

H A R V A R D L A W R E V I E W

Competition changes in light of COVID-19

The 2020 writing competition will be held May 16 to May 23. This year's competition will be entirely digital and can be taken anywhere. We will replace our usual in-person pickup with online registration in advance of the competition. For current HLS students, we will post a registration form link on our website and email it to you; registration will ensure that you receive the competition but does not bind you to completing the competition. Prospective transfer students who would like to receive information about registering for the competition should email hlrwritingcompetition@gmail.com. Registration will open on April 23 and close on May 12 at 11:59 p.m.

We are cognizant that many people have already scheduled work and travel around the competition dates, and we wanted to avoid further disruptions. At the same time, we are very aware that COVID-19 has created challenging circumstances for many considering taking the competition. Given these concerns, we've made a number of changes to how we administer the competition and our accommodations policy.

In previous years, competition-takers spent a substantial amount of time on logistics involved with handling a paper competition: copying the competition packets, printing multiple versions, and hand-drawing boxes around every suggested edit on the subcite at the end of the competition week. This year, we have removed these logistical challenges to allow all competition-takers to focus solely on the substance of the writing competition. As compared to previous years, we expect students to effectively have up to a full extra day out of the seven total days to complete the substance of the competition

In light of COVID-19, we are also bolstering our accommodations policy to account for potential illnesses or other disruptions:

- If you fall ill in the week prior to the competition, please reach out to Jennifer Heath, a non-student HLR staff member, at hlrwritingcompetition@gmail.com or 617-495-7889. If you will be unable to start the competition at the scheduled start date due to illness or another medical emergency, we will work with you to ensure you can take the competition.
- If you fall ill during the competition, please reach out to Jennifer Heath, a non-student HLR staff member, at hlrwritingcompetition@gmail.com or 617-495-7889 as soon as

possible. We will endeavor to provide a reasonable amount of extra time to continue working on the competition once you are recovered.

- For other extreme and extenuating circumstances prior to or during the competition, please reach out to Jennifer Heath, a non-student HLR staff member, at hlrwritingcompetition@gmail.com or 617-495-7889. We will consider accommodations on a case-by-case basis.
- If you have children who would be in school or in some form of daycare but for COVID-19, please email Jennifer Heath, a non-student HLR staff member, at hlrwritingcompetition@gmail.com or 617-495-7889. We will consider accommodations on a case-by-case basis.

Each year, more than 1/3 of our editors are selected through the holistic but anonymous review process that takes into account all available information that an applicant submits, including the competition entry itself, grades, and responses on a holistic review questionnaire. The holistic review questionnaire gives competition-takers the option to provide their racial or ethnic identity, disability status, gender identity, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. The *Review* remains strongly committed to a diverse and inclusive membership. This year, we will be adding a space on our holistic review questionnaire for you to specifically explain difficulties related to taking the competition during COVID-19. This statement, like the rest of the questionnaire, will be considered by the Selection Committee only after grading of the competition has been completed. Statements will remain anonymous and will not be evaluated for quality of writing or editing, nor will they be assigned a numerical score.

We know this is a difficult time for everyone. Each year, we endeavor to create a competition that is challenging, rewarding, and, ultimately, reflective of the work we do as editors. It is always our goal to make a competition that is fair, so that every competition-taker has an equal opportunity to join *HLR*. We hope that the changes to the competition we have made this year will help us to meet that goal while addressing the unique circumstances we all face. Even in these difficult times, we are excited to invite a new volume of editors to join us.