

The OPIA Insider's Guide to the
U.S. Department of Justice
SLIP and Honors Program Application
Process
2023

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Introduction

The U.S. Department of Justice hires law students and lawyers in four ways:

1. Volunteer Law Interns: unpaid internships for 1Ls and 2Ls.
2. Summer Law Intern Program (SLIP): paid internships for 2Ls and some 3Ls.
3. Honors Program: entry-level hiring for graduating 3Ls and LL.Ms, judicial law clerks and graduates in some public interest fellowships.
4. Lateral hiring: hiring of any attorney with at least one year of legal experience, including clerkships.

For two of these paths, the SLIP and Honors Program, candidates apply through an identical, centralized online application. This OPIA Guide is designed to give you background on these two programs and to assist you in filling out the online application. (For the Volunteer Law Internship program, see our separate “Insider’s Guide to the Volunteer Law Internship Application Process.”) [The Office of Attorney Recruitment and Management \(OARM\) section of the DOJ website](#) is also full of useful information on the application process and more detailed information about the various hiring components and their projected hiring, so make sure you spend time there as well.

Post-Graduate Honors Program

The Honors Program is the way that the Department of Justice (DOJ) hires virtually all third-year law students. The great majority of Honors hires are for permanent positions; a few are for time-limited fellowships or clerkships, some of which may then be converted to permanent employment, or may maintain the completed fellow’s or clerk’s eligibility to reapply to Honors. While some components at DOJ occasionally make postgraduate offers (“funnel offers”) to 2Ls participating in SLIP, such offers are quite rare, and not every component extends them. Judicial clerks, those in graduate law programs and graduates in some fellowships may also be eligible to apply for the Honors Program, up to 3 years after graduating from their J.D. program.

Entrusted with a high level of responsibility, Honors Program attorneys typically handle cases of national importance. The Attorney General’s Advocacy Institute provides Honors Program attorneys with litigation training, as well as additional specialized formal and informal training for many of the Department’s litigating components. Honors attorneys hired to prosecute criminal cases will typically complete a 6-month detail at a U.S. Attorney’s Office early on. A formal year-long mentorship program is provided for all Honors hires. Duties vary among DOJ’s components, and some divisions ask for a three- or four-year commitment because of the lengthy and extensive training process. For detailed information on what each division handles, see [the DOJ organizational chart](#).

To remain eligible to apply to DOJ Honors past their 3L year, graduates must engage in “eligibility-preserving activities”; in brief, these are judicial clerkships, certain public interest fellowships, certain government honors programs, or graduate law programs. However, the application of these rules can be a bit complicated in individual cases, so it’s important to check the DOJ eligibility guidelines carefully. In particular, gaps created by off-cycle clerkships/fellowships or those that leave one or more “gap years” can pose eligibility problems. The first eligibility-preserving activity must start within nine months of graduation and gaps between eligibility-preserving activities may not exceed 120 days. In the past, anyone who had had any sort of “real” job after graduating, including any work in a private firm

following graduation, had been prohibited from applying to the Honors Program. This is still largely true; however, the prohibition on private-sector work has been lifted for those who have completed this work during gaps between law school and a clerkship or fellowship, between two clerkships or fellowships, or between a clerkship or fellowship and starting work at DOJ as long as the gap between eligibility-preserving activities does not exceed 120 days. For more information on eligibility requirements see the [Honors Eligibility webpage](#). If after reviewing these rules you still have questions about your eligibility, you should consult with an OPIA advisor or with DOJ; you can have this conversation at any point in the year, but if you wait until the application opens, you are advised to reach out early in the application window. When reaching out about eligibility questions, you should include specific dates in your inquiry.

Starting salaries for Honors Attorneys can vary according to experience. Federal salaries are calculated using the General Schedule (GS) scale, with adjustments for specific localities. The vast majority of Honors attorneys enter at the GS-11 step 1 level (if directly out of law school) or at GS-12 (if entering after a one-year clerkship or fellowship). A small number enter at GS-13, and a very few enter at GS-14 (with three full years of clerkship/fellowship experience). Honors attorneys at Main Justice in DC will also get an additional “locality pay” increment to help compensate for the higher cost of living in Washington, DC. Try this [GS scale calculator](#) or find more general [information on the GS and locality scales](#) on the Office of Personnel Management website. It is also helpful to know that DOJ salaries typically bump up relatively quickly in the first few years of service, although they then tend to plateau a bit. Depending on your debt load and starting salary, you may still be eligible for LIPP as an Honors Attorney, at least initially. Consult Student Financial Services to help you crunch these numbers.

DOJ typically gets anywhere from several hundred to two thousand or more applications for the Honors Program, depending on the year.

For a brief overview, this year, the Department plans to hire approximately 214-222 lawyers through the Honors Program. Total anticipated hires are higher than last year’s 184-200 anticipated hires. The expansion is largely due to increased hiring by the Civil Rights, Tax and National Security Divisions, and by U.S. Attorneys’ Offices. This year, there are small decreases in hiring by the Antitrust Division and by the FBI OGC. Other popular components, like the Civil, Criminal, and Environment and Natural Resources Divisions, as well as the Cyber Fellowship, are hiring at the same rate as last year.

Two components recently joined those that informally participate in Honors hiring: the Office for Access to Justice, a relatively new office committed to justice system access, innovation and integrity, and which is expected to grow significantly in the coming years (we have heard it’s anticipating growing to 25-40 attorneys eventually) offers one position, and the Office of Legislative Affairs, a small non-litigating office handling legislative issues across the entire breadth of the Department’s responsibilities, is offering two positions this cycle.

While most Honors slots are permanent hires, there are some term fellowships; a few of these are highlighted here, since they garner much student interest:

First, the Antitrust Division offers one two-year Antitrust AAG Honors Fellowship. The Fellow spends one year in the Antitrust front office, and one year rotating through two different litigation sections. At the end of the two-year term, there is an option to convert to a permanent position. This is essentially the same program as the Rill Fellowship that was offered a few years ago.

The Criminal Division also offers four Asset Forfeiture Fellowships in the Money Laundering and Asset Recovery Section. This three-year program trains attorneys to litigate these matters; at the end of the

term, the Fellows may extend or convert to a permanent hire. Many graduates of this fellowship go on to be hired into U.S. Attorney's Offices, which always need attorneys with this highly marketable specialty.

In 2021, DOJ initiated a Cyber Fellowship. Three Cyber Fellows will be appointed for three years each, and will rotate through the Criminal Division's Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section, the National Security Division, and U.S. Attorney's Offices. At the end of the term, they may convert to permanent employment.

Finally, the Gaye L. Tenoso Indian Country Fellowship will be offered again this year. This fellowship was "designed to create a new pipeline of legal talent with expertise and deep experience in federal Indian law, tribal law, and Indian Country issues that can be deployed in creative ways to build tribal capacity, combat violent crime, and bolster public safety in Indian Country jurisdictions." The Indian Country Fellowship offers a three-year appointment, generally in a U.S. Attorney's Office, including a one-year placement with an appropriate tribal legal entity, typically in a tribal prosecutor's office. There are seven participating Districts this year. For more details on this Fellowship, including specifics on bar requirements, see the [Tenoso Indian Country Fellowship](#) webpage.

Components participating formally will select applicants for interviews according to the published timeline, and are committed to filling those slots (with the caveat that all intended Honors hiring is subject to change based on budgetary constraints). Components participating informally are not committed to hiring, but if they do, they may reach into the applicant pool even after other components have completed hiring (offices participate informally when they would like to hire, but might not be able to commit based on their budget status at the time). DOJ will allow applicants to apply only to informal components without also having to apply to at least one formally participating component. Even components that are not participating informally may access the applicant pool for up to a year after the application deadline. In late July of 2022, for example, DOJ pushed out a posting for some immediate AUSA openings to the entire 2021 Honors applicant class.

Some hiring components specify a commitment in years; if a duration is not specified, you may assume that there is none.

Below is a summary of the projected hires for each division within DOJ for attorney positions to begin Fall 2024. Hiring projections may change, so check the "[Honors Program Participating Components](#)" page for updates.

Honors Program Hiring Projections

Formal Participants

- Antitrust [△]: 13
- Civil ^{*}: 26
- Civil Rights ⁺: 10
- Criminal: 9
 - Regular Trial Attorneys [∞]: 5
 - Asset Forfeiture Fellowship Program [■]: 4
- Cyber Fellowship ^β: 3
- Drug Enforcement Administration [•]: 5
- Environment & Natural Resources [◇]: 12
- Exec. Office for Immigration Review [≠]: 75
 - Office of the Chief Immigration Judge: 50
 - Office of General Counsel: 4
 - Board of Immigration Appeals: 8
 - Office of the Chief Admin. Hearing Officer: 1
 - Office of Policy: 5
 - Office of the Director: 4
 - Legal Access Programs: 3
- Federal Bureau of Prisons ⁼: 2
- Tenos Indian Country Fellowship ^{!"}: 1
- Tax ^Ω: 24
 - Civil Section: 15
 - Criminal Section: 9
- U.S. Attorney's Offices: 6-7
 - District of Arizona ^β: 2
 - Southern District of California [△]: 1
 - District of Columbia, Superior Court Division ⁼: 2
 - Southern District of Florida [§]: 1-2
- U.S. Trustee Program [&]: 3-6

Informal Participants ^π

- Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys Equal Employment Opportunity & Diversity Management Staff: 1
- Federal Bureau of Investigation, Office of General Counsel ^{*}: 1
- Office of Information Policy: 1
- Office of Legislative Affairs [@]: 2
- National Security Division ^Σ: 3-5
- Office for Access to Justice: 1
- U.S. Attorney's Offices [€]: 14-15
 - Eastern District of California ⁼: 2
 - Northern District of California [∪]: 2
 - District of Colorado [°]: 1
 - Middle District of Florida ^r: 3
 - Southern District of Indiana [∅]: 1
 - Eastern District of Louisiana [!]: 1-2
 - District of New Mexico ^B: 1

- Southern District of New York[#]: 2–3
- Northern District of Texas[~]: 1
- Southern District of Texas[:]: 1
- Western District of Washington[¥]: 1

[^] The Antitrust Division offers twelve permanent positions and one two-year Fellowship opportunity. Hiring breakdown by location: Washington, DC (9); Chicago (1); New York (1); San Francisco (1); Antitrust Division Assistant Attorney General's Honors Fellowship (1 – Washington, DC).

^{*} The Civil Division offers permanent positions across several branches: the Appellate Staff (3); Federal Programs Branch (6); Torts Branch (4); Commercial Litigation Branch (8); Consumer Protection Branch (2); and Office of Immigration Litigation (5 – 2 Appellate and 3 District Courts). For further section hiring breakdown, consult the DOJ website.

⁺ The Civil Rights Division offers permanent positions.

[∞] These are permanent positions. Incoming Honors Program hires must agree to a four-year commitment.

[▪] These are three-year fellowships which may be extended or converted to permanent positions. Incoming Honors Program hires must agree to a three-year commitment. Fellows may reapply to the Honors Program in a subsequent year.

^β These are three-year appointments that may be converted to permanent. Fellows rotate through multiple Department components including the Criminal Division's Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section, the National Security Division, and the U.S. Attorneys' Offices. Fellows must agree to a three-year commitment and be able to obtain a Top Secret security clearance.

[•] The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) offers a permanent position and three time-limited appointments in the Washington, D.C. area. DEA candidates may designate their interest in the positions listed below on the application. The DEA Office of Chief Counsel offers two permanent positions in Northern Virginia. DEA Administrative Law Judges offer three one-year clerkships in Arlington, VA. These are not prosecutorial positions. Initial appointments do not exceed 14 months. DEA may extend these appointments for a second year.

[◇] ENRD offers permanent positions.

[‡] EOIR Honors Program hires commit to 2 year judicial clerkships and term appointments. The OGC and BIA may consider extensions or conversions to permanent positions. Individuals hired through the Honors Program may reapply to the Honors Program in a subsequent year for permanent positions in other components provided they meet eligibility criteria. LAP hires may be assigned to programs such as Legal Orientation Program, Legal Orientation Program for Custodians of Unaccompanied Alien Children or National Qualified Representative Program. U.S. citizenship required.

[%] The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Office of the General Council offers two-year appointments with rotational assignments to gain exposure to a wide variety of legal areas the FBI supports. Upon completion of the rotational assignment, Honor's Attorneys may be placed as permanent members of an FBI OGC Legal Unit. Applicants must be able to pass the FBI background investigation and receive Top Secret security clearance. U.S. citizenship required.

[–] The Federal Bureau of Prisons offers permanent positions in Washington D.C.

^{!"} This year one fellow will receive a three-year appointment with a participating U.S. Attorney's Office in one of the participating Districts, with assignment based on mutual agreement of the fellow and District. For more information about the fellowship, see the [Tenoso Indian Country Fellowship](#) webpage.

[∞] The Tax Division offers permanent positions. Incoming Honors Program hires must agree to a three-year commitment. Applicants may designate their interest in specific sections on the application.

[∞] Interviewing for permanent positions in Phoenix or Tucson, AZ. Open only to eligible applicants who have a J.D. and are serving in, have completed, or will soon begin a judicial clerkship. **Current law students are not eligible and will not be considered.** Candidates must be admitted to a bar (any U.S. jurisdiction) before entering on duty.

[^] Hiring for a permanent AUSA position in the Criminal Division in San Diego, CA. Open only to eligible applicants who have a J.D. and are serving in (or will soon begin) judicial clerkships (strongly preferred) or qualifying legal fellowships and are admitted to a bar (any U.S. jurisdiction) or have taken a bar exam (results pending in fall 2022). **Current law students are not eligible and will not be considered.** Candidates must be admitted to practice and have an active bar membership before entering on duty.

[–] The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia offers permanent Assistant U.S. Attorney positions for the Superior Court Division, Washington, D.C. Open only to eligible applicants who have a J.D. and are serving in (or will soon begin) a qualifying eligibility preserving activity and are admitted to a bar (any U.S. jurisdiction) or have taken a bar exam (results pending in fall 2023). **Current law students are not eligible and will not be considered.** Candidates must be admitted to practice and have an active bar membership (any U.S. jurisdiction) before entering on duty.

[§] The Southern District of Florida is hiring for two-year Assistant U.S. Attorney positions (with possible conversion to permanent). Open only to eligible applicants who have a J.D. and are serving in (or will soon begin) judicial clerkships (strongly preferred) or qualifying legal fellowships and are admitted to a bar (any U.S. jurisdiction) or have taken a bar exam

(results pending in fall 2022). **Current law students are not eligible and will not be considered.** Candidates must be admitted to practice and have an active bar membership before entering on duty.

& The U.S. Trustees Program offers two-year appointments that may be converted to permanent. U.S. citizenship required.

π Department components may participate informally in the Honors Program, subject to the availability of funds. They may not follow the regular Honors Program timeline or procedures, and may contact a candidate at any time during or after the formal review and selection process. These do not count as one of an applicant's three employment preferences.

* The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Office of the General Counsel (OGC) offers a permanent position in Washington, D.C. or Northern Virginia. FBI candidates apply to the Division as a whole. Selectees are assigned to specific branch with the OGC, and assignments are dependent on available openings. Selectees may handle legal issues including, but not limited to: National Security Law, Criminal Law, Cyber Law, Civil & Administrative Litigation, Privacy & Civil Liberties Law, Fiscal & Property Law, and Science & Technology Law. Selectees must be eligible for a Top Secret security clearance and successfully pass the FBI background investigation.

© These are two-year appointments that may be converted to permanent.

Σ The National Security Division offers permanent positions. Honors Program attorneys hired for permanent positions must agree to a three-year commitment, and must be able to obtain Top Secret security clearance.

€ All informally participating U.S. Attorney's Offices are only open to eligible applicants who have a J.D. and are serving in (or will soon begin) judicial clerkships (strongly preferred) or qualifying legal fellowships and are admitted to a bar (any U.S. jurisdiction) or have taken a bar exam (results pending in fall 2022). **Current law students are not eligible and will not be considered.** Candidates must be admitted to practice and have an active bar membership before entering on duty.

¢ Hiring for permanent AUSA positions in Sacramento or Fresno requiring a three-year commitment.

⋈ Hiring for two-year AUSA appointments that may be converted to permanent.

© Hiring for a two-year AUSA appointment that may be converted to permanent.

⋈ Hiring for permanent AUSA positions.

© Hiring for a permanent AUSA position.

! Hiring for permanent AUSA positions.

^BHiring for 1-year AUSA appointment that may be converted to permanent.

Hiring for permanent AUSA positions requiring a three-year commitment.

~ Hiring for a two-year AUSA position (with possible conversion to permanent) in the Criminal Division in Lubbock, TX. A two-year commitment is required.

⋈ Hiring for a two-year AUSA appointment (with possible conversion to permanent) in Houston, TX. A two-year commitment is required.

¥ Hiring for a permanent AUSA position requiring a three-year commitment.

Summer Law Intern Program

The Summer Law Intern Program (SLIP) is a paid summer internship. It is one of two ways law students can gain experience at DOJ (the other is volunteering.) Interning at DOJ can be especially helpful to students hoping eventually to apply to the DOJ Honors Program, since more than 50 percent of all DOJ Honors hires have had prior DOJ work experience, whether volunteer or SLIP law internships, clinical placements, or paralegal positions after college. Only second-year students and third-year students who will have a free summer before starting a judicial clerkship, a full-time LL.M. program, the Presidential Management Fellowship (PMF), or another qualifying legal fellowship are eligible to apply to the SLIP program. Components may also impose additional eligibility requirements; for example, the Office of the Solicitor General and the Office of Legal Counsel will only accept applications from 3Ls entering judicial clerkships the fall after graduation. DOJ has specified that a failing law school grade disqualifies SLIP applicants who would intern prior to law school graduation.

This year, DOJ anticipates hiring between 76 and 81 students in the SLIP program. This year's estimate remains consistently lower than the number of positions available in some earlier years, when at times there were as many as 140 slots. The ongoing low number overall may be a reflection of continued budget tightness; it may also reflect a preference by some components for the easier (for them) process of hiring volunteer interns, since so many volunteer applicants are typically available. Note that some of the divisions most interesting to many students (for example, Civil Rights and Environment and Natural Resources) have not participated in the SLIP program at all in recent years, including this year. (It's important to remember, though, that 2Ls may still apply to volunteer in these components.) Hiring projections may change, so check the [SLIP Participating Components list](#) for updates. DOJ receives roughly 1,000 applications for SLIP each year.

At the end of their employment period, SLIP participants receive performance appraisals. Favorable appraisals enhance a student's chances for entrance into the Honors Program down the road. As noted above, a few components at DOJ have in the past made postgraduate offers to 2L SLIPs ("funnel offers"), but the practice is very rare—never anywhere near as prevalent as law firm summer offers, although the Antitrust Division in particular has made funnel offers to HLS interns a few times recently. (An intern with a funnel offer will be asked to submit an Honors application, but will know in advance that an offer will ensue.) Nonetheless, a significant number of SLIP participants do go on to later success in the Honors Program, so if you are interested in the Honors Program for the future, it is an excellent idea to try to participate in SLIP. In addition, as long as you continue to meet the eligibility requirements, you can participate in SLIP more than once. For example, you could participate in SLIP during the summer between your 2L and 3L years, and participate again between law school graduation and the start of a clerkship or qualifying fellowship.

Note, however, that there may be complications if you have multiple DOJ internships (whether volunteer or SLIP) within a 12-month period. Working at the Department requires access to DOJ information, IT systems, and facilities. Security regulations permit interns to have short-term access for not more than six months with just a simple suitability review. Beyond six months, or for two or more short-term appointments within a 12-month period, a more elaborate background investigation is required. The cost of these investigations falls to the hiring component, and in some cases, components may opt not to spend their resources that way. If you have served in a prior DOJ internship/externship and are considering a second DOJ internship within 12 months of the start of the first, we encourage you to raise this issue with the hiring component prior to accepting an offer. For more information, see the [SLIP Conditions of Employment webpage](#).

Below is a list of the projected 2023 SLIP hires for each component within DOJ:

SLIP Hiring Projections

Formal Participants

- Antitrust Division[•]: 12
- Civil Division[‡]: 18
- Criminal Division: 5
- Executive Office for Immigration Review[§]: 11
- Federal Bureau of Prisons: 4
- Office of Information Policy: 2
- Office of Legal Counsel^{*}: 1
- Office of the Solicitor General (Phillips Fellowship)[¶]: 2
- Professional Responsibility Advisory Office: 2
- Tax Division: 10–15

Informal Participants[%]

- Office for Access to Justice: 1
- U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Indiana[&]: 4
- U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of South Carolina[≤]: 4

[•] Hiring for Washington, DC (8), New York (2), Chicago (1), and San Francisco (1) offices.

[‡] Candidates must apply to the Civil Division as a whole; however, interviews and offers will be branch specific. Positions are available in the Appellate Staff (1); Federal Programs Branch (4); Torts Branch (2); Commercial Litigation Branch (6); and the Office of Immigration Litigation (4 – 2 Appellate and 2 District Court). For further section hiring breakdown, see the DOJ website. All positions are in Washington, D.C. Interview notifications will specify which branch is considering the candidate.

[§] EOIR candidates may designate their interest in specific offices on the application. Office of the Chief Administrative Hearing Officer (OCAHO) (1 in Washington, D.C.). Office of the Chief Immigration Judge (OCIJ) (10 at Immigration Courts nationwide).

[¶] Candidates apply to the Bureau as a whole. Placements are available in the following locations: Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, PA, Annapolis Junction, MD, Atlanta, GA, Kansas City, KS, Grand Prairie, TX, Stockton, CA.

^{*} Eligibility for some positions is restricted to 3Ls who are entering a qualifying eligibility preserving activity in fall 2024/winter 2025. Federal judicial clerkships are strongly preferred. Positions are in Washington, D.C. Current law students graduating this academic year who are applying for but have not yet accepted/formally committed to a qualifying eligibility preserving activity initially should apply to the Attorney General's Honors Program and, upon formally committing to an eligibility preserving activity, log into their application and transfer to the Summer Law Intern Program.

[¶] Positions are in Washington, D.C. Eligibility is restricted to 3Ls who are entering a federal judicial clerkship in fall 2024/winter 2025. Current law students graduating this academic year who are applying for but have not yet accepted a federal clerkship initially should apply to the Attorney General's Honors Program and, upon accepting a clerkship, log into their application and transfer to the Summer Law Intern Program.

[%] Informal participants may not follow the regular Program timeline and may contact a candidate at any time during or after the review and selection process. This does not count as one of an applicant's three employment preferences.

[&] Three positions are in Indianapolis, and one is in Evansville.

[≤] Three positions may be in Columbia, Greenville, Florence, or Charleston.

HLS's Success

HLS students have traditionally done extremely well in both Honors and SLIP hiring, though our absolute numbers do rise and fall as the positions available expand and contract due to budget or other reasons. The following tables detail HLS hires over the past fifteen years*. To summarize, in recent years, the percentage of HLS applicants accepting DOJ Honors offers has ranged from a low of 10% to a high of 36%, depending on multiple variables, including numbers of open slots, interviews granted, and offers rejected. The percentage of HLS applicants accepting DOJ SLIP offers has ranged from 5% to 44%, depending on similar variables.

Table 1 Honors Program Statistics

Honors Program	Positions Available (approx.)	Total HLS Applicants	Interviews Granted	Offers Made	Offers Accepted	% of Applicants Accepting Offers
Fall 2007	160	36	23	n/a	9	25%
Fall 2008	160	37	23	n/a	7	19%
Fall 2009	160	96	52	n/a	16	17%
Fall 2010	160	80	38	n/a	8	10%
Fall 2011	77	50	20	n/a	5	10%
Fall 2012	156	42	19	n/a	4	10%
Fall 2013	105	50	18	n/a	8	16%
Fall 2014	207	53	35	15	13	25%
Fall 2015	217	36	44	22	12	33%
Fall 2016	236	51	62	17	15	29%
Fall 2017	158	21	25	10	6	28%
Fall 2018	217	17	15	4	4	24%
Fall 2019	236	22	20	10	8	36%
Fall 2020	168	42	53	21	13	31%
Fall 2021	157	34	46	14	11	33%
Fall 2022	192	34	51	15	8	24%

* A note on statistics: DOJ has since 2014 begun to provide us with information on how many students at HLS receive offers. Through 2013 we received only “offers accepted” information and used that as a rough proxy for offers received; starting with 2014, we provide both statistics. Also note that some applicants receive multiple interviews and/or offers. Although most applicants accept offers, the total number of offers extended may be higher than the total number of offers accepted.

Table 2 SLIP Statistics

SLIP	Positions Available (approx.)	Total HLS Applicants	Interviews Granted	Offers Made	Offers Accepted	% of Applicants Accepting Offers
Fall 2007	115	38	n/a	n/a	14	37%
Fall 2008	115	37	n/a	n/a	15	41%
Fall 2009	113	87	n/a	n/a	20	23%
Fall 2010	113	69	n/a	n/a	18	26%
Fall 2011	72	33	n/a	n/a	4	12%
Fall 2012	76	15	n/a	n/a	0	/
Fall 2013	45	9	n/a	n/a	1	11%
Fall 2014	110	21	7	4	1	5%
Fall 2015	101	18	15	9	8	44%
Fall 2016	105	8	4	2	2	25%
Fall 2017	73	6	2	1	?	?
Fall 2018	80	8	2	1	1	13%
Fall 2019	57	11	4	1	1	10%
Fall 2020	62	11	3	3	2	18%
Fall 2021	57	6	2	1	1	17%
Fall 2022	80	22	17	7	5	23%

Application Checklist

Before you begin the application process, you should assemble the following:

- A user ID (minimum of 8 characters, maximum of 30 characters, case sensitive) and a unique password (minimum of 12 characters, case sensitive) for accessing your application; create and make a note of these credentials. You will be prompted by the system for them, and will use them to access your application.
- A permanent email address that will not change during the course of the application and hiring process (August 2023 – February 2024).
- Social Security number.
- Resume, most recent law school transcript, and HLS's grading scale. (Either an unofficial transcript from the registrar or a scanned copy of your official transcript is acceptable. If you are a transfer student, you will need your transcript and grading scale from your originating school as well.)
- Information about your undergraduate degree (*e.g.*, type of degree, major, any graduation honors, year received, name of school, city and state where school is located).
- Information about your graduate law degree(s) (*e.g.*, type of degree, specialty, year received or will receive, any graduation honors, name of school, city and state where school is located).
- Information about your non-legal graduate degree(s) (*e.g.*, type of degree, major, year received or will receive, name of school, city and state where school is located).
- Information about each of your judicial law clerkships (*e.g.*, full name of court(s) served, dates of clerkship(s), name of judge(s), court type).
- Information about your legal fellowships (*e.g.*, name of fellowship, type of fellowship, fellowship sponsor and host organization (if different from sponsor), dates, fellowship eligibility (URL or attachment showing vacancy announcement), applicant eligibility (offer letter or placement documentation), salary, location, mission or purpose of the fellowship).
- Information about previous DOJ experience (*e.g.*, employing component, name of supervisor, supervisor's phone number or email address, dates).
- Information about other legal and/or non-legal experience (*e.g.*, name and telephone number of supervisor(s), name of organization(s), dates of employment, brief description of responsibilities).
- Three references who may be contacted, including names, relationships, telephone, mailing and email addresses.
- Information about any unique qualifications, training, special skills or competencies relevant to your application for employment.

The Application Process

Citizenship and Residency Requirements

Only U.S. citizens are eligible to apply to the FBI, EOIR, and U.S. Trustee components (for both the Honors Program and SLIP). Non-U.S. citizens who are lawful permanent residents and who are seeking US citizenship may apply to other components, and their eligibility will then be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Actual appointment of non-citizens is VERY rare, however, and note that, even if extended an offer, there is no guarantee that a non-citizen will be able to clear the security process. Dual citizens of the U.S. and another country may apply and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. In our experience, dual citizenship has rarely posed a barrier to working at DOJ. However, some dual citizens may also be asked to fill out additional paperwork as part of the security clearance process; see the Security Clearance section below for further details. Candidates for both programs (including non-citizens) also must fulfill a residency requirement; if you have spent two (cumulative, not necessarily consecutive) or more of the past five years outside of the United States (counting back from a few weeks before the date you would begin at DOJ) then you likely will not be cleared for either program. The only exceptions to this requirement are for U.S. federal or military employees, or their dependents, serving overseas; serving in the Peace Corps does NOT constitute an exception to the residency requirement.

Deadline

The applications for the post-graduate Honors Program and the Summer Law Intern Program are combined into one application available online. All applicants must submit their applications to either program through electronic transmission. The online process is designed to prevent multiple submissions from the same student, and any student who submits more than one application will be disqualified. DOJ estimates that it will take one hour to complete your application and another hour to gather necessary information. This may be a significant underestimate. In any event, we do recommend that you spend more time on your essays.

The online application will be available from July 31, 2022 to September 5, 2023 on the DOJ website. The deadline for receipt of the application is **11:59 PM, Eastern Standard Time, Tuesday, September 5, 2023. NO exceptions are made for those missing the deadline.** DO NOT wait until the last minute to file your electronic application in case you run into technical difficulties or questions. Several years ago, a student who missed the deadline because a hurricane knocked out his computer service was barred from applying. Law students are encouraged to apply **early** to ensure their applications are not only submitted but also received on time. However, note that HP and SLIP applications are not reviewed on a rolling basis. Your application will not be read until after the deadline has passed, so as long as you don't miss the deadline, your application will be given equal consideration no matter when it was submitted.

The Application

To access the Honors Program application, visit the [Entry-Level Attorneys](#) page, which lists a link to the application. Before entering the application, it may be helpful to review some of the other information on the “Entry-Level Attorneys” page, including “Eligibility Requirements,” “Participating Components,” “How to Apply,” “Key Dates,” “Status Updates,” “If you are Selected for an Interview,” and “Additional Information.” To enter the application, refer to the “How to Apply” section, and click on “online application.” This will bring you to a page displaying the DOJ logo: click on the link beneath the logo, which will take you to Avue Central, DOJ’s application submission website.

If you are applying for SLIP, go to the [Summer Law Intern Program](#) page, and review sections such as “Eligibility for the Summer Law Intern Program,” “Participating Components,” “Selection Criteria,” “How to Apply,” “SLIP Deadlines & Key Dates,” “Status Updates,” “Next Steps,” and “Additional Information.” To begin applying, refer to the “How to Apply” section and click on “Apply now”. This will bring you to a page displaying the DOJ logo: click on the link beneath the logo, which will take you to Avue Central, DOJ’s application submission website.

The application is almost exclusively online. It does not include, and DOJ will not accept, cover letters, letters of recommendation (with one exception), resumes, or writing samples (though these may be requested later in the process). A relatively recent change is that applicants will be allowed to upload transcripts, and will not need to input grades manually. Applications or pieces of applications will not be accepted via mail or facsimile. Students with disabilities or special needs who cannot access the Internet or who need a special accommodation may leave a voice mail message at (202) 514-8900. The TDD number is (202) 616-2113.

Do not leave the application up on your computer if you are not actively completing it. If there is a prolonged period of inactivity you will automatically be logged out, **and any information that you had filled in without saving may be lost.**

Register and Login

To register, select “SIGN UP!” in the top right corner of your screen. You will be asked to choose a User ID and Password. The ID must be a minimum of 8 characters and a maximum of 30 characters, and the Password must be a minimum of 12 characters. The ID and Password are both case sensitive. You will also be asked to choose a verification question and provide the answer, in case you forget your login information. You should also make sure to provide an email address that you check regularly because any further communication will be conducted through email. There are additional fields such as name, address, telephone, etc. Although these are not required fields, it is useful to enter this information now, as it will be stored and imported into later fields. To finish, click “Save This Information.”

Main Menu

After registering, you will come to the Main Menu. To start your application, click the “Start Application” button on the top right of your screen. The main page also has four tabs at the top that comprise its main components: “Back to DOJ Legal Careers Home,” “Application Status,” “Inbox,” and “Community.” The “Back to DOJ Legal Careers Home” link takes you back to the DOJ Legal Careers home page. To review the status of your application or optionally withdraw your application, click the “Application Status” link in the header. The “Inbox” link in the header will take you to your personal messaging inbox. Through the personal messaging feature, you can send technical questions directly to

an Avue administrator. If you are having trouble with the application (especially if the problem seems to be software-related) and require immediate assistance, you may also use the “Leave a message” link on the right side of your screen. This link will open a dialog box where you may enter your name, email address, and a message describing your issue.

Before you may use the personal messaging feature, you must accept the Avue Site Administrator as a colleague. When you open your inbox for the first time, you will see one unread message. Open the message and click “Accept Request” to connect with the Avue Administrator. To compose a new message, click the “Community” link in the top header, then click “Send Private Message” on the right-hand side. Select the Avue Advocate from the drop-down menu and then compose your message as you would a regular email.

The “Community” link takes you to an online forum where you can post questions or comments about the process, the programs, DOJ, or any other topics that might interest you. This application feature allows DOJ employees to monitor the forums and respond to questions in order to help applicants. If you discover any glitches as you proceed through the application, it’s wise to check this online forum to see if DOJ has already responded to questions about them. If you still need assistance, you may e-mail DOJ’s Office of Attorney Recruitment and Management at AskOARM@usdoj.gov. Don’t panic if there are glitches in the first few days after the application goes live. There are almost always problems, and DOJ works to resolve them as quickly as possible. However, don’t hesitate to use the Community or “Leave a message” links, email OARM, or to reach out to the OPIA office if the problems are not being fixed. To return to the Main Menu, click on the “Application Status” link. Finally, you can set your Visibility Preferences and Network Bio on the tab to the right of the instructions on the Main Menu page.

To continue with the application process, select the “Start Application” link and you will be brought to a page with useful instructions and a number of “Acknowledgements” at the bottom. You must check to accept each of the acknowledgements and click “Save and Continue” before beginning the application. Once you accept the acknowledgements, you will be brought to a page titled “Personal Information.” This is the beginning of the actual application.

When in the application, the items marked with an asterisk “*” are required items. You will not be able to submit your application until all of the required items are completed. Additionally, **on the bottom of each screen is a “Save and Continue” button. You should click this button on each page to save your information before proceeding to the next section of the application, or else this information will be lost and will need to be re-entered.**

As you work through the application, you may find you need to correct or change selections you have made. To clear a check in a square check box, click on the erroneous entry. To clear a selection in a round selection button, select an alternate option or click “decline to answer.”

If you encounter a technical glitch while completing any portion of the application, log out of your account and then sign back in. Closing and reopening the application has resolved a number of the technical glitches students have encountered. If you cannot resolve an issue by closing out of the application, send a message to a representative at Avue using the “Leave a message” feature or the private messaging feature.

It’s always a good idea to first write any prose responses in Microsoft Word, Pages, or another word processing application, and then paste your answers into the text boxes in the application. Doing so ensures that you will not lose your information if your web browser crashes or you encounter a software

glitch while completing a section of the application. However, because cutting and pasting sometimes results in formatting glitches, **we strongly recommend that you print out your entire completed application and review it in hard copy before you submit it.**

Once in the application, you will also see on the right a list of the application sections. You can tackle these sections by clicking on them individually. DOJ recommends that you complete them in order, though you need not do so in a single sitting. Once a portion of the application has been completed successfully and saved, it changes from a red font to a black font in this list. At any point the application deadline, you can change the information you have entered by withdrawing, updating, and re-certifying your application. Once you certify the application and the deadline has passed, however, you may only update contact and clerkship information; you will not be allowed to make any substantive changes. If you discover after the deadline has passed that there is an error in your application, you should email askoarm@usdoj.gov as quickly as possible.

Part 1: Personal Information & Program Eligibility Questions

Part 1 of the application includes the Instructions and Acknowledgements page, the Personal Information Page, and the Program Eligibility Questions. The Instruction and Acknowledgements page asks you to read over some text about the application process and certify that you understand DOJ's policies. The Personal Information section asks for your contact information. This page should be auto-populated with the information you filled out during the registration process. Make sure that you use an email you will be able to check throughout the application, interview and hiring period, since the DOJ relies heavily on email for contacting SLIP and Honors Program applicants. The Program Eligibility Questions page is the most important page in the section because the application uses your responses on this page to determine whether you are eligible for SLIP or the Honors Program. Make sure you fill out this section carefully.

The first question asks whether you are a current law school student. (Note that if you are a dual degree student and you completed your law degree but not your other degree, you must still identify as a current law school student.) The next sections will ask you about Citizenship and Residency. If you have questions about how your citizenship or residency will affect your application, see the section of this guide on Citizenship and Residency Requirements. In addition to the residency requirement described above, in non-pandemic times, DOJ interns and Honors Program attorneys cannot work remotely, so they must plan to live in or near the city where their component office is located. Early in the pandemic, DOJ internships were conducted remotely; now, most internships are in-person or hybrid, and a few are fully remote. DOJ will make decisions about summer 2024 SLIP internships closer to start dates.

If you select that you are a **current law school student**, the section after the Citizenship and Residency sections will read "Current Law School Student." If you are a 2L seeking a SLIP internship, make sure to select "I am seeking a summer internship to be served while I am a student." If you are a 3L seeking a SLIP internship before starting some other position, make sure to select, "I am seeking a summer internship to be served after I graduate from law school..." If you are a 3L participating in the Honors Program, make sure to select, "I am seeking a full-time attorney position to begin in 2024..." At the end of this section, you will be required to upload your transcript. Within the "Program Eligibility Questions" section, all applicants should only upload their current J.D. transcript. Transfer students and joint degree students will be given a second opportunity to upload additional transcripts from respective institutions and degrees in the "Review Supporting Documents (Transcripts/Vet Pref/Fellowship)" section later in the application.

If instead you select that you are a **law school graduate**, the section after the Citizenship and Residency sections will read “Law School Graduate.” In order to be eligible as a Law School Graduate, you must have participated in eligibility-preserving activities between your graduation and the time you are applying. You will therefore be asked to identify the eligibility-preserving activity or activities in which you participated. The options listed are “full-time judicial clerkship,” “full-time graduate law program,” “full-time legal fellowship,” and “none of these apply to me.” Selecting “none of these apply to me” will not make the algorithm kick you out, and you will be allowed to continue on with Part I of your application. However, if the algorithm then determines that you are not eligible, you will not be able to proceed to Part II of the application. If you are picking that option, you should spend some extra time reviewing the Eligibility Requirements section of the DOJ website, and if you still have questions about your eligibility, you should consult an OPIA adviser. At the end of this section, you will be required to upload your transcript. Within the “Program Eligibility Questions” section, all applicants should only upload their current J.D. transcript. Either the registrar-generated unofficial HLS transcript, or a PDF scan of an official HLS transcript is acceptable. And again, transfer students and joint degree students will be given a second opportunity to upload additional transcripts from respective institutions and degrees in the “Review Supporting Documents (Transcripts/Vet Pref/Fellowship)” section later in the application.

Important COVID-era note on transcripts: If you are an HLS graduate and don’t have either a saved copy of your full unofficial transcript, or a hard copy of your official transcript, you will need to request an official transcript from the Registrar (since only students are allowed to access unofficial transcripts.) HLS is currently back in-person, so hopefully this will proceed without a hitch. However, at times when HLS is operating entirely remotely, the Registrar cannot surface-mail out official transcripts. Instead, they will send you an electronic “official” transcript, along with an electronic letter attesting that that is, in fact, your official transcript. DOJ requests that you scan these into a single PDF document if at all possible. If you must upload two separate documents, you should name the second document “Registrar Letter” to make it easily distinguishable from the transcript.

Only current law school students will see a “Joint Degree Program Student” section. This section asks whether you are simultaneously pursuing a joint degree. If you answer “yes,” you will be asked to provide the status of both degrees: whether you have been conferred your law degree, your other degree, or neither degree. If you are in a program where neither degree is conferred until all your credits for both degrees are complete you must say that neither degree has been conferred, regardless of whether you have accrued enough credits to finish one or the other. (If you have been conferred both degrees, you should have answered the first question on the “Program Eligibility Questions” page by saying you are a law school graduate, in which case you would not have had to fill out this section at all.)

The final section on the “Program Eligibility Questions” page is the “Post-Law School Eligibility Preserving Activities” section. This section appears for both law school students and law school graduates; however, it is only relevant for 3Ls applying to SLIP for a summer internship between graduation and an eligible full-time post-graduation position, and for law school graduates who participated in eligibility-preserving activity between graduation and their Honors Program application. Any applicant that does not fit into these two categories can select “Not Applicable.” If you are a 3L SLIP applicant, you should select “I am seeking a summer internship to be served after I graduate.” If you are a law school graduate applicant, you should select, “I am a law school graduate.” If you selected anything other than “Not Applicable,” you will then have the opportunity to “Add Clerkship,” “Add Fellowship,” and “Add Graduate Law Program.” These buttons will open pop-up windows where you can describe the relevant activity. You should NOT include any activities that were part-time or happened before graduation from law school. You should NOT include any joint degree program that ran

concurrent with your law degree. If you are a law school graduate serving in a clerkship or legal fellowship and simultaneously pursuing a graduate degree, you should ONLY enter clerkship/fellowship information in this section. There will be opportunities to include your part-time degree information in Part 2, in the “Legal Education” or “Other Education” pages.

DOJ’s treatment of fellowships vis-à-vis eligibility preservation has evolved over time. While DOJ had long accepted applications from Bristow and Presidential Management Fellows, since 2008 it has additionally allowed conditional applications from graduates in other fellowships, and makes a case-by-case determination whether the application will be accepted. DOJ does not provide an exhaustive list of acceptable fellowships, but does list DOJ fellowships (Asset Forfeiture, Indian Country, Cyber Fellowship) and certain other fellowships (Equal Justice Works, Skadden Foundation, other Federal Agency Honors Programs, Presidential Management Fellowships) as acceptable. The application also notes that DOJ OCIJ, DEA clerkships, and other executive branch ALJ clerkships should be entered as clerkships. DOJ has clarified certain standards that a fellowship must meet to preserve eligibility: it must have been publicly advertised as a fellowship at the time the candidate applied to the fellowship; have published its eligibility criteria, application process, and application deadline; have a formal sponsor and an established legal mission, and be of fixed duration (for more information on these requirements, visit the [Honors Program eligibility page](#)). Full-time fellowships lasting at least a year and involving legal work for sponsoring organizations, and which also conform to the above criteria, appear to be the standard for preserving Honors Program eligibility; thus, fellowships such as the Skadden and EJW are generally acceptable, as would be other similarly structured fellowships. In contrast, DOJ has noted that *short-term (e.g. 3-6 month) fellowships and part-time fellowships for recent graduates sponsored by law schools or other entities to “bridge the gap” between law school graduation and full-time legal employment (often requiring that fellows continue to seek other employment and then terminate when they secure permanent employment) do not qualify to preserve Honors Program eligibility.* Applicants who add a clerkship, fellowship, or graduate law program with a duration of less than 12 months (one academic year for LL.M programs) must provide a reason for the short duration that will be used by DOJ to make eligibility determinations. While there are no guarantees, we are confident that recipients of the PSVF, Harvard Law Review, and similar fully-funded, year-long HLS-sponsored fellowships should also retain their eligibility to apply for the Honors Program. DOJ has also indicated that full-time, significant teaching fellowships, such as the Bigelow (University of Chicago Law School) and Climenko (Harvard Law School) Fellowships, preserve Honors Program eligibility. In contrast, a recent development is that DOJ has drawn a bright line excluding all fellowships at private public interest law firms, which used to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Such fellowships will now NOT preserve DOJ Honors eligibility. Finally, we note that post-graduate summer internships while studying for the bar (with, for example, a state Attorney General’s Office or a firm) will likely not threaten Honors Program eligibility, as long as they are clearly structured as internships, and do not include an outstanding offer of permanent employment. However, questions about such activities are best answered on a case-by-case basis.

The information you entered in the Program Eligibility Questions section will determine what the rest of your application looks like, as it will assign you to either the SLIP or Honors Program application. You can confirm that you are using the correct program’s application by visiting the “Components / Offices of Interest” screen. Based on your input, the name of the program you are applying for (*i.e.*, either the Honors Program or SLIP) will be noted within the text at the top of this screen. If you did not intend to apply to that program, you should immediately review the information you entered on the earlier screen for accuracy. If a message indicating that you are not eligible for either program is displayed, you should also review the information that you entered on the earlier screen because the application determines your eligibility based on those entries. Always remember to click “Save and Continue” whenever you make changes to a section. Once you have been correctly directed to either the Honors Program or SLIP, you

will move on to Part 2 of the application to answer an additional series of questions about your interests and qualifications.

Practice Areas of Interest

The application asks you to select legal practice areas of interest. Choose all of the interests that apply to you on this page. It is helpful if the areas you select have a nexus with the components to which you are applying. It's not advised to check *all* the areas, even if you feel very open to different types of practice.

Components & Offices of Interest

This is a strategic portion of your application, as you are asked to list the components where you would like to work. Be aware that this page will not appear until you complete Part 1. Your input in Part 1 determines whether the information on the “Components / Offices of Interest” page corresponds to the SLIP or Honors Program. The online application gives candidates the ability to indicate an interest in working for up to **three** formally participating components. You may have heard from other sources that DOJ will ask you to rank the components that you select. This was true in the past, and while some components gave little or no weight to rankings, others gave differing preferences to candidates who ranked them more highly. This wide variation in approach across components sometimes created a need for complex strategizing by applicants. However, **you are no longer required to rank components, but will merely select them.** You will, however, be asked to numerically rank sub-divisions of components, in order of preference, where relevant. If you are applying to the Honors Program, you will be able to numerically rank sub-divisions within the Antitrust Division (field office cities and Antitrust Office of the Assistant Attorney General Fellowship); Civil Division (branches, Appellate Staff, Office of Immigration Litigation’s (“OIL”) Appellate Section, and OIL District Courts); Criminal Division (Asset Forfeiture Fellowship Program, Trial Attorneys); Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA ALJ Law Clerk and Office of Chief Counsel Attorney); Executive Office of Immigration Review (Board of Immigration Appeals and several sub-offices); and Tax Division (civil and criminal sections), and ranking more than one sub-division does not count towards the limit of three component preferences. If you are applying to SLIP, you will be able to numerically rank sub-divisions within the Antitrust Division and the Executive Office of Immigration Review.

For the Honors Program, short answer questions (maximum of 2,000 characters) are required for the Cyber Fellowship, Indian Country Fellowship, and U.S. Attorneys’ Offices. Applicants who apply to both formal and informal USAOs need answer only once.

Beyond those components formally participating in the Honors Program or SLIP, some components choose to participate informally, subject to availability of funds. These offices are interested in hiring, but at the time they had to commit to participating (by early summer), they were not able adequately to predict their budgets. These offices may not follow the regular timeline and may contact a candidate at any time during or after the review and selection process. Some informal participants request to be listed on the online application. Applicants are then able to check a box to indicate their interest in being considered by that office. This does not count as one of an applicant's formal employment selections. Additionally, as noted above, applicants can elect to apply only to informal components; in order to do this, you must check the box at the top of the page, just under the instructions, saying that you decline to apply to any formally participating components.

An increasing number of U.S. Attorney's Offices (USAOs) choose to participate informally after the close of formal interviews. Some but not all USAOs interested in informal participation will be listed on the

application. Eligible applicants interested in being considered by informally participating USAOs may either check the box by the name of USAOs that have committed to informal participation, or check a box to be included in a general USAO candidate pool, and identify the specific States or U.S. territory to which they would relocate if they received an offer.

Links to the divisions' websites, which contain extensive explanations of the work they do, can be found on [this list of agencies](#) (components). Another useful resource for helping you decide which division is right for you is the DOJ "[Practice Area Chart](#)."

Selecting Components

Figuring out which components to select on the DOJ application has become significantly easier and less stressful since DOJ has eliminated the need to rank components. Some common-sense rules apply. First and foremost, if there are components where you are extremely interested in working, you should be sure to select them! And even if getting into DOJ, period, is your top priority, you shouldn't ever select somewhere you wouldn't want to work. As one DOJ staffer expressed recently, "two to three years is a long time to be somewhere you don't generally want to be." Since applicants no longer rank components, the components will be reviewing all eligible applicants who select them.

In prior years, applicants sometimes asked whether they should rank only one single component if their preference to work there was very strong. Translating to this year's process, should applicants select only one component if their preference to work there is very strong? Based on comments from DOJ in the past, OPIA had traditionally advised that it is not necessarily a wise strategy to list only one component because you strongly prefer it; those reviewing your application at DOJ might have regarded this as arrogant, and of course you eliminate your chances of getting an interview somewhere else. But to every rule there are exceptions; we have heard in past years that some in the Civil Rights and Environment and Natural Resources Divisions were impressed by applicants who ranked only their divisions. If you are truly only willing to work at a single DOJ component, then you should select only that component. However, it can be a risky proposition to do so if your goal is to work at DOJ. Generally speaking you should select as many components as you can where you think you'd be a good fit. In addition to your personal preferences, you can also take into account the number of honors attorneys or summer interns each component plans to hire; other things being equal, you will have a better shot at a component that hires many than at one that hires few. And even non-ranked selections can sometimes be deployed strategically; a DOJ attorney recently encouraged an applicant to select a component that, while substantively unrelated to her preferred component, would signal an interest in the type of enforcement work that is a major part of her first choice component's work.

As noted above, several components allow you to numerically rank sub-divisions or other preferences within the component. In other cases, if you are offered and accept a position, the Division will then work with you to determine your section assignment, taking into account office needs and your preferences. For example, the Criminal Division has a gathering in May during which new Honors hires can "meet and greet" representatives of each section; new hires can then rank up to 5 sections, and the Division ultimately makes section assignments. While you may finalize an Honors slot in late fall/early winter, you may not know your section assignment until much closer to your start date.

If, after considering your options, you are still perplexed, you may want to meet with an OPIA adviser to brainstorm how to make a wise selection.

Geographic Considerations

More than eighty percent of this year's non-EOIR Honors Program and SLIP positions are based in Washington, DC, with the remainder scattered throughout field offices in the U.S. Some divisions will require a geographic choice. [The DOJ website](#) has more detailed information as to which divisions place staff outside of D.C. Any geographic or sub-office selection does not count as one of your three "employment preferences." In the "Informal Participants" section, under both "U.S. Attorney's Office," and "Other DOJ Components," you have the opportunity to select the states in which you are willing to work, in case DOJ offices in those states join informally after your application has been submitted. Keep in mind that the list of states under "Other DOJ Components" will be visible to all the components you have selected, so formal participants with regional offices may also take note of what states you select.

Cyber Fellowship

If you select the Cyber Fellowship as one of your three component choices, you will be required to answer the following essay question: **Why are you interested in the Cyber Fellowship program and what specific experiences, characteristics, or qualifications make you a strong candidate?** Keep your response to a maximum of 2000 characters (including spaces).

Gaye L. Tenoso Indian Country Fellowship

This three-year position is intended to expand the legal capacity of DOJ to address issues related to tribal and federal law. The fellow will be assigned to a U.S. Attorney's Office with significant Indian Country work. This year, the Indian Country Fellowship will place one Fellow in one of the following U.S. Attorney's Offices (with assignment based on mutual agreement of the Fellow and District): the District of New Mexico, Nevada, or Oregon, the Northern, Eastern, or Western District of Oklahoma, or the Eastern District of Washington.

The selected fellow typically will spend one year with a tribal entity, usually in a tribal prosecutor's office, and the next two years working at their assigned U.S. Attorney's Office on issues related to tribal capacity, violent crime, and public safety. To learn more about the program and specific bar requirements, see the [Tenoso Indian Country Fellowship page](#).

If you select the Indian Country Fellowship as one of your three component choices, you will be required to answer the following essay question: **Why do you want to be an Indian Country Fellow and what background skills, education, or experience will contribute to your success, if selected?** Keep your response to a maximum of 2000 characters (including spaces).

United States Attorney's Offices

Four U.S. Attorney's Offices are formally participating in the Honors Program this year (District of Arizona, Southern District of California, District of Columbia, and Southern District of Florida), and eleven are participating informally (Eastern and Northern Districts of California, District of Colorado, Middle District of Florida, Southern District of Indiana, Eastern District of Louisiana, District of New Mexico, Southern District of New York, Northern and Southern Districts of Texas, and Western District of Washington). If you want to be considered by specific U.S. Attorney's Offices participating informally, select the box "U.S. Attorney's Offices," and more options will open up allowing you to select specific offices. You will also have the option to specify in which states you would be willing to work in case other offices join informally later in the process. However, all positions in formally or informally participating U.S. Attorney's Offices are limited to law school graduates who are serving in (or will soon begin) judicial clerkships or fellowships, and all require that applicants have taken the bar before applying and be admitted to practice before entering on duty. Also note that one of the formally participating offices, Arizona, will only accept law school graduates who are serving in, will soon begin,

or have completed a judicial clerkship, and will not accept graduates from fellowships. If you are a current 3L applying to the Honors Program, you will not be eligible to select the U.S. Attorney's Offices as one of your three component choices. Each U.S. Attorney's Office has specific bar requirements for applicants. For a complete list of participating USAOs and bar requirements, see the [Honors Program Participating Components](#) page.

If you plan to apply to one or more USAOs, you will be required to answer the following two essay questions:

- 1. Tell us why you want to be an Assistant U.S. Attorney and describe the experiences, characteristics, or qualifications that make you a strong candidate.**
- 2. What role can an Assistant U.S. Attorney play in making our society a better place?**

Keep your responses to a maximum of 2000 characters each (including spaces).

While only the USAO for the Southern District of Indiana and District of South Carolina are participating in SLIP hiring this year (as informal participants), note that virtually every U.S. Attorney's Office takes volunteer summer interns (in fact, in past years, 60% of DOJ's volunteer internships have been at U.S. Attorney's Offices). If you want to spend your summer in a U.S. Attorney's Office, you will have many opportunities to do so as a volunteer.

“Other DOJ Components”

After you have completed your selections, if you are an Honors Program applicant, you will have the opportunity to check a box indicating you are willing to have other (non-USAO) DOJ components consider your application, and to select where, geographically, you'd be willing to work. DOJ will keep Honors applications on file for a full year after the application window closes, and additional components can (and occasionally will), when looking to hire, dip back into that pool of applications. If getting into DOJ is a top priority for you, make sure to check this box—you have nothing to lose!

Legal Education

Under the heading “Legal Education,” this page asks you to list all law schools you have attended while earning a first law degree (J.D. or equivalent). Click on the red “Add JD” button in the left-hand corner of the window to add each law school you have attended while earning a J.D. Click on the red “Add LLM” button in the left-hand corner of the window to add each law school you have attended while earning an LL.M. To select your law school, do not try to type into the box; instead, click “Search,” which allows you to search for your school by state or school name. This section also asks if you have received “Graduation Honors.” Leave the “Graduation Honors” blank if you did not earn honors or you have not yet graduated.

The “Law School Grades & Class Standing” section asks for information about your GPA, school's grading scale, and class rank. Because HLS does not compute GPA, you should enter “Not Reported” in the box next to “J.D. Law School GPA,” as directed by the information pop-up. For “J.D. Law School Grading School,” you should select “Dean's Scholar to Fail.” Note that since HLS does not rank students, when asked for law school class rank, you should check “Law School does not rank students by percentile.” The only exception is if you have graduated with Latin honors and therefore know your rank. For example, a student who has graduated *magna cum laude* can check the “Top 10%” box. If you graduated *cum laude* (at HLS, between top 10% and top 40%), you should check “Law School Does Not

Rank,” and then feel free to explain your honors status/ranking in your response to the “Additional Information” question.

Note that, if relevant, you should check the box indicating that HLS implemented a “Pass/Fail” grading policy in the Spring of 2020.

Finally, you are no longer required to enter in your grades manually. Your J.D. transcript should already have been uploaded when you answered the “Program Eligibility Questions” to establish your status as an applicant. If you are a transfer student, you may upload an additional transcript to accommodate your transfer law school in the “Review Supporting Documents (Transcripts/Vet Pref/Fellowship)” heading. Likewise, if you are a joint degree student, you will be able to upload a transcript for your joint school there.

Other Education

This screen asks you to list your graduate and undergraduate degrees, along with school names, school locations, majors, date received, and graduation honors. If you have multiple undergraduate or graduate degrees, enter each of them separately. To add a degree, click on the red “Add” button on the bottom left-hand corner of the window. For location, list both the city and the state. If you received an undergraduate degree or graduate degree from a foreign university, list both the city and the country name. For date received, do not try to type into the box; instead, use the dropdown calendar. The bottom of this section asks you to check a box if you have a degree in certain fields (Accounting, Economics, Finance, Public Policy / Public Administration, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). If you select one of these fields, you will be asked to specify if you have a Bachelor’s, Master’s, or Ph.D.

Bar Admissions Status

This section asks all applicants to note their bar admission status within U.S. jurisdictions. If you have chosen any option besides “Not Admitted,” you will be asked to specify in which state(s) you have been admitted to the Bar or are awaiting your results.

Professional Accomplishments & Experience

This section allows you to check a box next to prescribed selections that describe various college and post-college professional experiences, including activities you have participated in as part of an internship, externship, student group, or job. For example, you may select that you have participated in “Compensated speech writing,” “College debate teams,” “Significant non-legal volunteerism,” or “Full-time employment as a paralegal.” Selecting an activity will open a new field where you can spend a maximum of 500 characters describing the activity. You should take advantage of this opportunity to describe your activities in a way that strengthens your candidacy for the components you’ve selected. Only select activities in which you have previously or are currently participating. If you plan to start participating in an activity but have not yet begun, do not select that activity. You can write about your intentions in the “Additional Information” section.

Honors & Awards

This section allows you to select scholarships, awards, and honors that you have received. The purpose of this section is simply to highlight important law school achievements for the people reviewing the

applications. Checking off some boxes will open fields where you have a maximum of 500 characters to elaborate on the honor. Again, use this opportunity if possible to advocate for your skills and abilities. If you received an honor that does not provide you space to elaborate and you feel you have relevant information to provide about the honor, you can use the “Additional Information” section to provide that information.

Employment

This section allows you to enter your employment experience, both at DOJ and elsewhere. If you have employment experience that you already entered as “Post-Law School Eligibility Preserving Activities” you can auto-populate that information to this section by clicking “Copy Post-Law School Eligibility Preserving Activities.” Note, however, that the “Employment” section requires more information than the “Post-Law School Eligibility Preserving Activities” section did, so you must click “Edit” next to the auto-populated jobs and fill out the additional required fields. The website will allow you to continue on to the next section even if you have not filled out those fields, so make sure you include this step. If you fail to fill out all the information, you will be stopped at the final “Certify and Submit” step and have to go back and fix it. Additionally, if you click “Copy Post-Law School Eligibility Preserving Activities” more than once, you will create multiple copies of the same jobs. It is easy to delete duplicate jobs by clicking the “Remove” button to the right of the job. You may also have experiences to add that were not relevant to the “Post-Law School Eligibility Preserving Activities” section. To enter prior DOJ employment, including internships of all kinds and other DOJ experience (for example, pre-law school paralegal employment), click on the “Add” button under the “U.S. Department of Justice Experience” section. To add other kinds of internships and employment, both legal and non-legal, click on the “Add” button under the “Other Experience” section. These links will prompt you to provide employment dates, organization name, supervisor’s name, a brief (2,000 characters) description of your duties, etc. Don’t hesitate to make strategic use of the area reserved for a description to highlight elements of your employment experiences that you feel support your DOJ application. You should anticipate that, if your application gets far enough, your supervisors at prior places of employment will likely be contacted.

References

You can add professional references by clicking “Add a Reference” and entering a name, contact information, relationship, etc. for each new entry. You will need the phone number of these references. While the form allows you to add more, the instructions explicitly limit you to three references, and the “References” section will not be marked as complete if you have four or more references listed, which will ultimately prevent you from submitting your application. If you have an additional reference who can speak to something about you that your other references would not address, consider including that person in your Additional Information response (see below). You do not need to ask these references to compose or submit letters on your behalf; they will be contacted directly by DOJ later in the process if necessary. However, it’s always a good idea to ask permission to list people as references, and to let them know when you have done so.

While the application refers to “professional references,” this is in contrast to “personal references,” not to “academic references.” In other words, your references need not all be from strictly professional/work settings—professors (clinical or podium) can make equally excellent references. Not so much, family friends or relatives! As in any setting, the best reference will be someone who knows you well, thinks highly of you, and speak to your strengths. “Big name” recommenders certainly don’t hurt, but they are not obligatory, and can do more harm than good if it is clear they don’t really know you well.

The application currently does not have a field to accommodate international references. When you click “Add a Reference,” you will be presented with boxes for city and state, but not for country. If you plan to use a reference in a different country, you may enter the name of the city as you would normally, but since there is a drop-down menu for the state, you will not be able to input a country here. Simply leave the state field blank. You may provide a proper address for your reference on the Additional Information page if you wish. Avue previously indicated to us that it was working to resolve this issue, but apparently has not yet succeeded in doing so.

Essays

These two questions allow you to bring in more personal information than would appear on a resume or in the remainder of the application. They are therefore a very significant opportunity for you to distinguish yourself from other applicants. Don’t forget—you don’t have the opportunity to send DOJ a cover letter, so these essays will serve that function too. DOJ tells us that they are looking for candidates with “demonstrated interest in the mission of the hiring office; demonstrated interest in public service; strong professional and academic track record; and activities and accomplishments demonstrating character, work ethic, and potential.” These essays are a chance to highlight why you fit some or all of those criteria. Hiring components look at these essays as mini-writing samples, so be sure to carefully edit and spell-check your submissions. While you may compose your essays in Word, it is recommended that you NOT cut and paste them into the application, but rather retype them, to avoid formatting glitches. The first response has a 6,000-character limit, including spaces (this is a 50% increase over the limit from prior years, and should afford you plenty of room); the second response has a 2,000-character limit, including spaces. If you applied to the Honors Program in the past, withdrew for a clerkship or fellowship, and are now reapplying, you may re-use the essays from your previous application. However, it may be in your best interest to update your essays in light of your clerking or other experience.

“Why did you apply to each of the components you selected? Please also address the characteristics and qualifications that make you a strong candidate for a position in each component. (Do not include USAOs).” You should think about this in advance, and be honest and direct. The more concrete and specific you can be in explaining your component preferences, the better. (This is where having done your homework on the office will pay off.) Make sure you address all the components you select (including any informal participants), not just your first choice. Your answer should be in a narrative form, and be clear and succinct. Err on the side of brevity. Note that this question has been slightly modified from past years, when you would first/also have been asked, more generally, “why do you want to work for the Department of Justice?” Of course, your interest in the Department as a whole should be suffused throughout your answer, but this change argues for an essay that is especially focused on the components you’ve selected, and in particular on the goodness of fit between you and those components. Hiring is a two-way street, and you will want to show that you understand the need for a good fit on both sides of the equation: that you want to do this work specifically, and that you would be a good choice for DOJ to hire to do it.

“If you could tell the selecting official one thing about yourself, what would it be? (All applicants should provide a response).” This is your opportunity to bring in some (appropriate) color (*i.e.*, personal information that would not appear on a resume.) You have the chance to reveal something about your personality or experience that will help the DOJ reviewers remember you and distinguish you from among the hundreds of applicants whose materials they review. Don’t forget that there are inevitably more qualified applicants for both the Honors Program and SLIP than DOJ can possibly hire; it is to your benefit to find a way (again, appropriately) to stand out a little and paint yourself as someone who would be an interesting colleague. Your essay could involve your family history, childhood experiences, deeply

held beliefs, unusual talents, hobbies, experiences with travel or living abroad, personal likes or dislikes, etc. Most people have a few quirks or unique experiences they can share, yet too many nonetheless answer this question with boilerplate statements about their personal commitment to public service. By doing so, you are squandering an opportunity to make your application come alive to a reader. Individuals involved in hiring vary in what they're looking for in the second essay, but if you have something interesting about you that makes the reviewer think "I have to meet this person!" that can be a good approach. Make sure you "connect the dots"—why is your essay relevant to how you would be a great candidate for DOJ? Be clear and succinct. Finally, be specific: claiming you have "people skills," for example, is too generic.

A reminder that those selecting any USAOs will also have to answer two additional essays, and those selecting the Indian Country Fellowship or Cyber Fellowship will have to answer one additional essay; see above for details.

Military Service & Veterans' Preference

Because Executive Branch attorneys are appointed under the excepted service, not hired through the competitive service, DOJ does not exercise a "hard" veterans' preference in Honors hiring, but it does follow the principles of veterans' preference as far as feasible, and considers status as a veteran as a positive factor in hiring.

The SLIP program, in contrast, is administered through the federal Pathways Program, and veterans' preferences are in place for students applying for 2L SLIP positions. Spouses of disabled veterans or widows/widowers of veterans killed in action may qualify for derived veterans' preference. Military spouses are not otherwise entitled to any special consideration or benefit, although candidates may, at their discretion, discuss their status as the spouse of a service member or veteran in the narrative portions of the application. Those hired into 3L/postgraduate SLIP positions are appointed via the excepted service, so DOJ follows the principles of veterans' preference as far as feasible, and considers status as a veteran as a positive factor in hiring.

To learn more about veterans' preference eligibility and determine whether you qualify, [consult the Veterans' Preference Guide](#). If you have additional questions about eligibility and/or required documentation, consult the Office of Personnel Management's [Vet Guide](#). If you have specific questions related to eligibility, you may also contact Annette M. Garland at DOJ's Veterans Employment Program Office by email at vets@usdoj.gov.

If you qualify for veterans' preference, you may upload the appropriate documentation on the Military Service and Veterans' Preference page or you may upload documents on the Attach Supporting Documents Page. If you use the button available on the Military Service page, do not be alarmed if you receive a "no file selected" message after uploading. You may not receive a confirmation from the website. To check if your documents have been properly uploaded, click on the Supporting Documents page, where you should find the complete list of files attached to your application.

Languages

This section allows you to identify any languages you speak other than English, and rate your proficiency in each. Begin by selecting a language. You will then be required to rate your oral, written and listening skills for that language. For each skill, you can choose one of four levels of proficiency: Basic, Limited, Professional or Bilingual. You can add and rate additional languages as appropriate. Some students have

questioned the somewhat cryptic proficiency levels; if you feel that you need or want to offer further explanation regarding your language proficiency, you should do so in the Additional Information section.

Demographics

In the “Demographics” section, applicants are asked to report their race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity, and disabilities. Answering these questions is optional. This information is used for reporting purposes; your decision to leave this page blank will not adversely affect your chance of being hired.

You will have the opportunity, but are under no obligation, to self-identify as having a disability. If you self-identify as such, you will then be asked whether you have a severe disability as defined by federal law. Your answers up to that point may only be used for anonymous statistical purposes. However, if you answer yes to both questions, you may then check a box (but again, are under no obligation to do so) that will enable the Department to identify you and take your disability into “expanded consideration” in the hiring process, as part of an initiative to promote the hiring of qualified individuals with disabilities. At that point, if you are selected for such expanded consideration, you will be contacted and asked for further documentation of your disability. Note that there are disability “points of contact” within all the components at DOJ. If you have any questions about disabilities and working at DOJ, you can reach out to the disability “[points of contact](#)” directly.

There is also a [diversity ambassador program](#), with specific DOJ attorneys assigned to HLS. You should feel free to reach out to any of these ambassadors with any questions as well (not just those assigned to HLS, and not just questions related to diversity.)

Additional Information

“Provide information related to experience, accomplishments, activities, qualifications, training, special skills or competencies, honors and awards, articles published, special circumstances, or other relevant information you want hiring officials to consider.” Students often must crunch down descriptions of their prior jobs, extracurricular activities, honors, publications, etc., to fit into a one-page resume or a character limit. This is your chance to expand on these elements. DOJ is very interested in seeing these details, particularly if the substance of what you’ve done is relevant to the DOJ components you have selected. For example, if you have engaged in some significant volunteer work that doesn’t fit elsewhere in the application, or you would like to elaborate more on a particularly relevant project you worked on during an internship, or you have a significant experience, like being the first in your family to attend college and law school, that isn’t otherwise touched on in your application, this is the place to bring up such information. This section should NOT be written as a narrative. While you can and should expand on these elements, your answer should be written in a format that is accessible to skimming (*e.g.*, bullet or outline format). This response has a 4,000-character limit that includes spaces. While we generally encourage you to use most or all of the characters in answering the two essays above, you should NOT feel compelled to use all 4,000 characters here just for the sake of using them, if you don’t otherwise have information you would like to transmit through this question.

Additional Section for 2L SLIP Applicants Only

If the information you entered on the “Legal Education” and the “Hiring Program Selection” screens indicates that you are a 2L SLIP applicant, an additional section will appear under the heading

“Application” on the right-hand side of the page. This additional section is “Law School Achievement.” If you are an Honors Program applicant or a 3L SLIP applicant who has accepted a judicial clerkship or fellowship or will be entering a graduate law program, you will not see this section as you do not need to fill out this information.

Law School Achievement (2L SLIP Applicants Only)

This section asks SLIP applicants several questions about their first-year legal writing course, grades, law review selection, and school grading system. SLIP applicants are asked to describe, via multiple choice, their grade in the first-year legal writing course and answer several yes or no questions about the first-year legal writing course, law review, and whether any failing or non-passing law school grades are included in their transcript. While it isn’t specified how HLS grades correspond to those in the multiple choice list, a suggestion would be that an “H” corresponds to an “A or equivalent;” a P corresponds to “a passing grade other than minimally passing,” an LP corresponds to “a minimally passing grade,” and an F corresponds to “a non-passing grade.” If you got a DS in your first-year writing course, you should highlight this fact in the “Additional Information” section.

The bottom of the page lists seven options that reflect law school grading systems, and you are instructed to fill in the bubbles under the option that best corresponds to your school. HLS students should use the third option from the top of this section, which reads: “**My law school grades in an Honors, Pass, Low/Marginal/Substandard Pass, Fail system.**” Next, select the bubble under this option that best corresponds to your academic performance at HLS. You must answer honestly; SLIP applicants who do not list their actual academic achievement will be disqualified.

If you attended a law school with a different grading system prior to transferring to HLS, you should select your previous law school’s grading scale. When you apply to SLIP as a 2L, DOJ will only see grades from the school you attended prior to transferring. Therefore, you should select your former law school’s grading system, not the grading scale in place at HLS.

Finally, the page asks whether or not you are willing to work in Washington, D.C.

Review Supporting Documents (Transcripts/Vet Pref/Fellowship)

This section asks applicants to attach documents supporting fellowship eligibility, veterans’ preference eligibility determinations, transcripts, and disabilities. **Do NOT attach resumes in this section, regardless of the fact that “Resume” appears in the drop-down menu. Do NOT attach letters of recommendation.** [Instructions for submitting the 2 letters of recommendation](#) required for the Antitrust AAG Honors Fellowship can be found on the DOJ website. These letters will be due at the same time your Honors application will be due, so contacting your recommenders in plenty of time is important.

Review and Print This Application

Before certifying and submitting your application, take time to review and print. **Be sure to look for spelling errors and missed fields.** While it may seem petty, the reality is that misspelled words or grammatical errors will give a reviewer a welcome excuse for tossing your application. We strongly recommend that you print out your full application and review it before you certify, since it is easy to miss little mistakes when you’re scrolling through the application online, and since formatting glitches can appear when you cut and paste sections from other programs. Be aware that some parts of the application are shuffled around in the printed report, so read through the whole report to determine if something is missing. For example, the essays required for the Indian Country Fellowship and the AUSA

positions are located in the Essay section of the printed report, even though you enter them in the application under the Components section.

Application Certification

Once you are satisfied with your application, click on “Certify and Submit.” This will take you to a screen that will let you know whether there is missing or erroneously entered information. It will also ask you to certify that you understand certain facts, and finally, click on “Submit and Certify”, which will submit and certify your application. **Don’t forget to Submit and Certify!** OARM tells us that every year some applicants get to this point but overlook this final crucial step.

If, after you Submit and Certify and prior to the application deadline, you need to make a correction or update to your application, log into your account, select the Withdraw and Update link under Application Status, make the desired change, then select Save and Continue. You **must** then re-certify and re-submit your application or it will not be considered.

On this page, you have the option to check a box that will allow DOJ to share information on the status of your application with OPIA advisors. If you check the box, we can see the status of your application by name; if you do not check the box, we can see your status identified only as “anonymous.” ***If you are comfortable doing so, we strongly encourage you to check the box, as it is very helpful to OPIA!*** Please know that identifiable data will never leave our office; we only use this information to help us keep track of students who may need OPIA’s assistance and to update our yearly anonymous statistics on the results of HLS students’ applications.

Once the application deadline has passed, you cannot make any significant changes. You will only be able to update your contact information, withdraw your application, or transfer an Honors application to a SLIP application in the wake of accepting a clerkship or fellowship. If you discover after the deadline that your application contains any errors, email askoarm@usdoj.gov right away.

Application Timelines

Table 3 Honors Program Application Timeline

Timing	Action
July 31, 2023	Applications opens
SEPTEMBER 5, 2023 (11:59 PM, EST)	APPLICATION DEADLINE
Late September 2023	Interview candidates selected
Mid-October through early November 2023	Main Honors Program interview period
Late November 2023 through February 2024	Offers extended

Table 4 SLIP Application Timeline

Timing	Action
July 31, 2023	Applications opens
SEPTEMBER 5, 2023 (11:59 PM, EST)	APPLICATION DEADLINE
Early October 2023	Interview candidates selected
Mid-October through early November 2023	Telephone interviews
Late November 2023 through January/February 2024	Offers extended

The Interviewing Process

The Department, through its contractor (Avue Digital Services), will send an electronic message to candidates selected for Honors Program interviews using the e-mail address listed in the application. All e-mails from the Department are issued from the address mail@avuedigitalservices.com. **Add this address to your contact list before you apply so any messages are not relegated to your “Junk Mail” folder.** If you are selected for an interview, you will receive an e-mail from Avue notifying you of your selection, although it might not initially specify the component(s) that selected you. Each hiring component will then send out a separate email to those it has selected to interview; thus, if you are selected for an interview by more than one component, you will receive more than one email. If you are NOT selected for any interviews, you will NOT be notified of this by email; you will have to check Avue regularly to determine your status. In addition, you can check the community forum, as DOJ uses this to let applicants know generally where the process is at any given point.

This year, most hiring divisions will conduct Honors interviews **on work days in late October and early November**. In the past, most Honors interviews were conducted in Washington, DC. However, **this year (as for the past three years), all interviews will be virtual**. In the past, when interviews were in person, components with field offices have at times offered interviews in other cities as well. The Executive Office for Immigration Review, for example, usually interviews in Falls Church, VA and at various Immigration Courts nationally. The Antitrust Division has interviewed at one of its field offices (in San Francisco, Chicago or New York). U.S. Attorney’s Offices have, in the past, conducted interviews at their offices. If at any point DOJ transitions back to in-person interviews and travel is required, the Department’s Conference Center will handle travel arrangements, and DOJ will cover most travel costs. Whenever possible, interviews will be scheduled so that an overnight stay is not necessary. The specific amount of reimbursement will be approved in advance on a case-by-case basis and information will be given to the individual applicant prior to the interview. DOJ is extremely reluctant to change assigned interview times, so be sure to contact them early if you have a serious conflict. Interviews range in length from 30 minutes to one hour, depending on the component, and often include more than one attorney interviewer.

We are aware of a quirk in the interview process for the Consumer Protection Branch of the Civil Division. For the past several years, this Branch has been doing unannounced phone screening interviews to narrow the field before setting up in-person or virtual interviews; we are told that these calls are in significant part to gauge the applicant’s true level of interest in the office. Applicants who are well-regarded may receive such calls; many applicants do NOT get them. A call like this can be a bit of a surprise, particularly if it comes at a bad moment or if the recipient is not prepared to answer some impromptu questions about his or her interest in the Consumer Protection Branch. If you have selected the Consumer Protection Branch, it is a good idea to do some homework and prepare ahead of time in case you get a screening call; forewarned is forearmed. However, if the call comes at a truly bad time, you should be able to reschedule for a day or two later. Just remember to be gracious, appreciative and professional in doing so.

All SLIP applications submitted by eligible candidates are forwarded to the selected components, which then decide who they want to interview. Candidates for SLIP will be contacted directly by the component that is considering them for employment with instructions about what information candidates should provide them. It is left to the discretion of each component whether to conduct SLIP interviews and how those interviews will be conducted. In the past, most components chose to do regional, telephone or virtual interviews; even pre-pandemic, most did **not** conduct in-person interviews, and in any case, SLIP candidates are never flown to D.C. for interviews. This year, all SLIP interviews will be conducted by telephone or virtually. However, some components may not interview SLIP candidates at all, and may

instead make offers based exclusively on the application itself, as has sometimes been the case for parts of the Civil Division and OSG in the past. If the component conducts interviews, the component's staff will advise the candidates what they need to provide prior to the interview.

You should comply with the requirements specified by the interviewing component. These requirements, which may include electronic submission of specific types of writing samples prior to the interview, will be part of the initial notification issued by the Department. You may [preview component interview requirements](#) for both the Honors Program and SLIP, though as of the publication of this guide, this information had not yet been updated for 2023-2024 (DOJ notes that this page will be updated in September.) If attending an in-person interview, we recommend that you bring a writing sample, resume, transcript, and reference sheet with you to each interview scheduled. A sample reference sheet may be found on the OPIA website in the section [covering resume and cover letter review](#). If a transcript is requested, DOJ has indicated that either an official or unofficial transcript is acceptable and may be sent as a PDF attached to an email.

[Attorney recruitment coordinators' contact information](#) for the participating components of the Honors Program and SLIP are listed on the DOJ website, although as of the time of publication of this guide, this information had not yet been updated for 2023 (DOJ notes that this page as well will be updated in September.) As the application and hiring process is centrally coordinated and streamlined, you need not contact these coordinators unless you have interview-specific questions or experience travel emergencies on the way to your interview.

In your interview, you should of course be prepared to answer the questions “Why do you want to work at DOJ?” and “Why do you want to work for this component?” In addition, DOJ interviews are likely to include a variety of more open-ended questions like “What makes a good litigator?” or “behavioral” questions like “Tell us about a time when you...[disagreed with a supervisor, had to make a hard decision, had to juggle multiple deadlines, etc.]” Over time, more and more DOJ interviews appear to be conducted fully or partially as “structured interviews” – i.e., relying increasingly on behavioral interview questions – as a way of reducing the impact of implicit bias in hiring, so it can be a good idea to familiarize yourself with this method. And of course, to prepare for your interview be sure to read up on the relevant component and on DOJ in general. The DOJ website is an excellent source of information (consider checking into press releases for a good overview of important developments). Speaking to HLS alumni, including Heyman Fellows, with experience in the component can be very helpful as well.

You can also consult the OPIA website for interviewing tips, and we encourage you to contact an OPIA adviser as well for more specific questions, or to practice with a mock interview. We collect information on DOJ interviews from our students and graduates who go through them, so we may be able to give you some insight into what to expect from your particular component. Once you've had your interview, we would appreciate very much if you could send us a summary (with as much detail as you'd like) via email so that we can add this information (anonymously, of course) to our “interview bank” for the benefit of future applicants like you.

Timing of Offers

Each office handles its own hiring, and some are much more organized than others about extending offers. For the Honors Program, DOJ anticipates most components will make first-round offers about two weeks after the end of formal interviews. The great majority of the offers will likely be made from November through December but in a few cases (and especially for the Executive Office of Immigration Review) the process could extend into January or February. Very occasionally, components that were not listed as formal or informal participants may reach into the pool of Honors applicants even later than that to offer

interviews; in the 2021-22 application cycle, we had an applicant receive such an interview late in the spring that resulted in being hired.

SLIP offers will come from late November through February; we anticipate the majority to be issued in November or December.

[According to the DOJ website](#), Honors Program and SLIP offers to **current law students** will remain open for at least 14 days after the date issued. Current law students receiving an offer on or before December 1 may extend their response deadline up to an additional 7 days by contacting the issuing office via email to reaffirm their interest in the position and specify the date by which they will respond. Components may withdraw an offer that is not accepted or reaffirmed within 14 days from the date of the offer. Components may deem an offer declined if the candidate fails to respond by the established deadline (original or extended, as appropriate). Honors Program offers to **law school graduates** will remain open for at least 14 days after the date the offer was issued. Components have the discretion to extend response deadlines. Components may deem an offer declined if the candidate fails to respond by the established deadline (original or extended, as appropriate.)

A special note about offers from the Appellate Staff of the Civil Division: In recent years, Civil Appellate has extended “informal offers” before making formal offers. We suspect they want to be sure that an offer will be accepted before it is extended, as we have indications that at least some offices may not be able to extend additional offers if one is turned down (we heard a rumor of this a couple of years ago about the Consumer Protection Branch of the Civil Division, for example).

Volunteer Positions as an Alternative to SLIP

Don't forget that 2Ls can and do volunteer for DOJ. If you do not receive a SLIP job offer, you may apply directly to your section of choice to inquire about securing a volunteer position. Each summer there are approximately 1,000 volunteer interns in offices nationwide, and about 3,000 volunteer interns a year when spring and fall terms are included. Most sections take on volunteers in addition to the SLIP hires, and you will not be penalized for seeking to come in as a volunteer rather than a paid intern (in fact, DOJ is likely to regard this as a positive indicator of your commitment to a summer at DOJ). Some components may historically have rarely hired through the Summer Law Intern Program, or do sometimes participate but not this year (for example, the Civil Rights Division this year and last.) Such components would therefore take on only volunteers. As the SLIP program has mostly contracted in recent years due to budget constraints, even more unpaid volunteers have been used. Fortunately, guaranteed funding through the HLS Summer Public Interest Funding (SPIF) program allows you to volunteer, and the substantive experience will be virtually identical in most cases. In fact, DOJ attorneys have told us that they often don't know which of their 2L interns are SLIPs and which are volunteers. One exception to this general rule, however, is the Tax Division: because of strict statutory limits on the sharing of taxpayer information, only paid SLIP interns (who are considered DOJ “employees”) can access specific case materials, while volunteer interns can only do generic research. As a result, SLIP interns in Tax get significantly more responsibility than volunteers, including assisting on trials and even traveling with the attorneys. Finally, note that the SLIP program doesn't always contract; last year, the Criminal Division participated in SLIP for the first time in at least 16 years!

Almost any office within DOJ is likely to accept volunteers. The Civil, Criminal, and Environment and Natural Resources Divisions usually offer the largest volunteer programs, and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia has historically offered more than 100 opportunities for volunteer interns each summer. In addition, many of DOJ's legal policy offices have opportunities for volunteer internships in Washington, DC, (for example, the Criminal Division's Office of Policy and Legislation).

There are also volunteer opportunities in the “front offices” of many divisions (*i.e.*, the office of the Assistant Attorney General of a given division), where an intern may be involved in both litigation and policy work. Outside of DC, virtually every U.S. Attorney’s Office accepts summer volunteer interns; in fact, 60% of DOJ’s volunteer internships are with U.S. Attorney’s Offices. Students are permitted to apply to as many of these components as they wish. See OARM’s “[Volunteer Legal Intern Recruitment](#)” page for a listing of volunteer internship opportunities; more are typically added as they become available later in the fall. The listing is formatted as a searchable database; you can search for volunteer opportunities by office, practice area, state and timeframe (e.g., summer vs. academic year). There is also a newly added [table of volunteer opportunities](#) that you can sort by hiring component, job title, state or date of posting. Note, however, that while this list is relatively thorough, it should not be considered exhaustive. If you would like to volunteer in a section that is not listed on the website, you may still pursue that possibility.

There is no online application available for those applying to volunteer as a summer intern and deadlines vary by office. However, most offices hire volunteers on a rolling basis, so it is to your significant advantage to apply earlier rather than later in the process; many sections may actually have completed their hiring by the deadline posted. To apply, students should send a resume and cover letter **directly to the section of interest**. If the website instructs you to apply by division, we do recommend that you send your materials to the division. However, you should still *also* apply directly to the section(s) you prefer, as this may prevent your application from getting lost in the shuffle. You can tailor your cover letter to the section and ensure that the section (which makes the ultimate hiring decision) receives your application promptly. A writing sample of no more than ten pages may also be requested. Each U.S. Attorney’s Office also hires separately. Links to their websites can be found on [DOJ’s list of U.S. Attorneys](#).

SLIP and volunteer applications can dovetail in multiple ways. You may opt to wait to apply for a volunteer internship in a component that hires through SLIP if your SLIP application is still pending, but if you strike out at SLIP, there is no downside to then applying to that office as a volunteer. In addition, note that for components that are not participating in SLIP in a particular year, there is no conflict in applying as a volunteer while your SLIP application to other offices is still pending.

More recently, we have also recognized that it may be sometimes be sensible to submit a volunteer application to an office even while a SLIP application to the same office is pending. For example, before 2011, the Civil Division generally hired between 20 and 30 SLIP interns. In the budget crunch of 2011, that number was cut to 3 and in 2012 the number was 6. It was not clear whether Civil Appellate, a popular and very competitive section of the Civil Division, would be allocated even a single SLIP position that year. Under those circumstances, Civil Appellate told us that they didn’t mind receiving volunteer applications from SLIP applicants before the SLIP process was complete. While SLIP openings have expanded again recently, Civil Appellate this year still has only one SLIP slot. So, for Civil Appellate and other competitive offices with tiny SLIP allocations, and especially if such an office is your strong preference, it may be wise to consider a simultaneous volunteer application.

Alumni Mentors at DOJ

There are many HLS alumni/ae at DOJ. After you have done your homework by studying the DOJ website, we encourage you to talk to some alumni for more detailed information about what the different components at DOJ do and about current hiring practices. One good source of information about alumni at DOJ is the Heyman Fellowship Program website. This program supports recent graduates in federal government jobs. As Heyman Fellows, these alumni have agreed to serve as sources of advice for current students and young alumni, and many of them are very recent graduates themselves. You can go directly

to [the Heyman Fellowship Program website](#), or you can connect to the Heyman site [from OPIA's home page](#) by going to "[Gateway to PI Jobs: Fellowships](#)." You can then find the [list of Heyman Fellows here](#).

Other alumni can be found in [Amicus](#) (HLS's alumni mentor database). You can log in with your HarvardKey.

Additionally, OPIA's JD and alumni advisers are familiar with many alumni at DOJ; if you can't find a contact another way, feel free to make an appointment online for advice about how to find one.

Finally, a bit of friendly advice: alumni are often very happy to assist students, but please keep in mind that they are doing so as a favor to you and are often very busy; be sure to be considerate, patient and appropriately appreciative of the assistance they give you.

Faculty Mentors

A number of HLS faculty members have worked at DOJ. You should feel free to approach any of these for advice. They include:

- Lecturer on Law Antonia Apps (USAO SDNY)
- Lecturer on Law James Baker (Counsel for Intelligence Policy; FBI General Counsel)
- Visiting Professor David Barron (Office of Legal Counsel)
- Professor Glenn Cohen (Civil Division, Appellate Staff)
- Lecturer on Law Michael Dreeben (Deputy Solicitor General)
- Lecturer on Law W. Neil Eggleston (AUSA and Chief Appellate Attorney, USAO SDNY)
- Professor Charles Fried (U.S. Solicitor General 1985-1989)
- Lecturer on Law Ara Gershengorn (Civil Division, Appellate Staff, USAO EDPA)
- Lecturer on Law Ian H. Gershengorn (Office of the Solicitor General, Federal Programs Branch)
- Professor Jack Goldsmith (Office of Legal Counsel)
- Lecturer on Law Joseph Greenaway (Chief, Narcotics Bureau, USAO DNJ)
- Professor Jim Greiner (Civil Division, Federal Programs Branch)
- Professor Vicki Jackson (Office of Legal Counsel)
- Professor of Practice Alan Jenkins (Office of the Solicitor General)
- Lecturer in Law Daniel Kahn (Chief, Criminal Division, Fraud Section)
- Lecturer on Law Lorinda Laryea (Criminal Division, Fraud Section, FCPA Unit)
- Professor Richard Lazarus (Solicitor General's Office, Environmental and Natural Resources Division)
- Dean and Professor John Manning (Office of Legal Counsel)
- Professor Daphna Renan (Counsel to the Deputy Attorney General)
- Lecturer on Law Diane Rosenfeld (Violence against Women Office)
- Lecturer on Law Patti B. Saris (Chief, Civil Division, USAO DMA)
- Lecturer on Law Emily Schulman (USAO DMA)
- Visiting Professor Patrice Simms (Environment & Natural Resources Division)
- Lecturer on Law Luke Sobota (Office of Legal Counsel)
- Lecturer on Law Emily Schulman (USAO DMA)
- Professor Daniel Tarullo (Antitrust Division)
- Professor, Emeritus Laurence Tribe (Senior Counselor for Access to Justice)
- Lecturer on Law Leo Tsao (Chief, Bank Integrity Unity, Money Laundering and Asset Recovery Section, Criminal Division; FCPA Unit; USAO EDPA)

- Lecturer on Law Jamie Wacks (USAO DMA)
- Lecturer on Law Jonathan Wroblewski (Criminal Division, Office of Policy & Legislation; Office of Legal Policy; Civil Rights Division)
- Professor Crystal Yang (USAO DMA)

Special Note for 3Ls Also Applying for Judicial Clerkships, Graduate Programs, or Qualifying Fellowships

DOJ realizes that 3Ls may be applying for judicial clerkships, graduate programs or fellowships at the same time that they are applying to the DOJ Honors Program. The combined application for the Summer Law Intern Program and the Honors Program allows useful flexibility. Any 3L application will be considered an application to the Honors Program until otherwise specified. If for the year directly following graduation you accept a clerkship, a position in a full-time graduate law program, or a fellowship, you must notify DOJ right away and withdraw from the Honors Program interview process (this can be done online). However, you will still be eligible for the Summer Law Intern Program, and if you wish, your application will be re-directed accordingly. (Note that if an offer for a clerkship or fellowship is simply “on the table” this is no impediment to continuing with the Honors Program interview process.) As a 3L, you can try for any of the posted SLIP positions; in particular, positions with the Office of the Solicitor General and the Office of Legal Counsel are reserved **only** for graduating 3Ls in the summer before a clerkship. If you opt for a 3L summer at DOJ, you will need either to do it in conjunction with studying for and taking the bar exam, or to make sure later bar study is compatible with your clerkship, fellowship or graduate program. While this can be a challenge, a number of our graduates have managed it, and interning at DOJ as a new graduate can forge important ties that may increase your odds of an Honors Program or lateral offer down the road.

A couple of details about 3L SLIP positions are worth noting. First, since 3L SLIPs are no longer student interns when they commence their SLIP positions, these hires are not processed through the Pathways program the way 2L SLIPs are. As a result, veterans’ preferences are treated differently, and, for non-veterans, for reasons that we have yet to plumb, DOJ cannot take you on board or pay you before June.

Special Note on Politics

Many students have asked us whether politics play a role in DOJ Honors or SLIP hiring, and whether students should remove frankly political elements from their resumes. While DOJ line attorney hiring is legally required to be apolitical, and has a long and proud tradition of being just that, concerns have been raised about untoward political influence in hiring in the past, and it seems these concerns arise again cyclically. In the years between 2002 and 2006, it seems clear that there were indeed times when ideological concerns affected hiring in both the Honors Program and the Summer Law Intern Program. A number of bodies have investigated this phenomenon, and some reports have been issued confirming it (see, e.g., [this report](#) from DOJ’s OPR and OIG). In the years following the IG/OPR’s report, substantial changes in the Honors Program and SLIP hiring process were instituted, and OPIA believes that ideological influence in DOJ line attorney hiring was effectively eliminated. Most recently, however, questions have been raised by some as to whether the policy of political hiring returned under the Trump administration. In our increasingly partisan political environment, some may also have questions about how interning or working within a particular administration may impact a future job search elsewhere. If you have any questions of this nature, it’s best to discuss them with an OPIA adviser.

OPIA does not generally recommend eliminating significant activities, jobs or internships from resumes for political reasons. First, this can leave odd gaps in your history that may raise more questions than the deleted material would have. In addition, it’s not a great idea to start your legal career by hiding things. Finally, and most significantly, if such activities have been important to you, you should think twice about whether you would want to work for an employer who would find them off-putting. If you have further questions or concerns, it would be wise to talk them over with an OPIA adviser.

Special Note for Those Who Have Applied to the Honors Program in a Previous Year

Students who applied for the Honors Program as 3Ls and were not accepted at the time often plan to reapply for the program after gaining a year or more of experience in clerkships and/or fellowships. This is a great strategy; historically, at least 40% of Honors Program hires nationally have had clerkships, and HLS's successful applicants show even higher proportions of clerks/fellows:

Table 5 Clerkship and Fellowship Experience of Honors Program Offerees

Honors Program Class	Offerees with a Clerkship/Fellowship	Total Offerees	Percent of Offerees with a Clerkship/Fellowship
2015	12	17	71%
2016	11	16	69%
2017	6	7	86%
2018	2	4	50%
2019	8	10	80%
2020	12	13	72%
2021	10	13	77%
2022	10	11	91%

Some components in particular either require (e.g., Civil Appellate) or strongly prefer (e.g., the National Security Division) to hire clerks. While the numbers vary from year to year, aggregating these recent years show that roughly three-quarters of HLS applicants with DOJ offers are clerks or fellows rather than 3Ls. So, applying after gaining experience in a clerkship or fellowship is a definite boost to your chances for success. As long as you remain eligible (you have not had a job that disqualifies you from the program and remain within the eligibility timeframe), the experience that you gained after graduating from law school will enrich your application and make you a more attractive candidate.

Some graduates reapplying have found that their old Avue account from their first application is still live. If this is the case, we recommend creating a new account, instead of trying to resuscitate the old account. Your information has likely changed enough that trying to update your old account would be almost as time consuming as creating a new account, and the potential for technical problems is much lower with a fresh account. In addition, students have asked whether they should indicate on their applications that they had applied in the past since it may not be apparent to the reviewers. In general, noting that you have applied before is a positive; it indicates that you are a serious candidate who is committed to joining DOJ. Honors Program reviewers understand that it is a very competitive program, and that many highly qualified applicants are of necessity turned away. In addition, if you previously reached the interview stage and are applying to the same component, it is very possible that you will be talking with the same people with whom you have already interviewed, so you are unlikely to be able to keep a prior application a secret. If you have further questions about whether or not you should include your status as a previous applicant on your new application, speak to an OPIA adviser.

Special Note About Grades

Many students ask what kind of grades they need to have a realistic chance at the Honors Program or SLIP. It's certainly true that these are competitive programs; the ratio of applications to offers is evidence of that. But it's also true that DOJ legitimately evaluates applications holistically, and grades are only one part of that mix. Some offices are more grade-conscious than others; for example, successful applicants to Civil Appellate, Federal Programs and the Office of the Solicitor General usually have done quite well

in their coursework, and frankly poor grades will of course reduce anyone's chances of success. But applicants for many other components have been successful with a range of decent grades on their transcripts because they have other attractive elements to their applications: a demonstrated commitment to public service, relevant internships and clinical experiences, on-point research and writing experiences, persuasive essays, etc. If you have concerns about your transcript, you should come speak to an OPIA adviser about them before you preemptively rule yourself out of the running for DOJ Honors or SLIP.

Security Clearance (and Past Drug Use)

Terminology and Process

For any legal position with DOJ, the student or attorney must pass some degree of security check; the level of scrutiny varies with the nature of the position and the component involved. A "suitability check" is a simple review designed to determine whether you are generally fit for federal employment; it examines character and conduct. A more detailed "background investigation" is required for anyone who will be working for DOJ for more than 6 months, or in multiple internships within a one-year period. A "security clearance" is required if you will have access to sensitive or classified information that would pose a risk to national security if disclosed; it examines an applicant's trustworthiness when given access to such materials.

The suitability check is the lowest level of scrutiny; this rather routine investigation is conducted for all summer interns (whether volunteer or paid) and permanent employees. A suitability check involves fingerprints and a relatively non-intrusive questionnaire. SLIP interns may be asked for a urine sample for drug testing. Suitability reviews are processed by DOJ's Office of Attorney Recruitment and Management. The more extensive "background investigation" is additionally required for more lengthy or full-time employment, including checking with references, former employers, co-workers, friends, neighbors, landlords, institutions of higher education, and credit/military/tax/police records. Some U.S. Attorney's Offices also impose more stringent requirements than Main Justice for their intern or graduate hires. Finally, for students or graduates who will be working with sensitive or classified information, a true security clearance is necessary, involving a much more detailed questionnaire and more intrusive investigation. The security clearance process at DOJ is conducted by a separate office, the Security Emergency Planning Staff, and may also involve the FBI. For SLIP or volunteer positions in U.S. Attorney's Offices, the suitability or security packages are first reviewed by the district where the candidate will work, and then by the Executive Office for United States Attorneys (EOUSA) in Washington.

The questionnaires used for both suitability checks and security clearances are called "[standard forms](#)"; the most common standard forms used by DOJ are SF85, SF85P, SF85PS and SF86. SF85 is the least intrusive form, used for generic federal employment; SF85P (sometimes with the supplemental SF85PS) is the form most commonly used for law students interning at DOJ; SF86 is the most probing form, used for students or graduates who will be working in components with a higher degree of involvement with national security issues and materials.

While this process almost always runs smoothly and is completed without a problem, security clearances for DOJ, U.S. Attorney's Offices and other federal agencies do sometimes run into bumps in the road. If DOJ has concerns, they will raise them directly with you and work with you to have them resolved if possible. DOJ's OARM has told us that they work hard to mitigate any issues, and that fewer than 1% of

applicants are found unsuitable for employment, so while you should take the process seriously, you need not panic about it, nor should you automatically self-select out of the process because of anxiety about your ability to clear.

Having said that, these processes have occasionally taken long periods of time and have proven an obstacle to a few applicants. There are certain relatively common factors (dual or naturalized citizenship, extensive international travel, etc.) that are likely to slow down a clearance, and at times a clearance seems to get hung up for no reason at all. If you are concerned in advance about possible factors that may slow down your clearance, or you suspect that your process is taking longer than it should, contact OPIA right away. We can often get additional information for you, and it's always better for us to know there may be a hold-up early in the process rather than at the last minute. In any case, you can contribute to a smooth process by turning around your security forms quickly once you get them (we recommend within a few days if possible).

We have heard of some very rare occasions in which a student applying to intern at a U.S. Attorney's Office may be asked to fill out part of the SF86 form before even they are even granted an interview (for example, we saw an instance of this in 2022 from the Southern District of California). U.S. Attorney's Offices in border states sometimes have more rigorous standards against drug use than offices in other parts of the country (perhaps because they prosecute so much drug smuggling), and this may be a way for such an office to determine up front whether an applicant who interests them is worth pursuing, or would just fail to clear the background check eventually.

Both DOJ and OPIA strongly recommend that you always answer all questions on these forms as honestly as you can. More often than not, issues that worry you may prove not to be obstacles to working at DOJ, but lack of candor on your security forms, if discovered, will be an absolute, lifetime bar to DOJ employment. Even if you are ruled unsuitable now, time can often cure unsuitability, and you may be ruled suitable in the future. However, when DOJ runs that second suitability check, they will typically have access to your prior clearance forms, and discrepancies can be seen. That's why it's so important to be candid on your forms. Again, you can run any concerns you may have by an OPIA adviser, who will keep your discussion entirely confidential, and who may be able to allay your concerns or help you gather more information on your situation. Here are some additional details on issues that most commonly come up during the clearance process.

Drug Use

Much concern has been expressed in the past about minor experimentation with illegal drugs barring lawyers or law students from jobs at DOJ. You can get a sense of the kinds of questions you may be asked about drug use by reviewing the standard forms described above. Drug use and past drug use continue to be taken seriously by DOJ. This is a particularly difficult issue: admitting to even minor drug use may sometimes lead to rejection, yet lying is committing perjury. Here is some information that may be useful to you in thinking about how DOJ may assess drug use:

- **There are no bright-line rules about how drug use will be assessed by DOJ.** All drug use is reviewed by DOJ case-by-case, and based on the totality of the circumstances involved. Two of the most important factors DOJ will consider in this inquiry are the recency of the use and the legality of use in the state where it took place, and other factors can play a role as well:
 - Regarding **recency**, while in practice it can be difficult to clear if there has been any use in the past year; however, this is NOT a bright-line rule. A few notes: The year is counted

back from the date you would be on-boarding at DOJ. So, for a 1L summer internship that would start in early June, the year would run from early June of the summer before HLS through May of the 1L spring term – in other words, use while a college student, even for someone who is straight through, would likely NOT fall within the one year. There is a twist, but also a strategy for addressing the twist: when you accept an internship and sign off on the background check forms, you must answer the questions as of the date of filling out the form. So, for example, a 1L who fills out the form in March of their 1L year needs to count back a year from that March. However, you should also be specific as to the date(s) of use. When OARM looks at the form, they'll pay close attention to that date, and if it will be more than a year from use to onboarding, OARM will consider it to be outside of the one-year timeframe.

- Regarding **legality**, it can make a difference whether your use was legal in the state where you used. For example, if you use marijuana in a state that has never decriminalized or legalized any sort of use, that's more serious than if you use it in a state where it's legal.
- Another important factor that weighs into the review is **frequency of use**. We are told that, even in a state where it's illegal, and even if the use was within the past year, there MAY be room to consider other factors if it was just a single use, a one-time event. For example, if you never used marijuana, but used it once when celebrating graduation, that might be OK. A relevant question would be whether the use was "habitual" or a "lapse of judgment".
- Another consideration is the **point in your life** where the use took place: were you working in a professional capacity, or still in the "student zone"?
- Also considered are the **type(s) of drugs used**, whether you **bought or sold any drugs**, whether you were a **member of the bar when use occurred** (post-bar use can be a major problem), whether you were **in a position of public trust when use occurred**, and any other **mitigating circumstances**. (The federal Office of Personnel Management recently issued a [memorandum on assessing suitability for federal employment on the basis of marijuana use](#); while this may not apply directly to DOJ, reading it may give you a sense of how DOJ's case-by-case assessment may be conducted.)

OARM has told us that they "seek to give every benefit of the doubt to the student." Thus, a situation that commonly arises -- minor experimentation with "recreational" drugs as a college student -- will not automatically bar you from DOJ employment, may not in fact prove to be a problem, and certainly should not lead you to avoid applying to DOJ. Having said that, we emphasize that the more recent and/or frequent the use, the more likely it is to be problematic, and use within the past few months, and/or during law school, *definitely* can create a problem. As a result, we continue to recommend that ***if you think you may want to work for DOJ during a summer or at any point after you graduate, the best approach is to stop any illegal drug use at all right now.*** You should also note that, whatever the laws in the various states in which you may have lived or travelled, **possession of marijuana is still illegal under federal law everywhere.** A final note about drug use: while use of CBD oil is now legal, federally, it is not regulated by the FDA, and hence there is no guarantee, despite any given product's labelling, that it may not contain trace amounts of THC, the chemical flagged in drug tests. In one instance a few years ago, for example, a single topical use of CBD oil during a massage (even followed by a negative drug test) threatened to undermine an Honors post in the FBI OGC. DOJ is working on a

consistent policy on CBD oil, but one hasn't yet emerged. Therefore, out of an excess of caution, we recommend abstaining from use of CBD oil as well.

- **Once hired, Honors employees must submit to a drug test**, and may be subjected thereafter to spontaneous drug testing throughout the duration of their employment with DOJ.
- **U.S. Attorney's Offices can apply different rules.** It is critical to note that each U.S. Attorney's office independently formulates its own policies regarding prior drug use by applicants. There is no centrally organized, universal U.S. Attorney's Office policy towards past drug use. For instance, years ago, an HLS student was turned down for a security clearance by the Colorado U.S. Attorney's Office because he admitted to trying marijuana *once* on an experimental basis; this almost certainly would not have been a problem at some other U.S. Attorney's Offices.
- **Be forewarned: this drug policy may undergo transformations across time.** Since these policies are not written or fixed anywhere, they can and do change over time; usually in a more liberal direction, but not always.

Additional Concerns

Certain financial factors can slow down or torpedo the suitability check, background investigation or security clearance, including defaulted student loans, neglected financial obligations, or failure to comply with tax laws. Unaddressed failure to file a return or pay taxes may preclude a candidate from obtaining clearance, although one or two delinquencies may not be a problem if you timely enter into a payment plan and abide by it. Debt (even significant debt) in and of itself is not a bar to clearance, but ignoring debt -- failure to make timely payments, seek debt relief, or make arrangements with creditors -- can be problematic. DOJ will not look at your credit score, but will want to see that you are managing any debt responsibly.

Honors Program, SLIP and volunteer intern candidates are also subject to a residency requirement. Candidates who have lived outside of the U.S. for two or more of the past five years (cumulatively), counting back from a few weeks before the date they would begin at DOJ, may have difficulty being approved for appointments. Federal or military employees and their dependents are exempted from this rule (although Peace Corps volunteers are NOT exempted from the rule), and miscellaneous vacations abroad, unless they add up to a significant chunk of time, are generally not counted. (See the [Honors Program "Conditions of Employment"](#) page or [SLIP "Conditions of Employment"](#) page). Additionally, while some DOJ offices (for example, Civil Appellate) may be willing to seek residency waivers for interns who spent significant time abroad because of overseas scholarships, waivers are not guaranteed even if you receive an offer, and approval takes considerable time, sometimes several months; internships can fall through at the last minute for this reason.

Dual citizenship can also create some additional steps and/or delays for the suitability check or security clearance. The process can take longer if applicants have naturalized or dual citizenship, and dual citizenship with some countries (such as Iran) can sometimes make security clearance virtually impossible to obtain. Marriage to a non-citizen can also slow down the process. Some dual citizens may be asked to sign a "Loyalty Statement" and/or fill out a "Dual Citizen Statement." For example, we have occasionally seen certain U.S. Attorney's Offices, as well as Main Justice's Criminal Division, do so, for Honors, SLIP and volunteer hires. The Loyalty Statement that we have seen reads:

I understand that, because of the citizenship laws of the country that I have listed on my Personnel Questionnaire Form, it is possible that country currently considers me to be its citizen, regardless of my valid U.S. citizenship. Notwithstanding such a possibility, I hereby declare that I am a citizen of the United States, and that my loyalty and allegiance are to the United States.

If required, the Loyalty Statement must be signed for the applicant to clear.

The Dual Citizen Statement that we have seen says, in pertinent part:

... You indicated that you claim Dual Citizenship with [country]. Because you indicate you hold dual citizenship, the [xxx] Division, Security Programs Staff requires a statement containing the following information:

Please explain why you consider yourself a dual citizen and how you maintain that citizenship.

Are there any obligations, benefits or rights you have (or have received and exercised) as a citizen of [country], to include your voting rights?

Lastly, if asked by the DOJ, are you willing to renounce your citizenship with [country] and (if applicable) relinquish your foreign passport? If not, please indicate why.

We have not been able to find out whether answering “no” or “I’m not sure” regarding your willingness to renounce your dual citizenship and relinquish your foreign passport would mean you would not pass the suitability check. We are unaware of any students or graduates who have actually been required to renounce dual citizenship, but we would not necessarily have access to that information.

In making an individualized determination for a dual-citizen applicant, DOJ appears to consider where the ‘center of gravity’ of the applicant’s connections lies. So, for example, DOJ may want to know: how many years has the applicant spent in each country? Where do they vote? Have they taken advantage of government programs (e.g., national health coverage) in either country? Have they served in the military in either country?

Finally, in the past, a couple of students have been flagged for further questioning because of admitted use of prescribed anti-depressant drugs or mental health treatment – neither of which is a bar to employment, it should be noted. In such cases, you may be asked for permission for DOJ to contact your physician or counselor, who would be asked only the following single question: “Does the candidate have a diagnosis or treatment that could impair his/her judgment or reliability, particularly in the context of safeguarding classified national security information or special nuclear information or material? If so, please describe the nature of the condition and the extent and duration of the impairment or treatment.” If the clinician’s answer is “no”, no further information is required. DOJ will not review a candidate’s medical records, and will not ask about legally prescribed drugs.

Once again, if you have concerns about these or other issues at any stage of your application, you should speak to an OPIA adviser. We will keep your concerns in strict confidence, and can seek additional information for you if necessary. Once you have an offer from DOJ, if you still have a concern, you can also choose to call the Office of Attorney Recruitment and Management anonymously at 202-514-8900 and ask to speak to a background investigation attorney. Or, if you are comfortable doing so, you can send an email request to speak to an attorney to askOARM@usdoj.gov. Simply identify yourself as a law student or graduate with an offer, and run your concerns by the BI attorney; they will do their best to

assess whether you need to be concerned, and if there is anything you should do to mitigate the situation. If you have called or emailed OARM but have not heard back in a day or two, you may reach out directly to Monica Barsoum or one of her colleagues at OARM at 202-514-2878, or you may notify an OPIA adviser and we can assist.

Note about Diversity and Disability

If you want to request reasonable accommodations at DOJ, you should do so when you accept an offer and while you are going through your background check—don't wait to start your internship or job to request accommodations.

Note that there are disability “points of contact” within all the components at DOJ. If you have any questions about disabilities and working at DOJ, you should reach out to the disability “[points of contact](#)” directly.

There is also a [diversity ambassador program](#), with specific DOJ attorneys assigned to HLS. You should feel free to reach out to any of these ambassadors with any questions as well (not just those assigned to HLS, and not just questions related to diversity.)

Further Information

If after reviewing this Guide and the FAQs on the DOJ website you need additional assistance from DOJ, you can call during business hours (8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. eastern time): (202) 514-8900. Individuals with disabilities or special needs needing accommodations can leave a voice mail message at (202) 514-8900. The TDD number is (202) 616-2113.

URL Addresses of Hyperlinks Used in This Document

- The Office of Attorney Recruitment and Management (OARM) section of the DOJ website: <https://www.justice.gov/oarm>
- The DOJ organizational chart: <https://www.justice.gov/agencies/chart>
- Honors Eligibility webpage: <https://www.justice.gov/legal-careers/honors-program-eligibility>
- Online salary calculator: <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/2023/general-schedule-gs-salary-calculator/>
- Information on the GS and locality scales: <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/2023/general-schedule>
- Tenoso Indian Country Fellowship: <https://www.justice.gov/legal-careers/attorney-generals-indian-country-fellowship>
- “Honors Program Participating Components”: <https://www.justice.gov/legal-careers/honors-program-participating-components>
- SLIP Participating Components list: <https://www.justice.gov/legal-careers/slip-participating-components>
- SLIP Conditions of Employment webpage: <https://www.justice.gov/legal-careers/general-information-and-conditions-employment-hiring-process-policies-requirements>
- “Entry Level Attorneys”: <https://www.justice.gov/legal-careers/entry-level-attorneys>
- Summer Law Intern Program: <https://www.justice.gov/legal-careers/summer-law-intern-program>
- Honors Program eligibility page: <https://www.justice.gov/legal-careers/honors-program-eligibility>
- List of agencies: <https://www.justice.gov/agencies/list>
- Practice Area Chart: <https://www.justice.gov/oarm/images/practice.pdf>
- The DOJ website: <https://www.justice.gov/legal-careers/honors-program-participating-components>
- The Tenoso Indian Country Fellowship: <https://www.justice.gov/legal-careers/attorney-generals-indian-country-fellowship>
- Honors Program Participating Components: <https://www.justice.gov/legal-careers/honors-program-participating-components>
- Consult the Veterans’ Preference Guide: <https://www.fedshirevets.gov/job-seekers/veterans-preference/>
- Vet Guide: <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/veterans-services/vet-guide-for-hr-professionals/>
- Points of Contact: <https://www.justice.gov/legal-careers/disability-points-contact>
- Diversity ambassador program: <https://www.justice.gov/legal-careers/ambassadors>
- Instructions for submitting the 2 letters of recommendation: <https://www.justice.gov/oarm/antitrust-divisions-assistant-attorney-generals-honors-fellowship>
- Preview component interview requirements: <https://www.justice.gov/legal-careers/component-contacts-pre-interview-submissions-honors-program-summer-law-intern-program>
- Covering resume and cover letter review: <https://hls.harvard.edu/dept/opia/job-search-toolkit/>
- Attorney recruitment coordinators’ contact information: <https://www.justice.gov/legal-careers/component-contacts-pre-interview-submissions-honors-program-summer-law-intern-program>
- According to the DOJ website: <https://www.justice.gov/legal-careers/entry-level-and-experienced-attorneys-conditions-employment#c15>
- Volunteer Legal Intern Recruitment: <https://www.justice.gov/legal-careers/volunteer-legal-internships>

- Table of volunteer opportunities: <https://www.justice.gov/legal-careers/volunteer-legal-internships-0?position=2>
- DOJ’s list of U.S. Attorneys: <https://www.justice.gov/usao/us-attorneys-listing>
- The Heyman Fellowship Program website: <https://hls.harvard.edu/academics/fellowships-and-prizes/fellowships/heyman-fellowship-program/>
- From OPIA’s homepage: <https://hls.harvard.edu/bernard-koteen-office-of-public-interest-advising/>
- Gateway to PI Jobs: Fellowships: <https://hls.harvard.edu/bernard-koteen-office-of-public-interest-advising/gateway-to-pi-jobs-fellowships/>
- List of Heyman Fellows here: <https://hls.harvard.edu/academics/fellowships-and-prizes/fellowships/heyman-fellowship-program/current-and-past-heyman-fellows/>
- Amicus: <https://amicus.law.harvard.edu/>
- This report: <https://www.justice.gov/opr/page/file/1206586/download>
- Standard Forms: <https://www.opm.gov/forms/standard-forms/>
- OPM memorandum on assessing suitability for federal employment on the basis of marijuana use: <https://www.chcoc.gov/content/assessing-suitabilityfitness-applicants-or-appointees-basis-marijuana-use-maintaining-drug>
- Honors Program “Conditions of Employment”: <https://www.justice.gov/legal-careers/entry-level-and-experienced-attorneys-conditions-employment#a4>
- SLIP “Conditions of Employment”: <https://www.justice.gov/legal-careers/general-information-and-conditions-employment-hiring-process-policies-requirements#a6>
- Points of contact: <https://www.justice.gov/legal-careers/disability-points-contact>
- Diversity ambassador program: <https://www.justice.gov/legal-careers/ambassadors>