

Tips for Developing a Winter Term Research/Writing Project Abroad

When developing a topic, remember:

- Have a well thought-out research question or clear working hypothesis.
- Add to the discourse. Look at an issue that hasn't been explored previously or examine a new aspect of a subject.
- Be sure you have sufficient background and familiarity to examine the issue in a sophisticated manner.
- Avoid choosing a topic that is too broad or complicated – Winter Term is quite short.

Meet with one of the HLS research librarians:

- They are trained in law as well as library science.
- Librarians can assist with a pre-emption check, help determine what sources can be found in/through the HLS library and what information has to be obtained abroad, and aid you in developing a preliminary bibliography.

Be sure your research warrants international travel – for example:

- Obtaining archival materials from a foreign library or institution
- Reviewing case law that isn't available outside of another country
- Conducting in-person interviews
- Observing court or other proceedings, or phenomena such as elections or responses to political issues

Identify and approach an appropriate faculty advisor:

- Seek out a faculty advisor whose area(s) of expertise and interest align with your proposed research focus. It's not necessary to know the professor already – most are very approachable.
- When arranging a meeting, send a description of what you propose (at least a paragraph) that demonstrates that you have done some preliminary work.
- Be prepared to ask specific questions about what you are contemplating.
- Contact the professor early to ensure time to incorporate their feedback and refine your proposal.

Don't overlook practical considerations:

- Will your research require foreign language proficiency?
- Could the calendar of the foreign country limit your ability to conduct research in January (e.g., institutions closed, people on holiday)?
- Are there sensitivities related to your topic?
- Did you develop a solid and realistic work plan – well before January – for the weeks you will be away and arrange interviews or confirm access to libraries and other resources abroad as needed? Winter Term abroad should be used for research – writing can be done in the spring term after you return to HLS.
- Does your research involve human subjects? Consult with the Committee on the Use of Human Subjects early in the fall semester to ensure you are in compliance with Harvard's rules.

HARVARD LAW SCHOOL

International Legal Studies