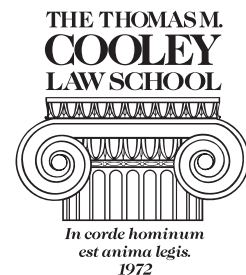




# Guide for International Students



# **Guide for International Law Students Attending the Thomas M. Cooley Law School**

The Thomas M. Cooley Law School is an independent and private college of law, fully accredited by the American Bar Association (ABA) and offers classes across Michigan. Cooley law students may complete their Juris Doctor program and attain their law degrees at any one of Cooley's four locations throughout Michigan: Auburn Hills, Lansing, Grand Rapids, and Ann Arbor. Founded in 1972, Cooley has the largest Juris Doctor program in the United States. A J.D. is required to practice law in most states in the United States, as opposed to the LL.B. degree which is the primary law degree required to practice law in common law jurisdictions, such as Canada and England. These degrees differ from an LL.M., which is a Master of Law.

Cooley's Juris Doctor Program offers a strong academic curriculum that prepares students for the bar examination. Equally important, Cooley offers numerous opportunities for students to learn the practical skills of being an attorney. One such example is the extensive externship programs administered by Cooley. Currently, there are over 1,400 pre-established, placement sites where students may gain practical legal experience under the tutelage of an attorney.

Cooley also offers in-house clinical programs: Sixty Plus, Inc., Elder Law Clinic, and Innocence Project. Cooley is also known for flexible scheduling options that make attaining a legal education possible for both traditional and non-traditional students. Finally, Cooley offers a generous honors scholarship program that provides more students access to a legal education. These are but a few highlights of what Cooley offers and are some of the reasons why students select Cooley for their legal education. Ghanaian citizen and Cooley alumnus, Eric Alifo, had this to say about his experience:

“Cooley virtually seeks students from all over the world and quickly blends them in its rich tradition of diversity. I was discovered far away in Ghana by Cooley's vibrant admission staff when I registered to take the LSAT. I had not known about Michigan and Cooley Law School, but the message was clear to me: ‘If you are contemplating finding a law school in the U.S., consider Cooley Law School’. The admission requirement and the process is very transparent, liberal, and international student-friendly. Once you enroll at Cooley, you will find students from every continent of the world, and you will feel at home while pursuing your academic goals.”

## **Diversity at Cooley**

Cooley's Juris Doctor Program is the largest in the nation and has a student body of over 3,700 with students coming from every state in the nation and dozens of countries throughout the world. Over 70 percent of its students come from outside of Michigan, and is regarded as the most diverse law school in the United States. Cooley has a diverse and international student body. In an article in Pre-Law magazine, “How to find Great Schools for Minorities & Women,” Thomas M. Cooley Law School is “the runaway leader” when it comes to promoting and making gender and ethnic diversity a priority.

At Cooley, we realize that the law does not exist in a vacuum and that the legal system shapes our society through attorneys. Cooley's mission has always been to prepare students for entry into the legal profession through an integrated program with practical legal scholarship as its guiding principle and focus. Cooley provides the knowledge, skills, and ethics needed to be a success in the field of law and a valuable member of society. From the sharing of different perspectives in the classroom to the presence of culturally-oriented student organizations, Cooley benefits from its diverse population and its diverse population benefits from Cooley.

## Applying to Cooley

Cooley uses a straight-forward formula to determine eligibility. The Admissions Office takes an applicant's cumulative undergraduate grade point average (UGPA) as evaluated by the Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS) or World Education Services (WES) Course-by-Course Evaluation, multiplies it by 15, and adds the resulting number to the candidate's highest LSAT score from within the last five years. This is the Cooley Admissions Index. A minimum Admissions Index for acceptance at Cooley is established yearly, as is a minimum LSAT score. Please refer to [www.cooley.edu/admissions](http://www.cooley.edu/admissions) for the most current minimum Cooley Admissions Index and minimum LSAT score.

Cooley Law School does **not** require foreign-educated applicants to utilize the JDCAS service provided by the Law School Admission Council (LSAC). The JDCAS does **not** provide the cumulative undergraduate grade point average that Cooley needs in order to calculate the Cooley Admissions Index.

If LSDAS **will not** evaluate an applicant's college/university transcript(s), the applicant must register for "LSAT Only" through LSAC. The applicant must have his or her undergraduate and graduate transcript(s) sent to World Education Services, Inc. (WES) for a complete **course-by-course** evaluation. This evaluation identifies each diploma or certificate and determines its U.S. equivalency. In addition, the evaluation provides all post-secondary study in terms of U.S. semester credits, grade equivalents and a Grade Point Average (GPA) on a 4.0 scale. For more information, please visit [www.WES.org](http://www.WES.org).

If LSDAS **will** evaluate an applicant's college/university transcript(s), the applicant will need to pay for and take the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) but will not need to have the transcripts sent to WES. Instead, the applicant must send the transcripts to LSDAS at LSAC. For more information, please contact LSDAS at 215-968-1001 or visit their website at [www.LSAC.org](http://www.LSAC.org).

## **UGPA x 15 + Highest LSAT = Cooley Admissions Index**

Meeting the minimum Cooley Admissions Index and minimum LSAT score may make an applicant eligible for acceptance into the JD program; however, the Faculty Admissions Committee may deny the applicant for character & fitness reasons. Please go to Cooley's Admission section on the Cooley's Website at [www.cooley.edu/admissions](http://www.cooley.edu/admissions) for the most up-to-date information regarding regular and alternative admission requirements to Cooley Law School.

### **Preparing to Matriculate at Cooley**

Once accepted to Cooley, the student must obtain a valid immigration status to study in Michigan. International students are classified under F1 status and are governed by regulations of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS), a branch of the United States Department of Homeland Security. Immigration laws require that an international student obtain I-20 approval from the school the student plans to attend in order to enter the United States. Before Cooley issues an I-20, the student must provide Cooley with a financial statement. This statement must show that the student is able to financially support himself or herself during his or her stay in the United States. In order to maintain a valid visa status, the student must be currently enrolled in the institution he or she is attending.

To obtain an I-20 after the student has been offered admission to Cooley Law School, the student must submit the following to Cooley's Admissions Office:

1. The completed and signed Intent to Enroll Form;
2. The \$25.00 non-refundable enrollment fee (in U.S. dollars);
3. The \$500.00 tuition deposit (in U.S. dollars);
4. The completed request for an I-20 or an International Student Transfer Form (if the student is currently attending a U.S. school); and
5. Proof of financial ability to support oneself while attending Cooley (signed letter from a bank certifying available funds, student loan approval letter(s), or a similar document to verify the student's financial status).

### **Issuance of the I-20 by the Division of Enrollment and Student Services**

Once the student provides Cooley with the above documents, the student will be issued an I-20, which the student is required to take to the U.S. Embassy in his or her country of residency in order to request a Student Visa. Cooley advises that the students consult with their local U.S. Embassy regarding the process for being issued a Student Visa as such processes could vary based on the country. Also, Cooley advises that the student request his or her I-20 as early as possible from Cooley, as it usually takes a couple of months for the student to set up a Student Visa interview at his or her local U.S. Embassy. If a request is made early and required

documents submitted, students would be able to set up an appointment at their local U.S. Embassy and have a Student Visa issued before the classes start. This will also give students enough time to arrive on campus and secure housing and other essential needs.

## **SEVIS Maintenance Fee**

The Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) aids in the maintenance of international student records at Cooley and all other institutions of higher education in the U.S. The United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) instituted a one time maintenance fee of \$200.00, which is subject to change, to be paid by each incoming international student. The USCIS requires that the student complete form I-901, after the student is issued an I-20. This fee is used to maintain the student's SEVIS file. Upon receiving an I-20 from Cooley Law School, the student will receive instructions regarding payment of the fee and completing form I-901 online.

## **Maintaining Your Student Status**

A student's opportunities for employment, school transfers, and program changes depend on the student maintaining his or her lawful status. To maintain F1 status, the student must:

1. Remain enrolled full-time at Cooley (6 credits per term is considered full-time)
2. Hold a current I-20
3. Maintain a current passport
4. If working, have the appropriate authorization for employment
5. Have your I-20 endorsed each year by the Division of Enrollment and Student Services
6. If you change your permanent local address, you must update your information with the Division of Enrollment and Student Services
7. If you decide to take a term off, you must inform the Division of Enrollment and Student Services of your decision

Once the student arrives on campus, the student is advised to keep the I-20 in a safe place, as it has to be endorsed by the Coordinator of Student Services and Diversity Programs each year indicating that the student is currently enrolled at Cooley. It will also be used for record transfers and employment recommendations.

If a student's visa expires while they are attending Cooley, their status is still current as long as his or her I-20 is valid. The key document is the I-20. The student is however advised to renew their visa if they visit their home country while enrolled at Cooley. Cooley will issue a letter confirming the student's current enrollment and good standing to assist in expediting the visa renewal process, if requested by the student.

A valid I-20 is either:

1. A previously issued I-20 (Student Copy) endorsed on the back by the Coordinator of Student Services and Diversity Programs for travel within the current academic year; or
2. A new I-20 issued by the Division of Enrollment and Student Services.

There are no special documents needed for travel within the United States. However, it is recommended that a student have his or her valid I-20 and passport in case any problems arise.

## FINANCIAL RESOURCES

### Student Loans

A legal education is one that requires substantial financing. An international student is **not** eligible for federal loans and must rely on his or her personal funds, or a private lender or bank. Most lenders or banks in the U.S. require a co-signer who is established in the U.S. and is either a U.S. citizen or have Permanent Resident status. International students are advised to make sure they have good financial backing to avoid any financial problems while attending Cooley. Before and after the student arrives on campus, the Financial Aid Office can assist the student to get further information or answer any questions the student may have about financing his or her legal education.

Below is a list of U.S. lenders or banks that provide student loans. International students are advised to contact these agencies regarding specific questions about their various loan programs.

Access Group-Comprehensive Loan

1800-282-1550

[www.accessgroup.org](http://www.accessgroup.org)

Citibank-Citiassist Loan

1800-967-2400

[www.studentloan.com](http://www.studentloan.com)

Wachovia Bank

1888-296-4332

[www.wachovia.com](http://www.wachovia.com)

Edamerica

1866-398-7726

[www.edamerica.net](http://www.edamerica.net)

International Education Finance Corporation

1888-296-4332

[www.iefc.com](http://www.iefc.com)

## Honors Scholarships

Cooley Law School offers one of the most generous scholarship programs among law schools in the U.S. The Honors Scholarship is awarded based on the student's LSAT or Cooley Admissions Index score. Scholarships can range from 25 to 100 percent tuition.

Below is the Honors Scholarship rate based on a student's Admissions Index or LSAT score. *If an applicant qualifies in two ways, the highest will determine the scholarship.*

<b>INDEX*</b>	<b>HONORS SCHOLARSHIP*</b>
215+	100%
210-214	75%
205-209	50%
195-204	25%

<b>LSAT SCORE*</b>	<b>HONORS SCHOLARSHIP*</b>
163+	100%
158-162	75%
153-157	50%
149-152	25%

\* Subject to Change

There are also some need-based and academic scholarships offered by Cooley and outside organizations for enrolled students. Information on these scholarships is updated frequently and available at the Division of Enrollment and Student Services.

## Employment at Cooley

International students may work on-campus a maximum of 20 hours per week while taking classes and may work full-time during term breaks or if the student takes a term off. While USCIS regulations automatically authorize a student in lawful F1 status to work at his or her educational institution, the student must also seek permission from the Division of Enrollment and Student Services. Please check with the Office of Student Services for school requirements and procedures governing the authorization of employment at Cooley. As there is no guarantee of employment at Cooley, income from desired employment at Cooley should not be included in the proof of financial ability while attending Cooley that is submitted to the Division of Enrollment and Student Services and Immigration Officials. Further, Cooley generally does not employ first-term students.

## **Employment Based on Economic Hardship**

If employment opportunities are not available or insufficient, a student may apply for permission to work outside of Cooley. However, the student must demonstrate economic hardship caused by unforeseen circumstances beyond his or her control. The student will be limited to 20 hours of employment per week while school is in session and full-time during term breaks or if the student takes a term off. Also, the student needs to have been currently enrolled for at least one full academic year at Cooley. Acceptable reasons for applications are:

1. Loss of financial aid or on-campus employment without fault on the student's part
2. Substantial fluctuations in the value of currency or exchange rate, or
3. Medical bills or other unexpected changes in the financial condition of the student's source of support.

## **Curricular Practical Training (CPT)**

Work experience is an important part of a law school program and may be considered Curricular Practical Training (CPT). Work experience includes alternate work-study programs, internships, cooperative education programs, and practicum experiences. The practical training must be required for the student's program, or the student must be enrolled in an official practicum course where the student will receive academic credits for work experience.

At Cooley, we have a required externship program that qualifies as Curricular Practical Training. The student must request approval for their externship from the Division of Enrollment and Student Services before the student can begin the externship. This request must be made before the student begins the Curricular Practical Training (Externship) program.

## **Optional Practical Training (OPT)**

International students may be eligible for Optional Practical Training (OPT). Through this program, the student may be employed in a full-time or part-time job if it directly relates to the study of law. The program allows for a period of up to 12 months of work at a full-time or part-time position in a field directly related to the student's course of study. Employment may take place at any location in the United States. Many students also choose to use 12 consecutive months after they have completed their studies for their OPT. A student cannot be approved for OPT until the student has completed one full academic year in school but can apply for an OPT 90 days before the one full academic year requirement.

If the student wishes to participate in an Optional Practical Training program after completing his or her coursework, the student must submit the application to the Division of Enrollment and Student Services before the student completes his or her coursework for Cooley's Juris Doctor Program. A student can also apply for OPT up to 60 days after they complete their program. Please note that the date when the student completes his or her coursework is the student's date of graduation. If the Division of Enrollment and Student Services allows the student to

participate in practical training and the student's application is approved by the USCIS, the student will receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD)<sup>1</sup> that will serve as the student's authorization card for his or her OPT.

This process is finalized when the student receives an EAD card from the USCIS. The estimated time for USCIS to process an OPT application is between 30 to 90 days, and the student is advised to apply for an OPT at least a term before the student is due to start his or her OPT.

Students may apply and be authorized for OPT without securing employment at the time of their applications. Students approved for OPT must not be unemployed for more the 3 consecutive months during their OPT. Volunteer work related to their program of study may be used to satisfy this requirement. It is **illegal** to start work before the student receives the EAD card. When the student receives the card, the student is now authorized to work during the period indicated on the EAD card. The USCIS must receive the student's application during the required application period in order for the student to begin his or her OPT on the scheduled date.

## **Driver's License**

Applications for driver's license can be filed at the local secretary of state office. They will require certain documents from you in order to process your application. If you already have an international driver's license in a foreign language and would like to have a U.S driver's license issued based on your existing license, your current license may have to be translated to English by a certified translator. Note that your international license has to be current. The Enrollment and Student Services office can provide you more information regarding this process.

## **Social Security Number**

Students can apply for a social security number at the local social security office. Usually, a number is provided for employment purposes and the student will be required to provide certain documents from the school and their employer as part of their application packet. The enrollment and student services office can provide you more information regarding this process.

## **Practicing in the United States**

For students who want to remain and practice in the United States, please note that certain state bar associations have citizenship requirements and will not license these students to practice if they do not meet their requirements. Students must contact each state bar for requirements to practice in that state. Also, please note that if a student wishes to remain in the United States to practice, the student must request a Green Card or other forms of legal residency from the USCIS.

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<sup>1</sup> The EAD is a small laminated card, similar to a driver's license. You may not begin work until you receive it, and you must stop working by the expiration date indicated. However, you are allowed 60 more days in the U.S. in F-1 status after that termination date.

## Cooley's Study Abroad & Toronto Programs

Cooley offers its students the unique opportunity to study law in the United States, along with providing an excellent learning environment. Cooley hosts various study abroad programs in Toronto, Australia, and New Zealand. Also, Cooley has partnerships with various U.S. law schools in order to provide students with the opportunity to study all over the world.

Cooley's Toronto program in the summer is held at the University of St. Michael's College at the University of Toronto. The Toronto program typically starts from mid-May to the end of June. The timing of this program often allows students to add another six-week, Cooley-approved, study abroad program. Students that want to participate in any of the programs must have earned 27 credits and must have a cumulative GPA of at least 2.25. For more information, please contact the Department of International, Graduate, and Extended Programs at [foreignstudy@cooley.edu](mailto:foreignstudy@cooley.edu) or (517) 371-5140.

## Housing

There are various housing options available to students, including renting a house or an apartment, either alone or with a roommate. Students are responsible for securing their housing needs, as Cooley does not provide any form of on-campus housing, except at our Auburn Hills campus, which is provided through Oakland University. For more information on-campus housing at our Oakland University campus, please contact Ms. Val Schnable, Coordinator of Enrollment and Student Services, by telephone at (248) 370-3638 or via email at [schnabl@cooley.edu](mailto:schnabl@cooley.edu).

Once accepted, the student will be granted access to the Cooley Portal Page, which has current listings on apartments and houses for rent, and a roommate list for students who are seeking a roommate(s).

## Health Insurance

There are several health insurance providers that offer health insurance plans for students. The Student Bar Association offers a health insurance plan for Cooley students and their families. Please contact the Student Bar Association Office at your campus or checkout the SBA page on the Cooley portal for more information on available plans. Also, the Ingham County Health Department offers a health plan based on the applicant's income. This plan is targeted at low income individuals and families who reside in Ingham County which covers the Cities of Lansing and East Lansing.

## Disability

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Cooley offers reasonable accommodation to disabled students who meet the requirements of the ADA and Cooley's

Disability Policy. Disabilities include, but are not limited to, physical, learning, personal injury, or mental illness.

Further information regarding Cooley's Disability Policy can be obtained from the Division of Enrollment and Student Services or the Student section of the Cooley portal.

## Contact Information

For more information about the Thomas M. Cooley Law School, or if you have more questions regarding admissions to the law school as an international student, please feel free to contact us by telephone at (517) 371-5140 ext. 2244 or 2245 or by e-mail at [admissions@cooley.edu](mailto:admissions@cooley.edu).

1. For additional information on **Visas, International Student Employment, Disability Services, and Scholarships**, contact the Division of Enrollment Student Services.

**Lansing Students:** Goldie Adele by e-mail [Adeleg@cooley.edu](mailto:Adeleg@cooley.edu) or ext. 2843

**Auburn Hills Students:** Angela Tyszka by e-mail [Tyszkaa@cooley.edu](mailto:Tyszkaa@cooley.edu) or ext. 7787

**Grand Rapids Students:** Julie Renbarger by e-mail [Renbargj@cooley.edu](mailto:Renbargj@cooley.edu) or ext. 6731

**Ann Arbor Students:** Allen Chung by e-mail [Chunga@cooley.edu](mailto:Chunga@cooley.edu) or ext. 8788

2. For additional information on **Employment Opportunities in the United States**

**Lansing Students:** Contact the Office of Career and Professional Development by telephone at (517) 371-5140 ext. 4111 or by e-mail [CSO@cooley.edu](mailto:CSO@cooley.edu).

**Auburn Hills Students:** Lisa Fadler at [Fadlerl@cooley.edu](mailto:Fadlerl@cooley.edu) or ext 7776

**Grand Rapids:** Danielle Hall at [Halldan@cooley.edu](mailto:Halldan@cooley.edu) or ext. 6986

3. For additional information on **Financial Aid and Loans**

**Lansing Students:** Contact the Office of Financial Aid by telephone at (517) 371-5140 ext 2210 or by e-mail at [Finaid@cooley.edu](mailto:Finaid@cooley.edu)

**Grand Rapids Students:** Julie Renbarger by e-mail [Renbargj@cooley.edu](mailto:Renbargj@cooley.edu) or ext. 6731

**Auburn Hills Students:** Angela Tyszka by e-mail [Tyszkaa@cooley.edu](mailto:Tyszkaa@cooley.edu) or ext. 7787

4. For additional information on **Health Insurance and other Student Health Services**

**Lansing Students:** Contact the Student Bar Association Office by telephone at

(517) 371-5140 ext. 4403 or by e-mail [SBA@cooley.edu](mailto:SBA@cooley.edu)

**Grand Rapids Students:** (616) 301-6800 x6914 or by e-mail [SBA-GR@cooley.edu](mailto:SBA-GR@cooley.edu)

**Auburn Hills Students:** (248) 751-7800

**Ann Arbor Students:** Allen Chung by e-mail [Chunga@cooley.edu](mailto:Chunga@cooley.edu) or ext. 8788

**Addresses:**

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**NOTES:**