

Law Letter of Recommendation

To the attention of the Admissions Committee:

I am writing to recommend my former student XXX for admission to your Graduate Program.

My contact with XXX work began when she invited me to be a member of the board of examiners of her final paper, which she submitted at the conclusion of her undergraduate studies in Law. Unlike other students, she handed me her final paper at the time she invited me, which was well before the term given to students to conclude their work. This is a rather unusual gesture among undergraduate students, and in my opinion it shows her great sense of responsibility and her diligence in fulfilling commitments.

For her final paper, XXX researched and wrote a comparative study of the treatment given by Brazil, Holland and Portugal to the use and trade of cannabis. She invited me to be part of the board of examiners because the topic of drugs is my main focus of study at the College of Law of the University of Brasilia. My PhD work is about the secondary criminalization of drug traffic in the great Brasilia region, Distrito Federal; this study provided the theoretical and methodological parameters for XXX final paper. Because of my studies on drugs, I can state that the high quality of Gabriella's work stood out among many studies that I have analyzed so far.

Her final paper is organized in three parts. The first section presents the history of the criminalization process as well as the War on Drugs. To make this analysis, XXX used mostly English language references, which demonstrates her fluency in that foreign language.

The second part presents a detailed comparative analysis of the legislation and public policies regarding cannabis in Brazil, Portugal, and Holland. To achieve this comprehensive analysis, she had to meticulously research domestic standards and policies of each country and become familiar with a wide range of studies that had already been made on this subject. The resulting paper shows her skill in carrying out research and in making a critical analysis of documents. It also underlines her concern with the precision of data; she resorted to information issued by the governments of the respective countries whenever any official data were mentioned. It is clear that, despite the difficulties related to this type of research, Gabriella managed to submit trustworthy references that made her work solid and coherent.

The last section presents a critical reflection on the current decriminalization policy adopted by Brazil, and asks if the decriminalization options adopted by Portugal and Holland could be alternatives to the Brazilian reality. At this stage of her research, XXX was able to show a keen analytical sense and to apply the methodological rules used in comparative studies to produce consistent results. While her analysis highlighted the limitations arising from the major differences among the countries considered, it also identified applications that Brazil had learned from the Portuguese and Dutch models. In addition, when emphasizing the need for objective standards to differentiate between users and dealers, she expressed a mature reflection on the Brazilian social reality; that is, she took into consideration the current lack of definition that leads poor black men to always be considered dealers, whereas white men carrying the same amount of drugs are simply considered users. Also, when problematizing policies of decriminalization of drugs before international conventions signed by Brazil, XXX has shown her capacity for dealing with complex themes, mentioning the various elements that should be considered in a possible decriminalization of cannabis in Brazil.

To sum up: XXX final paper is innovative, clear and concise, marked by complex analyses, with a coherent development section and conclusions that are in line with the arguments presented throughout the text. Considering the paper that she wrote and the way in which she presented it, I am confident that XXX can responsibly fulfill all commitments that she assumes. She is able to present innovative approaches in a coherent way and is attuned to socially relevant themes. Her paper demonstrates her skill at carrying out complex research and her ability to relate the study of Law to concrete social change, which is necessary for the construction of a less inequitable society.

XXX also took my course "Criminal Procedural Law 2", achieving the top grade. For this subject, students were asked to engage in two activities: a simulated jury and the presentation of a paper. At the simulated jury, XXX was a member of the group who performed as the defense for the defendant. For the paper, her group presented a study of the role of evidence in criminal procedure. I must underline that, because she was in her last semester, XXX was entitled to take this course as a 'tutor', i.e., she could attend two subject-courses at the same time, which means that her occasional absences were accredited, but she nonetheless had a commitment to submit all required papers, which were expected to be of the highest quality. Despite this prerogative, XXX attended almost every class. In addition, as a way of compensating for her few absences, she assumed an essential role in her group's work, coordinating the group's members and activities and showing not only leadership skills but – once again – her great sense of responsibility toward the commitments that she undertook.

I must also emphasize XXX outstanding academic record: out of the 51 subjects that she took throughout her undergraduate studies in Law, she attained the highest grade in 40 of them. Her background in International Relations is also worth mentioning; she had the highest grade in most classes in this subject that she took. Her outstanding academic record shows her ability as a scholar and her high level of dedication.

In light of the information presented above, I can strongly recommend XXX as a candidate for admission to your Graduate Program. Because of her final paper and because of her academic performance in the subject that I teach, I believe she will be an excellent student in the program. She is persistent, has initiative and is proactive, and possesses the skills necessary to develop complex studies on relevant and current themes – all characteristics that will lead her to success as a graduate student.

Thank you for your kind attention to this letter. I am available to provide any further information that may be necessary.

Sincerely,