GENERAL OVERVIEW

What is the Junior Deferral Program?

As an undergraduate student thinking about what comes after graduation, you may find yourself ready to apply to law school and also excited to explore other professional, educational, or service opportunities. You may know you want to go to law school and also want to teach for a few years, garner some business or legal skills in the workforce, pursue a master’s degree, or embark on a mission trip. Harvard Law School’s Junior Deferral Program can offer you that flexibility and breadth of opportunity. Apply to HLS when you are a college junior (or the international equivalent) and, if admitted, commit to defer that offer of admission after completing your undergraduate degree. You may use the deferral period to explore your broad interests before returning to the classroom.

ELIGIBILITY

Am I eligible for this program?

You are eligible to apply for the JDP as long as you are:

- Enrolled as an undergraduate student at an accredited college or university

- Recognized by your undergraduate institution as graduating in spring 2019. Internationally educated applicants may need to contact the J.D. Admissions Office to ascertain their eligibility. Generally speaking, if you will graduate in spring 2019 from a U.S. Bachelor’s or U.S. Bachelor’s equivalent undergraduate program, then you should qualify for the program.

- Committed to deferring your enrollment at HLS for a minimum of two years after graduating

Am I eligible to apply if I have taken a semester off?

As stated above, to apply for the JDP you must graduate from your undergraduate program in spring 2019. If you are scheduled to graduate in spring 2019, regardless of the amount of time it took to reach that graduation date, then the fact that you have taken a semester off will not
affect your eligibility. Internationally educated applicants must be scheduled to graduate from their U.S. Bachelor’s equivalent program in spring 2019 and are encouraged to contact the J.D. Admissions Office with further questions.

APPLICATION TIMING

When is the application due?

All deadlines relating to the Junior Deferral program will be announced in late summer.

Will this be a regular rolling admission process? When is it best to apply?

Unlike the regular admission process, this program will not have rolling admissions. We will accept applications from the date the application opens through the application deadline. We may begin reviewing files as they are complete, but all decisions will be released at the same time.

When should I take the LSAT or GRE?

You must take the LSAT or GRE (and have a reported score) no later than the application deadline. The application deadline will be announced in late summer.

What is the advantage to applying now versus after graduating and having work experience?

Some people will want to apply now so that they have an answer about law school before starting a job search. Such individuals feel certain that they want to go to law school and also want to spend some time exploring other professional or educational opportunities before entering the law school classroom. Others will want to take junior year to focus on seminars and classes, rather than an application process. It’s an individual decision and we encourage you to talk with your pre-law advisor and/or mentors.

If you are not admitted, can you reapply later?

Yes! If you are not selected for the Junior Deferral Program, we strongly encourage you to reapply either during your senior year or after gaining full time work experience.

If you are not admitted to HLS in your junior year, we encourage you to take advantage of an advising conversation with an Admissions staff member at the end of the process. The conversation will help you understand areas of your application that could be strengthened for a later reapplication. The advising sessions will be held over the phone after the process concludes.
If you do choose to reapply, please note that we keep applications on file for three years. If more than three years pass between your JDP application and when you choose to reapply, you must submit an entirely new application.

Your LSAT or GRE score will be valid for 5 years after you take the test.

**If I am accepted to the program, how much time do I have to respond?**

If you are accepted to the program, then you will be asked to respond to the offer in late summer.

**If I accept your offer of admission, can I apply to other law schools?**

No. If you accept the HLS offer, you cannot hold our active deferral and apply to other schools at the same time. If you decide you want to apply to another law school, you would need to withdraw from HLS before submitting other applications.

**APPLICATION PROCESS**

**How do I apply?**

Please visit our J.D. Admissions website later in the summer of 2017 to learn more about when the application will open and how to apply.

**What are the application requirements?**

- Expected to graduate with an undergraduate degree in spring 2019
- HLS application, personal statement, and resume
- $85 application fee
- LSAT or GRE score
- Undergraduate transcript (update required with junior year final grades)
- A minimum of two letters of recommendation, maximum three. We strongly encourage you to submit your two required letters from academic sources. If you are thinking about adding a professional letter, that should be your third “optional” letter.
- By invitation, an online interview will be conducted

**Can you explain more about the interview process?**

Interviews for the JDP are by invitation only; no applicants will be admitted without an interview, however, not all applicants will be invited to interview. Interviews will be conducted online by a member of the Admissions Committee.
Are admissions criteria the same for the JDP as for the regular application cycle?

Yes, admissions standards will be the same for applicants to the JDP as for the standard pool. Admissions decisions are based on the totality of available information about each applicant, and a careful evaluation of the candidate’s past accomplishments and future promise.

As a general guideline, most admitted applicants demonstrate potential for success in law school through an exceptional undergraduate academic record, competitive LSAT or GRE scores, and substantial accomplishments in work or extracurricular activities; however, no one of these aspects of an applicant’s file is dispositive in the admissions decision.

Our assessment includes factors such as work experience and demonstrated leadership, as well as intangible qualities such as energy, ambition, judgment, ability to overcome adversity, high ideals, and concern for the welfare of others. Our admissions committee seeks to identify characteristics that are important to academic success in law school, and qualities that will contribute diversity of perspective and experience, general excellence, and vitality to the student body. In line with the standard J.D. application review process, there are no “cutoff” scores or minimum scores for an applicant’s GPA or standardized test score.

Please consult the HLS 1L Class Profile to get a sense of the profile of the 1L class.

MAJORS/ACADEMIC BACKGROUND

What majors are you looking for?

Students from all academic disciplines and majors are encouraged to apply. Prior applicants and admitted students represent a range of disciplines spanning government, mathematics, social studies, the sciences, and several other disciplines.

If I am a STEM major, why might the JDP be particularly interesting for me?

Lawyers with experience in the sciences, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields are currently involved in some of the most important legal and regulatory questions of the 21st century and will continue to be similarly engaged. If you have a STEM background, you may wish to work in the field for a few years for practical experience in the sciences before studying the legal aspects that regulate such work.

Does it make a difference if I pursuing a BA or a BS? Do you take into account differences in GPAs across undergraduate majors?

Harvard Law School considers applications for all undergraduate majors. The admissions committee will review your entire transcript which includes examining the rigor of your
curriculum as well as grades received. The committee will be looking for both breadth and depth in your curriculum. Advanced seminars, lab work, and classes with extensive research and writing components are often ways students can demonstrate knowledge in a particular field.

**What if I studied abroad?**

If you have completed any of your undergraduate coursework at a foreign institution, Harvard Law School requires that your foreign transcripts be submitted through the LSAC’s Credential Assembly Service. The one exception to this requirement is if you completed the foreign work through a study abroad, consortium, or exchange program sponsored by a U.S. or Canadian institution, and the work is clearly indicated as such (including course name, grade, and credit hours) on your home institution’s transcript.

**THE DEFERRAL REQUIREMENT**

**Are there any restrictions on what I can do during my deferral period?**

You may decide to spend the deferral period between college graduation and matriculation at HLS in a variety of ways. Most students will choose to pursue full time employment or a master’s degree program. Students may also choose to pursue research or fellowship opportunities. The time must be spent in a structured educational program or employment situation.

**What if I want to do something entrepreneurial or start my own business?**

Great! If you decide to pursue something entrepreneurial, we will ask to see a copy of your business plan, commitments from financial backers, etc. Students admitted to the program in prior years have launched social entrepreneurship projects funded by fellowships and other funding sources.

**Will applicants be judged on what they say they intend to do during the deferral period before enrolling?**

As with any applicant for law school, we will be interested in how you plan to use your law degree, and how you envision your time before law school helping you to shape or refine that vision. As you learn more about the programs available to you at HLS and as you spend time considering your plans post-college graduation, we understand that vision may change. With that in mind, you may choose to tell us about your plans, but you don’t have to.
What are the implications of this program on my employment search?

You should discuss this with the Office of Career Services at your undergraduate institution with regards to specific employment options. However, universities, companies, and employers are increasingly familiar with this type of academic program. We do not anticipate difficulties in the job search process; however, if you find that an employer has questions about the program after your acceptance, the J.D. Admissions Office will work with you to help however we can.

Can I defer for more than two years?

Yes. We will work with you on a case by case basis if you are admitted and are considering an extended deferral period.

What if I decide that I don’t want to defer?

Students admitted in the Junior Deferral Program cannot elect to go “straight through” and matriculate immediately after undergraduate graduation. If you decide you would prefer to go directly to law school, you must withdraw and reapply to HLS in the standard admissions process during the fall of your senior year.

FINANCIAL AID

How is financial aid awarded at HLS?

Harvard Law School’s financial aid program is need-based. Therefore HLS does not award “merit” or “full-ride” scholarships. Our financial aid program has two central goals: to help make a legal education accessible to every student in the J.D. program through need-based aid, and to preserve the broadest range of career options for graduates through need-based loan repayment assistance (the Low Income Protection Plan, or LIPP). For more information, visit the Student Financial Services website.

Will parents’ income be included in financial aid considerations?

As part of running a need-based program, HLS believes that the most equitable way to measure financial need is to consider family (parental) resources for all students under the age of 25, with a reduced assessment of family resources for students between 26 and 28. Parental resources are not considered for students over the age of 29.

How will the financial aid process work for JDP students?

You will not apply for financial aid until the spring before you intend to matriculate. More information will be available to students after they are admitted for planning purposes.
ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

What if I don’t apply for the JDP but I decide to apply as a senior? Will it hurt my chances?

No! There is absolutely no penalty in the admissions process for not applying as a junior. You should apply when you feel you are able to present a strong application. Students who wish to enroll in a J.D. program the fall after graduation are not eligible to apply in the JDP program, and therefore must apply as a senior.

Does a summer internship help with admission?

Work experience is a valuable aspect of any application. The admissions committee will consider the nature of your work and volunteer experiences when evaluating your ability to handle the academic rigor of our program.

How many students will be admitted under this program?

The number of offers for admission will depend on the size and strength of the applicant pool.

Is this compatible with other graduate school programs?

Applicants to the JDP who are considering a joint degree should contact our partner schools (HKS, HBS, HMS, GSD, HSPH, or GSAS) for more information about the degrees offered. To be eligible for a joint degree program, you must be admitted separately to both Harvard schools. Masters or PhD work will be counted towards the deferral period at HLS.

What if I am also considering the 2+2 program at HBS?

Applicants may apply to both the 2+2 program at HBS and the JDP at HLS. Both programs require two years of work experience before matriculating. The student, in conjunction with HLS and HBS Admissions will need to determine which program they will enroll in first, and which program they will defer for a third year. This decision will be made on a case by case basis.

Is there any special process for international students?

The application process is the same for all current undergraduate students applying for the JDP program, including international students. Generally speaking, individuals scheduled to graduate in spring 2019 from a U.S. Bachelor’s equivalent undergraduate program should be eligible to apply.