



Global Essay Competition

From Foundations to Frontiers: UNCITRAL's Role in Shaping Tomorrow's Trade Law

Background

In 2026, the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) marks its 60th anniversary - six decades of shaping the rules that underpin global commerce. This milestone invites not only reflection on UNCITRAL's achievements in harmonizing and modernizing international trade law, but also a forward-looking inquiry into how UNCITRAL can steer an increasingly complex and dynamic global trade landscape.

As part of the UNCITRAL 60 celebratory events, the UNCITRAL secretariat is launching a global essay competition open to all researchers with an interest in international trade law and related disciplines.

The essay competition aims to:

- Engage researchers in shaping debates on the future direction of international trade law;
- Promote interdisciplinary thinking and innovative approaches to legal development;
- Strengthen global awareness of UNCITRAL's work; and
- Foster inclusive participation across diverse legal systems, regions, and academic traditions.

Theme

The global essay competition under the theme "*From Foundations to Frontiers: UNCITRAL's Role in Shaping Tomorrow's Trade Law*" invites original research and thought-provoking contributions that address:

- The social and economic impact of UNCITRAL texts, assessing their role in facilitating international trade and promoting legal certainty across jurisdictions.
- Innovative and forward-looking ideas on the future of international trade law, exploring how UNCITRAL can continue to serve as a solution-oriented, inclusive, and responsive forum in an evolving global context.

Interdisciplinary perspectives that integrate legal analysis with insights from economics, technology, and other relevant disciplines to address emerging trends and challenges are encouraged.

Eligibility and Submission Requirements

- The competition is open to researchers from all disciplines with an interest in international trade law. Submissions must be endorsed by a university or recognized research institution.
- Submissions may be made in any of the six official languages of the United Nations (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish) and should not exceed 10,000 words. Submissions should be sent to the UNCITRAL secretariat by email (uncitral60@un.org) under the subject line “Global Essay Competition” before **31 December 2026**.

Evaluation and Awards

- Essays will be evaluated by a distinguished panel composed of current and former members of the UNCITRAL secretariat, as well as eminent professors with recognized expertise in international trade law.
- The top ten winning authors—ideally two from each regional group—will be invited to present their essays during the UNCITRAL Commission session in Vienna in June/July 2027. Those essays will be published as part of UNCITRAL 60 documentation. Winners will also be offered a visiting scholarship at the UNCITRAL secretariat.

Contact

For further information, please contact: uncitral60@un.org



United Nations
Commission on International Trade Law



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From Foundations to Frontiers: UNCITRAL's Role in Shaping Tomorrow's Trade Law

Frequently Asked Questions

Eligibility & Endorsement

1. Is the essay competition open to young students?

The competition is open to researchers at all career stages. For students, only those who are currently enrolled in, or have completed, a research-focused master's or Ph.D programme in law will be eligible.

2. What form should endorsement by universities and research institutions take?

Official communication evidencing endorsement by the university or institution.

3. Can a single university or institution endorse multiple submissions from different researchers?

Yes, there is no limit on the number of submissions a university or institution may endorse.

4. What qualifies as a "recognized research institution"?

Any research institution legally established in its home jurisdiction.

Co-authorship

5. Are joint submissions permitted, and if so, is there a maximum number of co-authors?

Joint submissions are permitted and there is no limit on the maximum number of co-authors. However, please note that if a winning essay has multiple authors, all co-authors will be invited to present the essay at the UNCITRAL Commission session in 2027, but travel support will be provided for only one author.

6. Where co-authors are from different universities or institutions, which university or institution provides the endorsement — one of them or all of them?

A single institutional endorsement is sufficient, regardless of how many institutions the co-authors are affiliated with.

Originality

7. Do submissions need to be unpublished at the time of submission?

Both published and unpublished works are admissible.

Word limits & Citation style

8. Is an abstract required, and if so, is it counted within the word count?

Submissions (up to 10,000 words) may be made in any of the six official languages of the United Nations (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish). An abstract in English or French (up to 300 words) is required and is excluded from the word count. Both the submission and the abstract must be provided in Microsoft Word format.

9. Does the 10,000-word limit include footnotes and the bibliography?

The 10,000-word limit applies to body text and footnotes/endnotes. The bibliography is excluded from the word count.

10. What citation style should be followed?

Editorial guidelines for footnotes and other references in the United Nations Editorial Manuel (available [here](#)).

Copyright

11. What copyright arrangements apply to winning essays published as part of UNCITRAL 60 documentation?

Authors retain copyright in their essays. Winning authors are expected to grant UNCITRAL a license by signing a form to publish their essay as part of UNCITRAL 60 documentation.

Others

12. What can visiting scholars expect during their time at the UNCITRAL secretariat?

Winning authors will be offered a visiting scholarship at the UNCITRAL secretariat, in accordance with applicable United Nations rules and regulations.

