

# **Disability Rights Scholarship Program**

**OPEN SOCIETY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS**

**Deadline for Applications: January 6, 2020**

The Disability Rights Scholarship Program offers awards to individuals from Czech Republic and select countries in Africa and Eurasia for a one-year Master of Laws (LLM) degree.

The program's objective is to provide disability rights advocates and lawyers with the necessary expertise to develop new legislation, jurisprudence, policy, research, and scholarship to harness the innovations and opportunities offered by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The CRPD, which entered into force in May 2008, presents a paradigm shift in the field of disability rights and provides a framework for promoting the inclusion and full participation of persons with disabilities in their communities.

## Participating Institutions

Fellows will be clustered at select institutions that demonstrate cutting-edge capacity for legal education in international disability rights, and that are interested in forming a consortium of schools dedicated to developing this field and deepening their own capacity with an international perspective. In nurturing such a network, the Program strives to encourage faculties to incorporate disability rights into existing human rights curricula and participate in collaboratively-designed workshops and research efforts in the field. Participating schools include:

- School of Law, National University of Ireland, Galway, Ireland
- Faculty of Law, McGill University, Canada
- School of Law, University of Leeds, UK
- College of Law, Syracuse University, USA
- Washington College of Law, American University, USA

## **Eligibility**

The Program does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, color, sex, religion, sexual orientation, or disability. Candidates with disabilities are particularly encouraged to apply. The competition is merit-based and open\* to those meeting the following criteria:

- be a citizen and legal resident of **Ethiopia, Lesotho, Sudan, South Sudan, Czech Republic, Georgia, or Ukraine** at the time of application;
- have work experience in the legal profession or advocacy focusing on human/disability rights;
- have an excellent academic record with a Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.; in exceptional circumstances, those without a LL.B but with substantial relevant experience may be considered)—degree must be awarded by the application deadline;
- have demonstrated leadership in the field of disability rights;
- be proficient in spoken and written English or French and able to meet university-designated minimum scores on standardized language tests;
- be able to participate in an intensive academic writing program in July–August 2020;
- be able to begin the graduate program in August or September 2020;
- be able to receive and maintain visa or study permit required by host country;
- demonstrate a clear commitment to return to home country to contribute to advancing the inclusion and full participation of persons with disabilities in their communities.

\*Employees of the Open Society Foundations and employees of local administering organizations (and their immediate family members), who are directly involved in the administration of scholarships are not eligible, nor are individuals receiving other Open Society Foundations-funded support during the fellowship period.

## Fellowship Terms

The fellowship provides:

- tuition and mandatory university fees;
- monthly stipend for room, board, and other living expenses;
- program-related travel;
- accident and health insurance during the program;
- funds for educational materials and professional development;
- all costs associated with pre-academic summer program and annual conference;
- support for students with disabilities to obtain reasonable accommodations necessary for participating in the program of study.

The fellowship does NOT provide funding for dependent family members.

## Selection

Competition is merit based, and selection is made on the basis of academic excellence, professional aptitude, leadership potential, and proven commitment to work in the field of disability rights in the home country. Selection proceeds as follows:

**Preliminary Selection and Testing:** Applications are first reviewed by representatives from the regional program administration, host university consortium, and Open Society Foundations. Applicants chosen to continue in the competition as semifinalists are required to take an official TOEFL or IELTS, the costs of which are covered by the program. Most participating universities require a minimum TOEFL of 90-100 (Internet-based exam) or IELTS of 6.5.

All applicants should research local options for TOEFL or IELTS testing to ensure results are available by February 2020. Those with disabilities should contact the testing agency as early as possible to make arrangements for any necessary accommodations during testing.

**Interviews and Final Selection:** Semifinalists are interviewed by representatives from the Open Society Foundations, host universities, and other experts. The interview panel then recommends candidates for finalist status and subsequent university placement based on the quality of the written application, interview evaluations, and standardized test results.

## University Placement

Fellows are matched with universities according to their chosen area of specialization, academic profile, and professional aspirations. Final decisions concerning host university placement are made by the program selection committee, which includes university admissions staff and faculty, although finalists may be asked their preference.

**Visa application:** Upon receiving the university placements, students are responsible for securing required visas for both the summer school and for the host university.

## Participant Responsibilities

**Pre-Academic Summer Program:** Grantees are required to participate in a four-week intensive pre-program (location to be determined) before starting study at host universities in July or August 2020. The program consists of classes in academic writing, social science, and humanities-based seminars. Immediately after the summer program, finalists attend a pre-departure orientation.

**Fellowship:** Fellows must uphold the academic standards of the host institution and undertake full-time study for the program's duration. Failure to maintain academic and professional standards as defined by the host university may result in dismissal from the program. Failure to follow the laws governing foreign students in the host country will result in dismissal from the program.

## How to Apply

Applicants are encouraged to apply online. To apply online please [click here](#) to register, and then follow the instructions.

If you are unable to apply online, the full application form (available here: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/grants/disability-rights-scholarship-program>, or from the regional coordinators listed below) and all supporting documents must be submitted via email by the deadline to the appropriate contact below.

Reference letters should be on official letterhead and submitted by the recommender via e-mail directly to the regional coordinator (address below) by the deadline.

## Further Inquiries

Please contact one of the Regional Coordinators with further questions about the program or the application process.

## **Deadline**

Completed application forms and all necessary accompanying documents, along with a copy of your passport, must be submitted online or (if unable to access the application portal) to the appropriate Regional Coordinator by **January 6, 2020**.

## **Regional Coordinators for Disability Rights Scholarship Program**

**Residents of Ethiopia, Lesotho, Sudan, South Sudan:**

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**Residents of Czech Republic, Georgia, or Ukraine:**

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