

CAL Undergraduate Research Scholarships Scheme 2017
Project Proposal Form

Project Proposer/s:	Ben Warwick
School/Dept:	Birmingham Law School
Project Title:	Diversity of Input at the UN Human Rights Bodies
Project Summary	
<p>The supervision of the international human rights treaties is undertaken by expert committees and is heavily supported by the input of civil society 'parallel' reports. The combination of expertise brought by the independent members of the committees and the information brought to the process by civil society have together been seen as a firm basis for assessing the human rights progress and violations of governments.</p> <p>However, there has been no sustained attention to the sources of the expertise and the information relied upon. This project aims to empirically interrogate the diversity (or lack thereof) that underpins these processes. It relies on the wealth of publically available records of the civil society submissions to these United Nations bodies.</p> <p>A number of working hypotheses are as follows: that there is significantly greater civil society input into the examination of 'Global North' countries; that a 'proxy' civil society made up of international NGOs assists in the examination of 'Global South' countries; and that 'single issue' NGOs make up the majority of submissions to the treaty bodies. If shown, each of these hypotheses has far reaching analytical and practical implications.</p> <p>Establishing the basis for the treaty bodies' practice will allow the development of a richer picture of their substantive contributions. It will also help move forward the stagnant debates on treaty body reform by providing new areas of interest. The project will also advance discussions on the role and importance of representativeness in the human rights work of the UN.</p>	
What the researcher will do	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Using the UN database of documents, gather and input an original data set on the categories of civil society participant in the processes of two UN human rights bodies and the mode of their participation (Weeks 1-4) 2) Undertake a preliminary analysis of key trends, including on geographic diversity, topic focus and organisation type (Week 5) 	
Skills required by the Scholarship holder	
<p>Legal skills, preferably with knowledge of the international human rights organs.</p> <p>Ability to work independently.</p> <p>Proficiency with Microsoft Excel.</p> <p>Motivation, persistence, and consistency.</p>	
How will your Project benefit the Scholarship holder?	
<p>I have previously supervised a group of nine UG researchers (in Durham University) to carry out research and to produce a significant report on another human rights issue. This report was ultimately one of the contributing factors in a UN committee finding that the UK was in breach of its international legal obligations. Those researchers found that that project benefited their studies, built connections and confidence, and shaped career aspirations.</p> <p>This project touches on a number of areas of broad interest that will mean that the student researcher: a) can develop their skill set, and gain a fuller understanding of this area of law; b) will improve their career prospects through evidencing a sustained commitment to investigating a legal problem; c) will be named and acknowledged in outputs from the project; d) will feel better integrated into the academic community and understand better the workings of the research process.</p>	
How will the Scholarship benefit your Project?	
<p>This project builds on a pilot data set completed in August 2016 in respect of one of the human rights bodies (the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights). This data, while on its own providing a number of insights, requires comparator data from the two other bodies which will be the focus of the scholarship holder (the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on the Rights of the Child). This data will form the basis of an article to be submitted to <i>Human Rights Law Review</i> in late 2017 (and which is intended to be REF returnable). I also intend to discuss with the leading think-tank at the UN in Geneva – the <i>Universal Rights Group</i> – the possibility of using the data and the analysis as the basis of one of their highly impactful Policy Report.</p>	