

APPLYING FOR FEDERAL CLERKSHIPS OVERVIEW OF OSCAR – May 2010

For graduates

Includes Important Information about how to create a Northeastern Transcript
(on line grade sheet) for OSCAR

The Online System for Clerkship Application and Review (OSCAR) is a centralized resource for providing notice of available federal clerkships and application information. OSCAR lists federal judges who choose to accept clerkship applications electronically, judges who want to receive only paper applications, and judges who wish to advise applicants that they do not have a clerkship vacancy.

Graduates must apply through OSCAR to those judges who choose to receive applications electronically. Graduates select the federal judges to whom they wish to apply, and build and submit their applications online for these judges. Judges will begin to sort and review application materials online as soon as you finalize your application.

Below is a short guide with initial steps for getting started with OSCAR. For detailed information about using OSCAR, please go to <https://oscar.uscourts.gov> and after you have registered, you will find tip sheets, user guides, forums and blogs.

STEPS FOR GRADUATES USING OSCAR:

1) Register and complete a profile for OSCAR. Go to the OSCAR home page, <https://oscar.uscourts.gov/>, and click on the Registration Tab to register as an applicant. Once you are registered, check the home page often as it has important updates from OSCAR about changes in the system.

- When creating your profile, we recommend that you select to receive reminders about new clerkship openings.
- When entering your undergraduate institution, type in the name of the school under “keywords,” select “Go,” and then select your school from the dropdown box.
- There is a section in the profile where you can indicate if you have completed a judicial internship or judicial externship. If you have completed a co-op with a judge, you should select “judicial internship.” It is our understanding that judges give equal weight to internships and externships and the only reason that they are listed separately is because law schools give different names to these experiences.
- When creating your profile, we recommend that you leave the Professional Organization section blank. You always have the option of editing this information if a judge to whom you are applying requests it.

2) Upload documents. To begin to apply to an OSCAR judge, you will need to complete a profile and upload documents, under “My Documents.” OSCAR will house up to three resumes, 25 different cover letters, three writing samples and a law school and undergraduate “grade sheet” (see 2B below). **All documents must be in .pdf format in order to be uploaded. Scanned documents are not accepted.** All application materials can be saved in draft form and revised until finalized.

A) Upload Your Resume: The first document you must upload is your resume -- it needs to be on the system in order to create an application for any judge.

B) Transcript(s) for OSCAR:

OSCAR requires that you create an on-line grade sheet, where you list all of your law school courses and indicate the grade and credit hours.

If you entered law school after fall 2007:

The OSCAR grade sheet requires you to separate your courses by semester/quarter. Since we do not have “traditional” grades, you should type in the course names and corresponding credit/pass/honors/high honors, fail “grade” in the section entitled "grade earned." OSCAR will only allow 5 characters in the "grade earned" section and that is why you must use the abbreviations noted below. You should list your courses and co-ops in chronological order (i.e., first year fall semester courses, first year second semester courses, summer quarter courses or co-op, etc.).

If you entered law school before fall 2007:

Because we do not have “grades,” we have designed a procedure which will enable you to send information electronically to the judges about your academic performance.

Step 1: If you need an “electronic” transcript for OSCAR, you must submit the following to Louise Ivens (l.iven@neu.edu) in the Career Services Office **no later than Friday, August 6, 2010:**

- a copy of all your course evaluations
- a typed list (word document) of all courses completed to date by quarter (first year courses listed first).

Step 2: The Career Services office will forward the evaluations and your list of courses to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs who will assign a one-word adjective which describes your overall performance in each course. The Career Services Office will then send back to you via e-mail the list with the courses and the corresponding adjectives. You will use this document to type in your “adjectives” on the on-line law grade sheet.

Step 3: The OSCAR law school grade sheet requires you to separate your courses by semester/quarter. You should type in the course names by quarter and the “dean approved” adjectives under the section entitled "grade earned." OSCAR will only allow 5 characters in the "grade earned" section and that is why you must use the abbreviations noted below.

For the “grading system” description, all students and graduates must use the following exact language:

Northeastern School of Law does not issue traditional grades or rank its students. A complete transcript includes a one page academic history, which lists all courses taken and the corresponding grade, the legal internships ("co-ops") completed, as well as copies of all course and co-op evaluations. Students selected for interviews with federal judges will provide a copy of a complete transcript at that time.

***Students who entered law school before fall 2007:** Students are graded on a pass/fail basis and receive written evaluations of their coursework as well as their performance as legal interns.*

For the purposes of OSCAR, graduates provide a Dean-approved one word assessment (adjective) of academic performance in each class. The range of adjectives is as follows: Fail (F), Marginal Pass (MP), Satisfactory (S), Good (G), Very Good (VG) and Excellent (EXC).

Students who entered law school in the fall of 2007 and after: Students are graded on a credit/fail basis for first year classes. In their upper level classes, they may be awarded honors (“H”) or high honors (“HH”) for exceptional performance; otherwise they are graded on a pass/fail basis and all students receive written evaluations of their coursework as well as their performance as legal interns.

For the purposes of OSCAR, students will enter in the "grade" column the credit (“CR”) /fail grade received for first year classes and the pass/fail, honors (“H”) or high honors (“HH”) grade for upper level classes.

Under the “narrative” text box, use the following exact language to describe the co-op program:

All upper-level students are required to complete eleven-week full-time internships (co-ops) through Northeastern’s Cooperative Legal Education Program. Students alternate every quarter between attending school full-time and working as full-time legal interns.

You can then list your co-ops and indicate the quarter you completed each co-op. The narrative box is intended to reflect only information that is on your transcript.

If you are selected for an interview with a participating OSCAR judge, you will be required to submit a complete copy of your official law school transcript. At this time, you will be able to show judges all of your course and co-op evaluations. Co-op evaluations are not reduced to a “grade” and are not included in the electronic grade sheet/transcript submitted through OSCAR.

“Other Transcripts” requested – The document type, other grade sheet, may be used for other advanced degrees or trade schools. There is a separate “undergrad grade sheet.”

C) Upload Your Cover Letter(s): There are two ways to upload cover letters – by saving a document as a .pdf and uploading it to OSCAR or by using the OSCAR on-line editor. If you are using one cover letter for multiple judges, you should use the on-line editor¹ because it inserts merge fields (judge’s name and address) which will create individual letters for each judge.

If you are writing individual cover letters for certain judges, you can upload these individually as .pdf files.

3) Recommenders and Recommendation Letters:

Applicants cannot upload letters of recommendation. If you are applying to an OSCAR judge, your recommenders will have to upload a recommendation letter to OSCAR.

- **Decide who you would like to write letters of recommendation for you,** whether they are professors and/or coop employers. Once you have contacted these individuals and obtained their permission, you need to list them as your recommenders under the “My Recommendations” tab. Permanent NUSL faculty members are already entered as recommenders in the system, and can be chosen from a drop-down list under “Choose Existing Recommender.” For recommenders that you do not see on the drop-down list, you may create them in the system yourself using the “Add to My Recommenders” tab. You will

¹ If you are copying and pasting text for a cover letter from a Word or Wordperfect document to the on-line editor, it is recommended that you paste the text as “plain text” (using the pop-up that appears when you select the on-line editor). This should eliminate formatting issues.

need to type in their e-mail addresses as well. **Please make sure that your recommender is not already listed before you create a new entry for them as multiple recommender entries create system problems.**

Inform your recommenders. Let them know when you would like to finalize and submit your application (graduates can submit finalized applications that are immediately viewable by judges), as well as the names of the OSCAR judges to whom you will apply, and tell them that they will need to log on to the OSCAR website (<https://oscar.uscourts.gov>) with a username and password.² It is highly recommended that you select all of the judges to whom you want to apply before you select your recommenders. The recommender can either upload letters of recommendation from an existing file or create letters of recommendation using the on-line editor. Make sure to give each of your recommenders a copy of the “Frequently Asked Questions for OSCAR Recommenders” on the OSCAR website: <https://oscar.uscourts.gov/drupal/content/recommender-faqs> Also, remember to inform recommenders that they need to log on to OSCAR to upload a letter of recommendation and to check the status of their pending recommendations on the **Requested Recommendations** list.

- **In order for your chosen recommenders to access the system to upload your recommendation, you must (in addition to taking the preliminary steps of uploading your résumé) “create” an application for each judge to whom you are applying – See Section 5) below.** This should trigger an electronic notification to your recommenders that you have requested their recommendations for these judges. Make sure that your recommenders are aware that your applications are ready to have their recommendation uploaded.

4) Click on the Search for Positions tab – The “Judges List” contains a listing of federal circuit court, district court, magistrate and bankruptcy judges. The “Staff Attorneys list” contains a listing of the 13 appellate staff attorney offices. OSCAR participating judges and OSCAR Staff Attorney’s Offices are those that have requested an OSCAR accounts and have posted their hiring preferences. You can search on each list for positions. OSCAR also displays non-participating judges in the Judge List and non-participating Staff Attorneys in the Staff Attorneys list. The non-participating offices will be grayed out and listed as No Information is Available.³

5) “Create an application” for each judge to whom you want to apply through OSCAR. To “create” an application for a judge:

- Click on the judge’s name for the clerkship to which you wish to apply.
- Select the Clerkship List sub-tab for that judge and click on “View and Apply.”
- You will now see the specifics of the clerkship position listed under the “Clerkship Details” sub-tab. On the right side of the page, you will see the Build An Application instructions.

² Recommenders receive two kinds of emails from OSCAR. The first kind is a one-time email that is sent the *first time any student* lists a recommender in their OSCAR account (no matter how long ago). This email gives them a log-on and password to access the system. This email is sent *only once* the first time a recommender is listed by a student. All subsequent times that person is chosen as a recommender, OSCAR merely sends an email notifying him or her that he/she have been chosen as a recommender. Your recommender will **not** be reminded of their OSCAR logon and password in that email.

³ If you are applying for federal clerkships, there are two resources that you should check – 1) Many, but not all, of the judges who are seeking clerks are listed on the OSCAR website. This includes the judges who require electronic as well as hard copy applications. 2) For a comprehensive listing of all federal judges, consult the BNA’s Directory of State and Federal Courts, Judges and Clerks (available in the Resource Room and on-line, through Career Services webpage, internet sites for job hunters).

You are now ready to begin uploading documents and building your application. Remember, you must upload at least one document (your resume) to begin building your application. When you have attached documents and identified your recommenders, click Create Draft Application to save the application as a draft.

6) Finalize your application - Once you have finished with a particular application and are ready for it to be seen by the judge, you must click the “Finalize Application” button. If you do not click on this button, your application will never be seen by the judge. **HOWEVER**, once you click the “Finalize Application” button, you **CANNOT** make any subsequent changes to your application materials. Make sure that you are **COMPLETELY FINISHED** with your application before you make it “final” and viewable by the judge.

A Note on Timing: Graduates using the system may complete their applications at any time: as you are completing your application you must finalize it so that it can be seen and accessed by judges. Final applications will be immediately viewable by judges.⁴

Please contact the Career Services Office if you have questions or need assistance with this process.

Q:/shared/clerkships/oscar/oscar10students510

⁴ Current student applications cannot be viewed by judges until September 7, 2010.