts and diplomas, complete the top half of a [Transcript and Diploma Request Form](#) for each university or law school that you have attended (or are attending). You should then print out and provide this form to the registrar or administrative officer in charge of student records at each university or law school. Ask the registrar or the administrative officer to (a) fill out the bottom half of the Transcript and Diploma Request Form; (b) provide an official transcript for your academic record; and (c) provide a diploma (for any degrees that have been granted). The registrar or administrative officer should place the completed Transcript and Diploma Request Form, your official transcript, and your diploma in an envelope, seal the envelope, and then sign across the seal (back flap) before giving this envelope to you. **Do not** open the envelope or break the seal when it is returned to you. You should then send the transcript (and diploma for degrees that have been granted) in the sealed envelope to the Graduate Program at the address provided in [Section 18: Where to send materials not submitted electronically](#) so that all materials are received by the application deadline.

The deadline for submission of transcripts is:

- *September 15, 2024* for applicants wishing to commence research beginning in February 2025
- *April 15, 2025* for applicants wishing to commence research beginning in September 2025

IMPORTANT: If your transcript or diploma is not provided in English, please see [Section 11: Certified Translations](#) below.

If original documents are not available, please supply certified copies of the original documents.

If the school prefers to send the Transcript and Diploma Request Form, your transcript, and your diploma directly to the Harvard Law School Graduate Program, please ask them to send the materials to the address below in [Section 18: Where to send materials not submitted electronically](#).

Law Exchange Programs

You must provide an official transcript for any exchange program for which you received credit for your law degree, unless the name of the exchange school, all credits earned, and individual class grades from the program are clearly reported on your official law school transcript.

Summer Programs/Certificate Programs

Please do not submit transcripts for summer programs, or for certificate programs shorter than 6 months.

Multiple Degrees from the Same School

If you have received more than one degree from the same university or law school, you may submit a single transcript (as long as the transcript provides detailed information, including credits earned and individual class grades, for each degree).

Bar Schools or Programs

If you attended one of the following bar schools or programs in Australia, Barbados, Ghana, Hong Kong, Japan, Jamaica, Kenya, Korea, New Zealand, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, or the United Kingdom, you should include the bar school/program in the list of institutions on the Education page of your application, selecting "Other" for the level of study. You will also need to provide a transcript for the bar school/program attended. Applicable bar schools or programs are Australian Graduate Diploma of Legal Practice (GDLP), Commonwealth Caribbean Certificate of Legal Education, Ghana School of Law, Postgraduate Certificate in Laws (PCLL), Legal Training and Research Institute (LTRI), Kenya School of Law, Judicial Research and Training Institute (JRTI), New Zealand Professional Legal Studies Course, Nigerian Law School, Sierra Leone Law School, Law School of Tanzania, Law Development Centre, Legal Practice Course (LPC), and Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC f/k/a BVC). ***If you did not participate in one of those programs, or if you attended a bar school or program in another country, please disregard this instruction.***

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

You must provide at least two letters of recommendation in addition to the letter of Harvard Law School faculty support (most applicants provide three letters of recommendation). **We will not accept more than five recommendations under any circumstances.**

The letters that are most helpful are those written by law school faculty members who know you well or by persons for whom you have worked in a professional capacity. The content of the recommendations is much more important than the total number of recommendations you submit. Letters from personal or family friends, no matter how eminent, are generally not helpful.

Letters of recommendation may be addressed to the Committee on Graduate Studies.

Applicants to the Visitor program who are currently enrolled in the Harvard Law School LL.M. or S.J.D. program, or who received their degrees from Harvard Law School within the previous three years, are not required to submit letters of recommendation. They only need to provide a letter of Harvard Law School faculty support.

The deadline for receipt of recommendations is:

- *September 15, 2024* for applicants wishing to commence research beginning in February 2025
- *April 15, 2025* for applicants wishing to commence research beginning in September 2025

It is your responsibility to make sure that your respective recommenders are aware of the applicable deadlines for receipt of their letters.

Recommendations must be submitted through our online application (and not by email or on paper).

IMPORTANT: You must provide the names and institutional affiliations of your recommenders by completing the [Register Your Recommenders page](#) of the application. **Recommendations from unregistered recommenders will not be considered.**

Online recommendations (Required)

- Register the recommender (or qualified translator, if applicable – please refer to [Section 11: Certified Translations](#) below) using the “Add Recommender” link on the [Register Your Recommenders page](#) of the online application
- The recommender will then receive a “Recommendation Request” email from Harvard Law School Graduate Program with instructions on how to submit the recommendation online
- Note that your recommenders may upload their letters of recommendation at any time before the application deadline, even after you have submitted your application

IMPORTANT: Recommendations must be written solely by the recommender. If your recommender cannot provide a letter in English, please ask them to provide a letter in their own language. In such cases, the applicant should obtain a certified translation into English done by someone other than the applicant (please follow instructions in [Section 11: Certified](#)

[Translations](#) below). We reserve the right to disqualify the application of a candidate who has played any role in writing or translating a letter of recommendation.

11. CERTIFIED TRANSLATIONS

Documents that are not provided in English must be translated by third-party qualified (i.e., certified, professional, or formally trained) translators. For avoidance of doubt, applicants and their family members may not translate application-related documents even if they are qualified translators.

For official transcripts and diplomas

If your school does not provide your transcript and/or diploma in English, please take the applicable school documents in the original sealed envelope to a qualified translator and ask them to:

- (a) open the sealed envelope;
- (b) translate the contents into English — the translation must be a literal and complete version of the original document;
- (c) certify that the original is a true and official copy of your school documents as the translator received them from you; and
- (d) place the original documents, the translation, and the certification in a new envelope, seal the envelope, and sign across the envelope seal.

You should then pick up the sealed envelope from the translator and send it to us unopened (for address see [Section 18: Where to send materials not submitted electronically](#)).

For letters of recommendation

If a recommendation is not written in English, please ask your recommender to provide a letter in their own language, in a sealed envelope that has been signed over the seal. (This must be done in hard copy - electronic letters are not acceptable.)

Instead of registering your recommender's name and email address in the Register Your Recommenders section of the online application, provide the name and email address of a qualified translator. (In the "Relationship" field, please specify "Translation for [Recommender Name]," but list the recommender's Organization and Position/Title.)

Take the recommendation in the sealed envelope to the qualified translator and ask the translator to:

- (a) open the sealed envelope;
- (b) translate the contents into English — the translation must be a literal and complete version of the original document;
- (c) certify that the original is a true copy of the letter of recommendation as the translator received it from you; and
- (d) upload the translation, together with a scanned copy of the original letter, using the link they receive by email after you register them in the Register Your Recommenders section of the online application.

12. APPLICATION FEE

The application fee is US\$85 and must be paid online by credit card when you submit your application.

The application fee is nonrefundable and will not be credited to your program fee if you are admitted.

Application fee paid by sponsor: If your application fee will be paid by a sponsoring organization (e.g., IIE, government agency, etc.) that is unable to pay the fee with a credit card, please contact the Graduate Program (gpquery@law.harvard.edu) well before the application deadline for further instructions on how to submit your online application and instructions for how the sponsoring organization should submit the application fee.

13. REQUIRED CERTIFICATION

To submit an application, you will need to make the required certification:

I certify that the information presented in my application is accurate, complete, honestly presented, and is my own work. I also certify that any information submitted on my behalf is authentic, including letters of recommendation, academic transcripts, and certifications. I understand and agree that any inaccurate information, misleading information, or omission will be cause for an investigation of misconduct in the admissions process, rescission of any offer of admission, and/or for discipline, dismissal, or revocation of degree if discovered at a later date. I agree to immediately notify the Graduate Program of changes or updates to information submitted within this application and I acknowledge that any changes or updates may affect the outcome of the admissions process.

14. NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

Harvard University's policy is to make decisions concerning applicants, students, faculty, and staff on the basis of the individual's qualifications to contribute to Harvard's educational objectives and institutional needs. Harvard University and Harvard Law School do not discriminate against any person on the basis of age, race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and gender expression, as well as pregnancy), genetic information, ancestry, religion, caste, creed, veteran status, disability, military service, sexual orientation or political beliefs in admission to, access to, treatment in, or employment in its programs and activities.

Questions about the Non-Discrimination Policy

Inquiries regarding the application of the Law School's non-discrimination policy may be referred to the Law School coordinator of that policy, the Assistant Dean for the Graduate Program and International Legal Studies, at gpquery@law.harvard.edu or 617-496-8214.

Inquiries concerning the application of non-discrimination policies may also be referred to the Regional Director, Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, J. W. McCormack POCH, Room 222, Boston, MA 02109-4557.

15. CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

The application for admission, together with all supporting materials, becomes the property of the Harvard Law School Graduate Program upon submission. No materials will be returned to the applicant or forwarded to other schools or agencies. All information submitted by the applicant will be treated as confidential and, subject to relevant laws, will not be shared with persons outside of Harvard University without the applicant's permission.

16. CHECKING THE STATUS OF YOUR APPLICATION

You will not be able to check to see if your materials have been received until after you have submitted your online application. Once you submit your online application, you will be able to track the status of your application as it is processed by our office on your [Status Page](#) in the online application. Your Status Page will indicate whether your various supporting documents (recommendations, transcripts, TOEFL score reports, etc.) have been received. You will not have access to your Status Page and the status of materials sent to the Graduate Program will not be updated until AFTER your application is submitted.

If there is a problem with any of the materials you submit, we will contact you. Please do not contact the Graduate Program to inquire about the status of your application materials. Given the number of applications we receive and the limited time we have available to process, authenticate, and review each of them, it is not possible for us to reply to telephone, fax, in person, or email inquiries asking us to verify receipt of application materials or to confirm application status.

Instead, we ask that you check your Status Page in the online application and return to it periodically to see if specific items have been received. NOTE: It may take several weeks to update the status of a particular item.

17. ADMISSIONS DECISIONS

Admissions decisions for Visitors will be communicated electronically. Decisions on applications submitted by the April deadline generally will be released by mid-June. Decisions on applications submitted by the September 15 deadline generally will be released by mid-December. Please do not call or email the Graduate Program office to inquire about the status of your admission decision. This will only disrupt our workflow and prevent us from completing our decision-making process as quickly as possible.

Once the decisions have been reached, you will be notified promptly. To protect the confidentiality of applications, we do not release any information on an application decision to anyone other than the applicant.

18. WHERE TO SEND MATERIALS NOT SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY

Materials not submitted electronically through the online application should be sent to:

Harvard Law School Graduate Program
Admissions Office
1585 Massachusetts Avenue
Suite 5005
Cambridge, MA 02138
USA

We cannot accept application materials sent by fax or e-mail. No exceptions will be made.

IMPORTANT: Please note that all materials related to your application will be filed by your family name (also known as surname or last name). Please include your full name (exactly as it appears on your passport) and underline your family name(s) on all correspondence with the Graduate Program.

Other than materials submitted through the online application, (including online recommendations), all supporting documentation must be in printed form.

No videos or digital media storage devices (e.g. USB flash drives, DVDs) will be reviewed.

Please do not submit certificates, awards, books, articles, dissertations, or other publications.

19. FEES AND EXPENSES

The program and activity fees for Visiting Scholars and Visiting Researchers for the full 2024-2025 academic year* are as follows:

- a. Visiting Scholars (those who received their highest law degree ten or more years ago): \$7,400
- b. Visiting Researchers (those who received their highest law degree within the last 10 years, or who are completing a doctorate or other advanced law degree): \$3,900
- c. Visiting Researchers who graduated from Harvard Law School within the previous 12 months: \$1,900

A year at Harvard Law School can be expensive. For a two-term appointment starting in spring 2025 (and extending over the summer), a single person could expect to incur at least \$44,275 in living expenses for a 12 month period. In addition, we estimate at least \$194/month (or \$2,328/year) for health insurance for a single Visitor, though there are many policies available and actual rates depend on the Visitor and the specific terms of each policy. (Visit <http://www.hio.harvard.edu/health-care-scholars> for more information.) For dependents, at a minimum, an additional \$21,333 in living expenses would be required for a spouse and at least \$11,200 for each child, not including dependent health insurance fees, if required.

(The expenses for a single term appointment (five months) are approximately half of the amounts above.)

There is no application fee waiver or financial aid available from Harvard Law School for Visitors.

**Fees are subject to change. Information on estimated living expenses for 2025-2026 will be provided when available.*

20. TECHNICAL PROBLEMS WITH THE APPLICATION

Please note that the Graduate Program application works best when it is accessed through the Chrome web browser on a computer (as opposed to a tablet or smartphone). You can [download Chrome here](#) for free if you do not already have it installed on your computer.

Some actions within the application may require you to click a pop-up dialog box to confirm the action you have selected. If your browser has a pop-up blocker enabled, you may need to disable the pop-up blocker or create an exception for graduateprogram.law.harvard.edu. If you are completing the application on a public computer terminal and the application seems to be "stuck," you may need to contact the system administrator to create a pop-up blocker exception in order to complete the application.

If you are using the Chrome browser, pop-up dialog boxes may offer the option to "prevent this page from creating additional dialogs." **DO NOT SELECT THIS OPTION.** Dialog boxes are required to perform certain actions (including submitting the application), and blocking dialog boxes will prevent you from being able to complete those actions.

If you inadvertently select the "prevent this page from creating additional dialogs" option in Chrome, you should immediately click "Continue" at the bottom of the page to save your work and then close the browser and completely exit the Chrome browser. When you reopen the browser and return to the application, dialog boxes should be re-enabled. If you do not know how to disable the Chrome pop-up blocker or if exiting and restarting the browser fails to restore the dialog box function, please consult the pop-up information on the [Chrome support site](#) for instructions before contacting the Graduate Program.

If you experience any technical problems using the Graduate Program application, please email GPQuery@law.harvard.edu for assistance.