

OSCAR QUICK GUIDE

Please note that this guide is not intended to replace the official OSCAR User Tip Sheets or Video Tutorials (both of which can be found under the “Resources” tab of the OSCAR user interface). This guide is merely intended to overview general application procedures and to point out a couple of items that are *not* included in the guide that we want to make sure you know about.

We would strongly recommend both reading this guide and the official OSCAR User Tip Sheets (as well as watching the Video Tutorials). You may also want to review the [OSCAR Applicant Prep Kit](#). If you are having difficulty using OSCAR, please first refer to this guide and the OSCAR user tip sheets and if referring to these resources does not answer your questions, feel free to contact Eric Stern in the CDO.

SETTING UP YOUR ACCOUNT

Go to the OSCAR website: <https://oscar.uscourts.gov/>

Creating an Account: Click on the “Register” tab. Fill out the applicant registration form.

- a. **Email Alerts:** We would recommend signing up for email alerts so that you are notified of new clerkship openings that match your search criteria.
- b. **Class Rank:** You should select the option “School Does Not Rank.” If you received an annual distinction, you should make sure to list it on your resume and mention it in your cover letter.
- c. **Law Review/Journal:** You should answer yes to this question if you are a current or past member of one of the Berkeley Law journals.
- d. **Moot Court Participation:** Students who competed in McBaine or any outside moot court competition should respond "yes" to this question.
- e. **Editing your profile:** Once you create an OSCAR account, you will be able to edit your profile from your home page. Because your profile is viewable to judges, it is important to keep it updated and correct.

After you have filled out this registration form, you will on subsequent visits log-in with the username and password you created. (If you lose your password, you can click on the “forgot password” link and your password will be emailed to you.)

QUICK OVERVIEW OF THE OSCAR APPLICATION PROCESS

Step One: Upload Documents:

- Upload or create (using the on-line editor) the documents you plan to submit—cover letter, resume, grade sheet(s), and writing sample(s)—in the My Documents section.

Step Two: Set Up Recommenders:

- Use the My Recommendations section to select your recommenders ahead of time.

Step Three: Research and Manage Clerkships:

- Use the functions in the “Search for Positions” tab to identify clerkship positions to which you wish to apply.

Step Four: Submit Applications:

- If the judge is accepting online applications, build an application for submission.
- Click on the highlighted link (judge name) of the judge to whom you wish to apply. This takes you to the Judge Details screen. Click on the Clerkship List sub-tab to display clerkship opportunities.
- Click on the “View & Apply” button so that you can begin building your application.
- Upload each document that you are required to submit to that judge. (Note: Required documents are indicated in the Clerkship Details sub-tab).
- Identify your recommenders for that application.
- Click the “Create Draft Application” button to store application materials as a draft (this action triggers recommendation requests to your chosen recommenders).
- Click on the My Recommendations tab and the “Status of Clerkship Recommendations” sub-tab to see whether your recommenders have uploaded letters and attached them to your applications.
- When you are ready to finalize your applications, click on the “My Applications” tab. The Finalize Application button sends your application to the judge.

NOTE: Applicants can submit *up to* **100 online applications** through OSCAR. For more information on this restriction, please review the OSCAR Tip Sheet entitled “100 Application Limit & Application Dashboard.”

STEP 1: UPLOAD YOUR DOCUMENTS

· **Uploading Your Application Materials:** You will use the “My Documents” tab to upload, review and manage all of your application materials. You can upload multiple versions of resumes and writing samples, but all of these documents must be uploaded as PDF documents. See the OSCAR Tip Sheet entitled “PDF Conversion Guidelines” for more advice. Later, when you begin applying, you will be able to select which version of a document you would like attached to each application.

- **OSCAR Tip Sheets:** For more information, refer to the tips sheets on “*Requirements for Uploading Documents*” and “*Upload Application Documents*.”

a. **Grade Sheets:** Note that, instead of uploading electronic versions of your academic transcripts, OSCAR requires you to enter your grades into an online grade sheet form (that OSCAR will automatically convert into PDF format). This guide (beginning on pg. 10) contains instructions we have prepared that will help you complete the online grade sheet form with your Berkeley Law transcript information.

- **OSCAR Tip Sheet:** For more information, refer to the tip sheet entitled “*Create an Applicant Grade Sheet*.”

b. **Cover Letters:** For cover letters, you do not need to upload an individual PDF for each judge to whom you are applying. Instead, after selecting “cover letter” as your document type from the “My Documents” homepage, you can choose to create one or more template cover letters using an online HTML editor, complete with merge field codes (for the judge’s name, title, address, salutation, etc.). When you create an individual application by selecting a template letter, an individualized electronic cover letter containing the judge’s specific information will accompany the rest of your application materials. Note that the judge address block and salutation line for your letters are already pre-filled into the online editor box with the appropriate merge fields.

i. Before creating several applications using your template cover letter, we recommend that you preview how it will actually look with the merge codes filled in, which you can only do after creating your first application with it. (See Step 4 for how to create an application and how to preview your application materials.)

- **OSCAR Tip Sheet:** For more information, refer to the tip sheet entitled “*Create a Cover Letter Using the On-Line Editor.*”
- ii. **IMPORTANT NOTE ON CHIEF JUDGES:** OSCAR’s on-line cover letter editor *will not* automatically include Chief Judge information in the address or salutation of your merged cover letters. You will need to *manually* enter this information into your on-line cover letters. (The B-Line Clerkship Database *will* automatically export this information into your final paper judge list; so if you do the mail merge properly, you should not have to manually enter this information into the cover letters you will use for paper clerkship applications).
- c. **Document Upload Limits:** When you create an online application, you will be able to select particular uploaded versions of each document type to attach to the application for that judge. However, OSCAR limits the number of document types (e.g., 25 cover letters) uploaded in the system at any one time. Thus, if you are applying to a large number of OSCAR judges, you may need to upload your documents and build your online applications in stages.

STEP 2: SET-UP RECOMMENDERS

Entering Recommender Information: Before you actually begin applying for clerkships, you must also upload your recommender data in the My Recommendations section of OSCAR.

- d. Click on the “Choose My Recommenders” option. First, check to see if your Berkeley Law faculty recommenders are among those whose contact information has already been entered by us by clicking on the button entitled “Choose Faculty Recommenders.” For each of your recommenders listed, click on his or her name and then click the “Add to My Recommenders” button.
- e. Second, if you cannot find your recommender on the drop-down menu, try click on the button entitled “Search All Recommenders” to see if OSCAR has a record of your recommender. If you find your recommender listed, click on her name and then click the “Add to My Recommenders” button.
- f. Third, if you cannot find your recommender through either of the two options described above, add each of your unlisted recommenders by clicking on the button entitled “Create Recommender.” (Make sure to add an assistant email if applicable. You can find a list of Faculty Support Unit assignments for Berkeley Law faculty [here](#)). Click save to add your new recommender.

NOTE: If your recommender is not affiliated with Berkeley Law, you can leave the assistant email text box empty. You should only provide an assistant email when your outside recommender has designated someone who will handle the processing of their on-line recommendation letters.

- g. The recommenders you select and/or add will be displayed at the bottom of the screen in the "My Current Recommenders" section. (For recommenders you select from the pulldown menu, the phone number and assistant email will not be displayed to you publicly but are stored within OSCAR already.)
- h. OSCAR automatically sets each of your current recommenders as "Default Recommenders," which means that their names will automatically populate the recommender fields for each of your applications. You can change their "default" status by clicking on the boxes to the left of their names in the "My Current Recommenders" section below and then choosing "Unset as Default Recommender" from the Batch Options pulldown menu.
- i. When creating individual applications, you continue to have the option of deleting one or more of your default recommenders and/or adding one or more non-default recommenders from your pool.

- **OSCAR Tip Sheet:** For more information, refer to the tip sheet entitled "*Identify Your Recommenders.*"

NOTE: Uploading your recommender information in the My Recommendations Section is NOT SUFFICIENT to trigger notification to the recommender to upload letters for you. You NEED to *actually* build draft applications for each judge to whom you are applying so that the recommenders (and their assistants) receive your requests and then have on-line applications to which they can attach their letters.

Outside Recommenders: Because of the volume of letters that are generated by faculty, Berkeley Law FSU Assistants do not have the capacity to support outside recommenders (i.e., people who are not directly affiliated with Berkeley Law). *Eric Stern in the CDO is available to help.* In recent years, it has become common practice for outside recommenders to produce one signed letter on official letterhead that is addressed to "Dear Judge" or "To Whom it May Concern." Simply direct your outside recommenders to email an electronic copy (**PDF and Word**) of the letter to Eric Stern who can upload the letter to OSCAR and attach it to your on-line applications.

Then, when you have pending requests for that letter from your outside recommender to be uploaded and attached to your on-line applications, email Eric and he will take care of those requests by uploading the letter, attaching it to your on-

line applications and activating the “auto-upload” feature for all subsequent requests for that outside recommendation letter. **(If you don’t prompt Eric with an email, he will otherwise not be aware of the pending requests.)**

STEP 3: RESEARCH AND MANAGE CLERKSHIPS

Beginning your research. The “Search for Positions” tab and “Judges” sub-tab are where you actually search and apply for clerkships. When you select the Judges Tab, you will see an alphabetical listing of all federal circuit, district, magistrate, and bankruptcy court judges, plus specialty courts and some Special Masters appointed by the U.S. Court of Federal Claims. Judges who have never participated in OSCAR (have not registered for an OSCAR account and posted a profile) will not have a clickable link on their last name.

Reviewing Judge Details. Judges who have at some point created an OSCAR profile will have a clickable link on his or her last name, where applicants may view the Judge Details tab with basic judge and chambers information. Judges choosing to post one or more positions in OSCAR will have position information listed below the judge's name (including whether the positions are available or filled or expired and the term start date and end date). Judges not choosing to post positions in OSCAR will not have any position information below their name.

Reviewing Clerkship Information. By clicking on the last name of a judge with an available clerkship position, you will be taken to a screen that allows you to click on a tab called “Clerkships List.” Click on this tab to view available clerkship positions and then the “View & Apply” tab to review the application instructions. (This is also the screen from which you will be able to build your clerkship applications).

Judges have the flexibility to list more than one clerkship for the same term if the term start and/or term end dates are different (e.g., one clerk serves September-August and one serves January-December). Although it is possible for the judges to view all applicants for all their positions in a single list, the safest course for applicants would be to apply separately for each of the listed positions in which they are interested. *Please note that this advice applies even when a judge has listed multiple clerkship positions with identical terms.*

Targeted Searches and Building Clerkship Folders. You can use the “basic search” functions or the “advanced search” functions to identify specific clerkship opportunities. “Folders” enables you to do multiple searches over multiple OSCAR sessions without losing your search results. (Your search results are not saved when you perform another search or log out). Use the folder functions in the “Judges” section (or from a “Judges List”) to save and organize selected clerkships. File selected clerkship search results in folders labeled as you wish (9th Circuit, California, etc.). You may search through folders, delete them, and move clerkships between folders. Click on the “Folders” tab to view their contents.

- **OSCAR Tip Sheet:** For more information, refer to the tip sheets entitled “*Search for Positions,*” “*Use the Advanced Search Feature,*” and “*Copy Positions Into Folders.*”

STEP 4: SUBMIT APPLICATIONS

NOTE: Remember, submitting an application requires three steps. Applicants must first (1) create a draft application by selecting application materials and specifying their recommenders. They then need to (2) confirm their document and recommender choices, which trigger recommendation requests to their recommenders. Applicants need to lastly (3) finalize their applications, which make them *immediately* available to judges.

Apply for a clerkship from the “Judges” tab. This will take you to the “Clerkships List” page. From that page, click on the “View & Apply” button to get to the page where you will begin building your application for that clerkship position. From there, you can begin building an application by selecting the documents you wish to include with the application and designating your recommenders. Then, click on the “Create Draft Application” button to enter the application into the system. This will store your application as a draft and will trigger email invitations to your recommenders to go into their OSCAR accounts and upload letters of recommendation for your application.

While your application is in draft status, you can review your submitted documents and chosen recommenders. Go to the “My Applications” tab. From there, you can click on the “Edit” button to review the application and make any changes to any of the documents or recommender choices you have designated for this application. (You can also review the application packet as the judge will see it by clicking on the envelope icon under “Documents.”)

- **OSCAR Tip Sheet:** For more information, refer to the tip sheet entitled “*Build an Application.*”

Replacing Documents in an Existing Application before Finalizing an Application: You have the ability to change document materials (resume, writing sample, law school grade sheets, undergraduate grade sheets, other grade sheets, and cover letters) already attached to an existing application while the application remains in Draft status (prior to the application being finalized and released to the judge for viewing). Until you click on the *finalize application* button, the judge will not be able to see your application.

How you add new documents to an existing application depends on the type of document you want to change. However, regardless of the type of document, you must first upload the revised version via the “My Documents” section and then you must also take some action with respect to each of the applications you have already created. **Simply uploading the new version to “My Documents” and deleting the older version from “My**

Documents'' will have no effect on the versions already attached to each of your previously created applications.

You can replace documents in an existing application by either individually selecting new documents (that you have added in your My Documents section) to be attached within the Build an Application field of a specific application. This will apply if you want to replace writing samples or grade sheets. Here's how to do that:

1. From the Applications sub-tab, click the Edit button, available in the options column for any application still in Draft status. This will bring you to the Clerkship Details/Build an Application screen.
2. In the Build an Application box on the right of the screen, roll your mouse cursor over the document field (e.g., Writing Sample) that you would like to modify, which will cause it to expand.
3. Click on the pull-down menu to select the document to include in the application. (**Note:** For documents already uploaded to the application, OSCAR shows [leave current] in the pull-down menu.
4. If you previously submitted your applications without attaching any version of a particular document type, OSCAR will display [select] rather than [leave current]. You will need to click on the pull-down menu for each document type you wish to update and select the updated document.
5. Click on the **Update Application** button to save your edits.

Replacing Resumes and Cover Letters: For changes to resumes and cover letters, you can use the Batch Options function to replace these documents in multiple clerkship applications simultaneously. Go to the Applications sub-tab and select those existing applications you wish to add updated resumes and cover letters to by clicking on the corresponding checkboxes. Select Replace Resume/Cover Letter from the Batch Options menu. Then, select the document(s) you wish to upload from the sub-menu that appears and then you will have replaced those new documents in all of the applications you selected.

Status of Recommendation Letters: Before you finalize your applications, you should also view the status of your requests by clicking on the "Status of Clerkship Recommendations" tab in the "My Recommendations" section.

- **NOTE:** Once you finalize your application, it becomes immediately viewable to judges (regardless of whether all of your recommenders have uploaded their letters and attached them to your applications). *Be sure and check to see whether your letters have been uploaded before finalizing your applications.* If you uploaded your application without letters, contact Eric Stern in the CDO to develop a plan to address this issue.

Finalizing Your Applications: Once an application is complete, you will see the Finalize Application button in each of the individual clerkship applications you have built. (There is also an option that allows you to “batch finalize” all of your clerkship applications as well.) Finalizing the application releases it to the judge for review. After you have finalized your application you will receive an email confirming the submission. The email will have a PDF attachment that contains the application materials (but not the recommendation letters – you will not be able to view these). Keep this email for your reference, as it will contain a confirmation number for the submission.

Deleting or Withdrawing Applications. Applicants do have the option of deleting applications prior to being finalized and released to the judge for viewing. **However, if the application has already been finalized and released to the judge, the student will only have the option of withdrawing the application and will not be able to submit another on-line applications to the withdrawn clerkship.**

- **OSCAR Tip Sheets:** For more information, refer to the tip sheet entitled “*Delete or Withdraw an Application.*”

UPDATING FINALIZED APPLICATIONS. OSCAR allows you to add, edit, or delete documents and recommenders on finalized applications. (However, you *cannot* make changes to finalized applications to filled or expired positions.) This is a great feature, particularly when you have updated grades (or a new recommendation letter or writing sample) to share with a judge to whom you already applied.

STEP 1 - PREPARE UPDATED DOCUMENTS: Whether you are replacing a document that you have uploaded to OSCAR as a PDF file or a document that you created in OSCAR such as a grade sheet or a cover letter written with the online editor, you **must** change the **Document Label** (name). **The Update function will not work correctly if you attempt to replace an application document with one having the same name or label as the document currently attached to the application. You must rename the new document.**

- For updated PDF documents, simply enter a unique **Document Label** when you upload the replacement document to your My Documents tab.
- For grade sheets or online editor cover letters, make sure to change the **Document Label** before you save your changes.

STEP 2 - ATTACH DOCUMENTS TO APPLICATION

1. Select **My Applications > Clerkship Applications** from the main navigation to display your list of clerkship or staff attorney applications.
2. Locate the application in the list, and click the **Edit** button to display the Position Details tab.
3. Use the Build an Application box to make changes to your application:

- To update application document, use the drop-down menus to select the documents you wish to include with the application. To remove a writing sample or grade sheet, roll over the selection box to open and click the icon to remove the document. Select a new document from the drop-down menu.
 - To update recommender selections, scroll down to Recommenders and use the check boxes to select or de-select recommenders for the application.
4. Once you make your changes, click the **Update Application** button.
 5. OSCAR will prompt you to confirm your changes and to verify that all information in the application is true and correct. Click **OK** to continue.
 6. OSCAR updates the application. You will receive a confirmation email, and the Last Updated column under My Applications > Clerkship Applications will show when the application was most recently updated and display a confirmation number.

OSCAR GRADE SHEET GUIDE

Instead of uploading transcripts, applicants will enter their grades through an electronic form for three different degree types: Law School, Undergraduate School and Other (for advanced degrees). You can create up to 2 law school grade sheets (for transfer students), 3 undergraduate grade sheets and 3 other grade sheets. [OSCAR does not permit you to upload official or scanned copies of actual transcripts.]

To create a grade sheet, you will need to enter the data from your transcript into the data fields provided in the electronic form. Once completed and uploaded, OSCAR will convert the electronic form into a PDF document. After the conversion, you will be able to view the final form (as the judge will see it) and be able to reopen the form and make adjustments to the final document.

- 1) Click on the “**My Documents**” tab.
- 2) Scroll down past the documents list and click on the “**Add New**” button.
- 3) Enter a file name in the document label field and then select the document type (i.e., law grade sheet, undergraduate grade sheet, other grade sheet.).
- 4) At the **Grading System Description**, enter the following narrative to explain Boalt’s grading system:

“In each first-year large section, the top 40% of students are awarded honors grades as follows: 10% of the class members are awarded High Honors (HH) grades and 30% are awarded Honors (H) grades. The remaining class members are given the grades Pass (P), Pass Conditional or Substandard Pass (PC) or No Credit (NC) in any proportion. In first-year small sections, grades are given on the same basis with the exception that one more or one less honors grade may be given.

In each second-and third-year course, either (1) the top 40% to 45% of the students are awarded Honors (H) grades, of which a number equal to 10% to 15% of the class are awarded High Honors (HH) grades or (2) the top 40% of the class members, plus or minus two students, are awarded Honors (H) grades, of which a number equal to 10% of the class, plus or minus two students, are awarded High Honors (HH) grades. The remaining class members are given the grades of P, PC or NC, in any proportion.

A pass conditional or substandard pass grade (“PC”) indicates work that is sufficient to obtain credit, but is of substandard quality.

In a very few courses, grades are given on a Credit/Not Credit basis. A grade of Credit (CR) indicates satisfactory work in such a course, and a grade of No Credit (NC) indicates a failing grade with no credit for the course.

Incomplete (“I”) indicates that the student did not complete the requirements of the course by the end of the semester in which the student was enrolled; once entered on the student’s transcript, the grade I is not removed. When the student completes the work, the grade achieved is entered along with the date of completion.

IP (In Progress) indicates a two-semester course. The grade is recorded the second semester.

NR (No Record) indicates that there is no grade recorded for the student. This may mean that the instructor has not yet turned in a grade or that the student did not remove the course from his or her class list prior to the drop deadline.

ACADEMIC HONORS INFORMATION. Information about students’ academic honors shall be made available solely for the purpose of aiding students and alums who are applying for judicial clerkships and academic positions.

[Note: The definition of academic honors expanded in 2018-19. Previous to this change, there were only three different types of annual academic distinctions: (1) Boalt Scholar – Top 3 Students; (2) High Distinction – Top 10%; and (3) Distinction – Top 25%.]

In summer each year, the Registrar, in consultation with the Dean of Students, shall determine (1) those 2L students who should receive academic honors, (2) those 3L students who should receive academic honors after two semesters of study in their 2L year, and (3) those students in the last graduating class who should receive academic honors after two semesters of study in their 3L year.

Under the new rules adopted in 2018, academic honors will now be awarded to students attaining the top 5%, 10%, 15%, 25%, and 33% of class standing based on grade point average (GPA).

In addition, the Registrar, in consultation with the Dean of Students, will determine the three students with the highest GPA:

- (1) in the 2L class based upon two semesters of study in their 1L year;
- (2) in the 3L class based upon two semesters of study in their 2L year; and
- (3) in the last graduating class based on two semesters of study in their 3L year

NOTE: This key, which was prepared by The University of California, Berkeley School of Law (Boalt Hall) Career Development Office based on information provided by the Registrar’s Office, applies to all grades awarded in or after 1998.

- 5) In the **Cumulative GPA** box, enter “N/A.”
- 6) In the **Semester Box**, enter the appropriate information regarding the first grading period on your transcript. The **Session** field reflects the label for that semester (e.g., Fall 2015).
- 7) The **Ordering** field allows you to select the order of the Semesters displayed. For example, at the first session, identify your first law school semester as “1” in the first session, second semester as a “2,” etc. [For many of you, Fall 2017 will be ordered as “1,” Spring 2018 will be ordered as “2” and so on. You must provide an ordering number. Otherwise, you will not be able to add course rows to the correct semester and your final document will not format correctly.]
- 8) Enter the appropriate data in the **Course Name, Professor Name, Grade Earned, Credit Units, and Comments**. You would use **Comments** to list awards you received for being one of the top students in a particular course. To create additional rows to enter your data, click on the **Add Course Row** button.

NOTE: If you received credit for approved work that you did outside of the traditional law school curriculum, we would recommend that you provide a short description in the “**Course Name**” box to provide some context for the audience reviewing your grade sheet. Then, you can utilize the **Narrative** text box function to expand upon these items if necessary. We have provided some suggested examples below:

Independent Study: you should indicate the topic (e.g., “Political Theory Independent Study,” or “Feminist Jurisprudence Independent Study”).

Editorial Work on Law Journals: you should write “Law Journal Work,” and then indicate in the **Narrative** text box the name of the journal on which you worked and the title you held on the journal.

Moot Court Work: you should write “Advocacy Work,” and then indicate in the **Narrative** text box the name of the competition you participated in and the title you held.

Student Teaching: you should write “Student Teaching Work,” and then indicate in the **Narrative** text box the name of the course (e.g., Legal Writing, Academic Support Programs, Moot Court program, etc.) and the title (e.g., tutor, student instructor, moot court advisor, or teaching assistant) you held.

Faculty Supervised Clinical Work: you should write “Faculty-Supervised Clinical Work,” and then indicate in the **Narrative** text box the name of the clinic.

Practitioner-Supervised Clinical Work: if you did a legal externship during the academic year for credit, you should write “Practitioner-Supervised Clinical Work” and then indicate in the **Narrative** text box the name of the employer with whom you did this externship.

Sessions at Other Law Schools and Study Abroad Programs: if you participated in and received credit for a study abroad program or an academic session at another law school, you should write “Session at [Name of Law School]” or “Study Abroad Program at [Name of School].” Then, you can provide more detail on the program in the **Narrative** text box.

- 9) To add supplemental comments that are not course-specific, enter this data in the **Narrative** text box listed below the **Add Course Row** button.

NOTE: In addition to those items listed above in Instruction #7, there are a few additional situations in which you may want to use the **Narrative** text box to provide further explanation of items that appear on your transcript.

- If you are a transfer student, you may want to mention that your 1L grades are set out on a separate grade sheet.
- You may want to provide further explanation if your current transcript reflects an “*In Progress*” or “*Incomplete*” designation for one of your courses.

- 9) To create the next semester, click on the **Add Semester/Quarter** button.

- 10) Click the **Save** button at frequent intervals to prevent loss of work by system timeouts or network interruptions.

- 11) Click the **Upload** button to convert your grade sheet(s) into PDF document(s). You must do this in order to create your final document.

- 12) If you would like to preview your work, viewing it as the judge will see it, click on the small PDF icon when you return to the “**My Documents**” tab.

- 13) To edit your work, click on the Label. You can edit grade sheets using the on-line editor.

*Remember, editing documents in your My Documents section **will not** replace the previous documents in already submitted applications or materials tied to draft applications. First, you must create and save in your My Documents section a revised grade sheet. Then, you **MUST** go back to each of your applications and manually substitute the edited grade sheets.*

- 14) To delete a grade sheet, click on the **Delete** icon.