



# Boston College Pre-Law Advising Handbook

---

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	1
Exploring Your Interest in Law	2
Preparing for Law School	5
Investigating Schools and Programs	7
Understanding Admissions Criteria	11
Applying to Law School	13
LSAT	13
CAS	15
The Application	17
Personal Statements	17
Letters of Recommendation	18
Dean's Certifications	19
Filing Your Applications	20
Taking Time Off	21
Considering Admissions Decisions	22
Financing Law School	24
Legal Career Checklist	29
Legal Career Resources	30

## Acknowledgements

This Handbook was prepared with the assistance of NAPLA, and with their permission to restructure and distribute this document to students. Special thanks to Pre-Law Services at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign for letting Boston College utilize portions of their updated version of the guidebook.

The *NAPLA Pre-Law Guide* is based on Cornell University's *Legal Careers Guide*, which was used by permission of Cornell Career Services. NAPLA would like to acknowledge the following schools for their contributions to the *Guide*: Binghamton University, Boston College, Boston University, Bucknell University, Columbia University, Duke University, Northeastern University, Princeton University, and Texas A & M University. The Law School Admission Council provided information on study abroad transcripts, and the Financial Aid section is based on the "Financial Aid Toolkit" developed by the Pre-Law Advisors National Council (PLANC).

**This version of the Handbook was last updated in August 2019.**

## Exploring Your Interest in Law

A **J.D. (Juris Doctor)** can lead to a wide range of law-related careers and can open doors to careers in government, business, higher education, communications, and numerous other fields. Law school graduates are administrators, teachers, librarians, and business managers as well as advocates, judges, and politicians.

The law can be a rewarding profession. At its best, legal practice challenges the intellect, demanding the exercise of reason and judgment. The ethics of the profession require attorneys to promote justice, fairness, and morality; thus, legal employment can bring particular satisfaction to those who seek to work, within the law, to rectify social injustice.

There are significant differences in career choices lawyers make, from public interest law and government law to private practice in a firm. The differences among starting salaries alone can exceed \$100,000. And, now more than ever, the need to pay back law school loans can affect the career choices of a new graduate.

Before beginning the application process, consider carefully if a law degree is right for you. It is not necessary to know what kind of law you want to practice, but it is advisable to explore the various career options of a lawyer as part of your decision-making process. There are a number of ways you can explore the field of law:

- Talk with a career coach and/or the pre-law advisor about your interest in pursuing legal studies.

Boston College Career Center: [Considering Law School](#)  
**Salvatore Cipriano, Ph.D., Pre-Law Advisor**

Schedule an appointment with Dr. Cipriano through [Eaglelink](#) or call 617-552-3430

- Conduct research on legal careers using resources at the Career Center.
- Review the [Law School Admissions Council's \(LSAC\)](#) website to learn more about law schools and the application process.
- Read the *Official Guide to Legal Specialties*, which contains profiles of many different types of legal practice, from corporate law to environmental to sports and entertainment. These profiles contain very helpful information, such as what a day in the life of these lawyers is like, what types of clients and projects they have, work/life balance, etc. A used copy of the guide can also be purchased cheaply on [Amazon](#), and a copy is available in [O'Neill Library](#).
- Honestly and realistically assess your interests as well as your strengths and weaknesses.
  - Reflect on your interests and your strengths by meeting with a [Career Exploration Coach](#) in the Career Center. They can help you with self-assessment and assist you in taking strength or interest inventories.
  - A good resource that includes self-assessment exercises is *Should You Really Be a Lawyer? The Guide to Smart Career Choices Before, During & After Law School*, by Deborah Schneider and Gary Belsky.

- The classic career guide *Do What You Are* by Paul Tieger and Barbara Barron also contains helpful Myers-Briggs based diagnostic exercises to help you determine what your Myers-Briggs personality type is, and to help you match your personality type to a career.
- Investigate online resources, including the [American Bar Association](#), the [National Association of Law Placement](#), [National Jurist-Prelaw](#), and [Internet Legal Research Group](#).
- Intern with a law firm or law-related organization to gain exposure to the field and to experience the work environment.
- Conduct informational interviews to learn about the legal profession. Talk with lawyers who are family members, family friends, or alumni of your college to learn:
  - what lawyers do in a typical work day
  - personal attributes needed to be successful in a legal career
  - satisfactions and dissatisfactions of the field
  - impact of a legal career on personal lives
  - Visit the [Career Center website](#) for helpful tips on conducting informational interviews, and connect with BC alumni in legal fields on [Eagle Exchange](#).

### Realities of a Legal Career

An important step in making a decision is to distinguish between commonly held *expectations* and the *reality* of legal practice. Hours can be very long and often include weekends. Legal work can require spending considerable time in tedious, painstaking research. The market for new lawyers is competitive for those seeking positions in cities and firms that are in high demand.

Depending on the type of law practiced and the location, entry into law firms can be difficult and salaries may not meet expectations. Specifically, while a corporate lawyer in a private firm may earn \$135,000 or more the first year, s/he may also work twelve hours a day, six or seven days a week. Most of those interested in public interest law can expect a starting salary around \$40,000.

Note: It is also critical that potential law students conduct their own research and understand the substantial changes to the legal job market since 2009. Resources like [AccessLex](#) provide integral insight into the legal market and the value of the J.D. degree.

Employment statistics for the class of 2017 law graduates, based on the NALP (National Association of Law Placement) Employment Report and Salary Survey for the Class of 2017, reveal the following:<sup>1</sup>

- The median salary was \$70,000, representing a 7.7% increase from 2016.
- About 50% of starting salaries in 2018 were between \$45,000 and \$75,000.<sup>2</sup>
- Approximately 54% of employed graduates in the class of 2017 obtained a job in a private practice law firm.

---

<sup>1</sup> Judith N. Collins, "Overall Employment Rate Up Modestly, Employment in Legal Jobs Up More" *Jobs & JDs: Employment for the Class of 2017—Select Findings* <https://www.nalp.org/uploads/SelectedFindingsClassof2017.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> The adjusted mean salary was calculated at \$91,833. See NALP, *Salary Distribution Curves, Class of 2018* <https://www.nalp.org/salarydistrib#2018>

- Approximately 72% of graduates were employed in full-time positions for which bar passage is required.

While the overall employment rate for the class of 2017 was up slightly from 2016, the number of jobs found by graduates fell again, by over 1,000. However, the number of law school graduates also declined for a fourth year in a row after peaking in 2013. While there has been some tempered optimism in recent years, the numbers also highlight the fact that the number of job openings for entry-level, full-time positions remained stagnant.<sup>3</sup>

These employment statistics, while sobering, encourage students to consider deeply their level of passion for a legal career. Law school enrollments are also on the rise, which may create additional difficulties if job openings remain stagnant over the next 3-5 years.<sup>4</sup> But one silver lining is that due to all the media attention that the difficult job market has received, there is more information available than ever before about the costs of legal education and the realities of the legal job market. Every student is encouraged to consider his or her own personal calculation of a return on investment, both personally and professionally.

---

<sup>3</sup> See the recent data compiled by *Law School Transparency* <https://data.lawschooltransparency.com/jobs/legal-jobs/?scope=national>

<sup>4</sup> "New Data Confirm Boost in Law School Attendance," *American Bar Association*, Dec. 2018 <https://www.americanbar.org/news/abanews/aba-news-archives/2018/12/new-data-confirms-boost-law-school/>

## Preparing for Law School

Admissions committees look at a variety of factors and trends in your academic record in an attempt to predict how you will perform in law school. There is no “pre-law major” and unlike medical school, there are no specific educational requirements for entrance into law school.

### Develop research, analysis, and writing skills

Law schools are interested in your ability to do rigorous analytical research, to write well, to present, and to persuade. Take courses that will develop these skills. The American Bar Association offers an [overview of the skills and values](#) important to preparing for a legal education and a career in law.

It is *highly* recommended that you review this statement and assess your skills and values to determine if they are consistent with a career in law.

Law-related classes may allow you to get a feel for law as a general subject, but they neither cover the material in the same depth nor embody the intensity and rigor of law school. Therefore, they are not especially accurate indicators of your ability to succeed in the study of law or whether you will enjoy it. Law schools (and law professors) will not necessarily determine that you will be a successful law school student based upon your completion of law-related courses.

### Select a Major

Choose a major that interests you. Admissions offices are not particularly interested in your major, but they are interested in how well you did in the discipline(s) you chose to pursue. A double major is not necessarily a positive factor in the admissions process.

While specific coursework may be helpful in corporate law, environmental law or intellectual property, a JD is a generalist’s degree, and applicants come from widely diverse academic backgrounds.

### Compile an impressive record

A solid GPA—particularly within your major—is expected, but a willingness to go beyond requirements demonstrates an intellectual curiosity that would be advantageous in the study of law. Academic excellence reflects discipline and abilities, though the variety and depth of your coursework will also be seriously considered by admissions committees as evidence of your interests and motivation.

In general, lecture courses provide a good foundation for further instruction, while seminars allow you to present, discuss, critique, and defend more specific ideas. Smaller classes give you the opportunity to interact with faculty. It is very important that you begin early in your college career to get to know faculty whom you might later ask for recommendations; make yourself stand out as an individual by attending office hours, asking questions in class, and conducting research with faculty.

### Pursue Activities

Law schools will be interested in your extracurricular activities, leadership experience, summer jobs, internships, and public service since they seek well-rounded candidates for admission. Select activities that interest you; they do not have to be directly related to law. However, a law-related internship (or research position) can show background knowledge and exposure to the law, two core skills identified by

the American Bar Association as critical to success in law school.<sup>5</sup> Over time, get involved in more depth in fewer activities. Take initiative and show leadership. Be an executive board member of an organization, or take on leadership of a large project.

---

<sup>5</sup> "Pre-Law: Preparing for Law School," *American bar Association* [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal\\_education/resources/pre\\_law/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/pre_law/)

## Investigating Schools and Programs

With approximately 200 accredited law schools in the United States, how do you decide where to apply and ultimately where to attend? Begin by assembling a list of law schools based on the criteria that are important to you, then revise your choices according to your chances of admission.

Selecting schools carefully will help reduce the time and expense of applying to an excessive number of schools.

### Criteria for Selection

Consider the following factors and determine which are important to you:

- **National/Regional Schools:** Does the school attract applicants from across the country and abroad, or are most students from the region in which the school is located? Do most students want to work throughout the country or in the school's region following graduation?
- **Location:** Is the school in an urban area or in a suburban/rural setting? Is it part of a university or independent? Are there other graduate schools nearby? Is the school in a place you would want to be for three years and where you would be willing to work following graduation, depending on employment opportunities?
- **Costs:** What are tuition, housing, and transportation costs? Is financial aid exclusively need-based, or are merit scholarships available? Does the school offer a loan forgiveness program for public interest lawyers? What is the average debt burden for graduates from this school?
  - *Note:* There are ways to minimize your cost of attending law school and to keep down the debt you incur. Apply to schools where you will be in the top part of the applicant pool; schools may give you a merit scholarship to attract you. Also, public schools are usually less expensive, and even if you are not a resident of a state in which a school is located, you can sometimes pay in-state tuition after your first year (once you establish residency).
- **Career Services:** What advising and resources are available to help you find a job? Is career counseling available? How many employers recruit at the law school and who are they? What percentage of the class has positions at graduation? In what types of positions and geographic areas are they employed? What is the percentage of graduates holding judicial clerkships? What assistance is given to students not interested in working in law firms? What is the bar passage rate for recent graduates? How involved are alumni in career activities?
- **Faculty/Classes:** What are the academic and experiential backgrounds of faculty? How accessible are they? What is the faculty-student ratio, the number of full-time vs. adjunct faculty, and the number of female and minority faculty? How many students are in each course? Are classes taught in the Socratic method or lecture?
- **Facilities and Resources:** Is the school affiliated with a university? Do students have access to courses from a range of academic disciplines to supplement their legal curriculum? Is the library large enough to accommodate holdings and permit students to conduct research and study? How helpful is the library staff? How accessible are electronic databases such as [Lexis](#) and



[Westlaw](#)? In general, do the facilities provide a comfortable learning environment?

- **Student Body:** What is the size of the entering class? What does the admissions profile tell you about the quality of the student body? Where did students study as undergraduates and what are their geographic backgrounds? Is there diversity in interests and personal/cultural backgrounds? What is the overall atmosphere—are students friendly or overly competitive? Is there much interaction with fellow students outside the classroom?
- **Special Programs:** What courses are available in specialized areas? What joint degree programs of interest to you are available? What are the opportunities for practical experience, including clinics, internships, etc.? Can you “write” on to law reviews in addition to be selected based on class rank? What specialized institutes, journals, or organizations exist in your areas of interest? Does the school demonstrate a commitment to women and minorities through special programs?
- **Student Life:** Is housing provided for first-year students? If not, does the school offer assistance in locating off-campus housing? Is the school located in a safe area? What is the cost of living? What types of cultural opportunities are there? What is the culture for students from underrepresented backgrounds? Is the law school committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion? Does the school provide recreational facilities? What is the general ambiance?

## Reputation

A number of factors contribute to a school’s reputation, including faculty, facilities, career services, and the reputation of the parent university. Though a number of law-school rankings are available, most factors evaluated are not quantifiable, and therefore you should not perceive the rankings as accurate or definitive.

*Selectivity* at law schools, however, is one factor that can be quantified; you can gauge a school’s relative selectivity by comparing the number of applicants accepted to the overall number of applications. Two key resources that will help you determine your competitiveness for schools are the [Official Guide to ABA Law Schools](#), which includes the required disclosures that provide insight into selectivity.

Schools can be divided roughly into three groups:

- Schools with **national reputations** that tend to appear in various “top” lists (e.g., “T-14”), such as the [US News and World Report’s rankings](#). They draw students from a national pool and offer geographic mobility to graduates. Note, however, that with the introduction of the [Uniform Bar Examination](#), students may transfer their Bar test scores to other states, potentially increasing their geographic mobility regardless of their ranking of their law school.
- Schools with good **regional reputations** that are attended primarily by students from the region, who may want to remain in the area following graduation, but who may also seek positions throughout the country.
- Local schools that draw students primarily from the **immediate area** who want to practice there following graduation.

## Non-Traditional Alternatives

Evening divisions and part-time programs make it possible for students to work and study law simultaneously, earning a J.D. in four years. When investigating a part-time program, consider:

- Does the school allow a part-time student to transfer to the full-time program? Under what circumstances? How difficult is it to transfer? How many part-time students have successfully made the transition?

These questions are important because many part-time programs have less stringent entrance requirements. Students who wish to enter as a part-time student and transfer to a full-time program must carefully consider how difficult such a transition is, and how to structure class selection in order to obtain any necessary prerequisites for transfer into a full-time program.

- What support services and student organizations are available for part-time students?

Because many part-time programs offer evening courses, part-time students will not necessarily have the same social and student organization opportunities, many of which take place during the day. Knowing what services and organizations meet the needs of part-time students is important.

- How will you balance working full time with obtaining a law school education?

Law school is very demanding, and students should consider how they will balance working while obtaining a legal education. Ask what an average part-time student's schedule is like at the school. Talk to coworkers, family members, significant others, and friends to help determine how you will balance your schedule. Consider personal goals and family obligations to help you plan the best timing.

A few schools on the quarter system allow students to enter mid-year. Summer entry and/or summer courses can accelerate the degree program from three to two-and-a-half calendar years. And finally, some law schools have created summer trial programs, which allow borderline applicants to prove themselves capable of legal study in time for fall entrance.

## Publications and Online Resources

There are [a number of resources](#) designed to help you research and evaluate law schools. Three essential resources you will want to use include the following:

- [LSAC Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools](#) provides information on the approximately 200 American Bar Association-approved law schools, including faculty, library resources, enrollment, and links to each law school for bar passage percentages, placement data, 25th and 75th percentile LSAT scores and GPAs.
- [ABA Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools](#) provides copies of all ABA-accredited law schools Standard 509 Required Disclosure Forms, which includes median LSAT scores and GPAs, faculty, enrollment and library resources. The ABA also provides detailed employment data for all recent graduates of each law school.

- [The NAPLA/SAPLA Book of Law School Lists](#) provides information about joint degrees, areas of academic emphasis within the schools, schools that grant one-year deferrals, bar passage rates at a number of schools, schools that award non-need-based scholarships, etc.

After you complete your research and compile a list of schools, meet with a pre-law advisor to discuss schools of interest to you and to get a reality check on your competitiveness for them.

## Understanding Admissions Criteria

### Objective Criteria

Law schools consider the objective criteria, the GPA and LSAT score, the factors that most accurately predict how applicants will perform in their first year of law school:

- **Law School Admission Test (LSAT):** Applicants take the LSAT, a half-day standardized test, during one of nine test administrations offered annually by the Law School Admission Council. Scores, which range from 120 to 180, are used by most law schools as a common measurement of potential for success in law school.<sup>6</sup>
- **Undergraduate Grade Point Average (GPA):** Applicants submit undergraduate transcripts to the Credential Assembly Service (CAS), which converts grades to a cumulative grade point average using a set of consistent values. The GPA offers admissions committees another numerical basis for comparing applicants.
- **Applicant Index:** Many law schools ask the CAS to combine applicants' LSAT scores and GPAs with weighted constants to produce a single number which can be used to assess and compare potential for doing well.

### Subjective Criteria

Subjective criteria are the factors law schools consider in addition to GPAs and LSAT scores:

- **Personal Statement:** Applicants submit a personal statement as part of the application process for almost all law schools. Admissions committees look for a concise, detailed, well-written statement revealing the applicant's individuality. They want to learn from the statement who the applicant is and what makes him/her qualified to study at their law schools.
- **Letters of Recommendation:** Most law schools require applicants to submit letters of recommendation from professors or employers to gain a different perspective on the applicant's academic strength and personal qualities. Admissions officers find most helpful specific examples of applicants' motivation and intellectual curiosity, an assessment of communication skills, and a comparison with peers.
- **Evaluations:** Introduced in the 2010-2011 application cycle, an evaluation rates both cognitive and noncognitive attributes and skills that have been identified as important to success in law school, using a scale that represents degrees of a particular characteristic. To date, most law schools prefer letters of recommendation to evaluations.
- **Experience:** This factor includes undergraduate curricular and extracurricular activities, internships, part-time and full-time work experience. Include a *resume* in your application materials that demonstrates your skills and abilities relevant to the study of law and how you will contribute to the diversity and strength of the class.

---

<sup>6</sup> Note that as of summer 2019, over 40 law schools now accept the GRE. See [https://www.ets.org/gre/revised\\_general/about/law/](https://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/about/law/)

Most law schools have recruitment programs to increase participation in the legal profession by underrepresented groups. State schools may reserve seats for state residents. Review websites of schools to learn about their selection criteria, and you may want to contact schools about your specific concerns.

## Applying to Law School

After reaching the decision to pursue a law degree, you will want to file a strong and complete application to increase your chances for admission. The first step in the application process will be to meet with the pre-law advisor, who can help you create a strategy for maximizing your chances for success.

### **Boston College Pre-Law Advisor**

Salvatore Cipriano, Ph.D.

[salvatore.cipriano@bc.edu](mailto:salvatore.cipriano@bc.edu)

To make an appointment, log into [Eaglelink](#) and select the “Government, Law, and Public Policy (GLP)” industry cluster, or call the office at 617-552-3430

Next you should open an online account with the [Law School Admission Council \(LSAC\)](#). LSAC is comprised of the 203 ABA-accredited law schools in the U.S. and 18 Canadian law schools, and was founded to coordinate and facilitate the process of applying to law school.

Be aware that applying to law school is expensive. [As of 2019](#), the basic costs include:

- Credential Assembly Service (CAS) registration fee (\$195)
- LSAT registration fee (\$200)
- CAS Law School Reports (\$45 per school)
- Application fees (per school; average between \$60 and \$85)

You might need to add other costs such as LSAT preparation, travel to visit law schools, etc.

LSAC offers [fee waivers](#) for those with a demonstrated inability to pay for essential parts of the application. The waivers cover two LSATs per testing year (June through April); one LSAT Writing; one CAS registration, which includes the Letter of Recommendation service and access to electronic applications; and six CAS Law School Reports.

### **Law School Admission Test (LSAT)**

*When and Where do I take the exam?*

The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) is required for admission to all ABA-approved law schools. The test is administered nine times per year (June, July, September, October, November, January, February, March, and April) by LSAC. The LSAT is [administered digitally](#) on a Microsoft Surface Go tablet; test-takers will be able to use scratch paper. Detailed test information—dates, sites, registration forms, fees, and deadlines—and registration is available on [LSAC](#).

Be aware that *test sites can fill quickly*, especially in or around major cities. It is advisable, then, to register several months in advance of a test date so that you can take the test in a convenient location. Students studying abroad can take the exam in many international cities as well; check the registration website for an up-to-date list of where and when the LSAT is offered outside of the United States.

The optimal time to take the exam is in the summer of the year you apply, but taking the test in the fall—especially in September or October—will allow you to see your LSAT score and still submit your applications in a timely manner. Note that taking the LSAT in the summer allows you the opportunity to retake the exam, if you choose to do so, in the fall.

Scores from the January administration will reach law schools in time to complete application deadlines at all schools. Note, however, that the November exam is very close to finals. If you decide to take this exam, plan early so that you can determine how to prepare for this exam without having your semester grades suffer. If you take the January test, plan to submit your applications around the time of the test. You may, however, decide to wait to see your score before submitting your applications.

**A note about the LSAT and Study Abroad:** Many students choose to study abroad in the spring of their Junior year. This can impact your planning and preparation for the LSAT, especially if you plan to take the exam in the summer. You should factor in your study abroad timing when deciding which LSAT to take. The LSAT is offered in many other countries, but you should carefully consider whether you will have the time and focus necessary for preparing for the exam while abroad. You can search for international testing centers [here](#).

#### *How is the LSAT scored, and what does it measure?*

The LSAT is designed to provide law school admissions committees with a common measure of applicants' *aptitude for legal study*. The test consists of five multiple choice sections, each thirty-five minutes in length:

1. one reading comprehension section
2. one analytical reasoning section
3. two logical reasoning sections
4. one experimental test question section (not scored)

A 35-minute writing sample at the end of the test is also not scored; copies of the writing sample are sent to schools where you apply. Your score is computed on a scale of 120 to 180, based on the number of questions you answer correctly; there is no deduction or penalty for incorrect answers, so it is advantageous to guess if you do not have time to answer a question.

#### *How do I prepare for the LSAT?*

The best way to prepare for the LSAT is to pursue a study strategy that works best for you. Note that all test-takers will prepare differently. A good idea is to think about your most effective study habits your classes, and build a strategy from there.

LSAC offers relatively inexpensive books of previously administered LSAT exams on their [website](#). LSAC also offers free, comprehensive LSAT preparation through the [Khan Academy](#).

If you feel that you would benefit from a more structured program of study, you may want to consider taking a commercial test preparation course. Please note, however, that commercial courses are expensive and the quality of instruction can be uneven, so it is important to learn who will be teaching the course and what materials will be used. Talk with others who have taken the LSAT course you are considering in order to learn from their experience, especially regarding its effectiveness. Such courses can be helpful in motivating you to study and in building your confidence. Boston College offers an [on-campus prep course](#) several times a year for \$649 + \$50 dollar book fee. Other popular companies include [Kaplan](#) and [PowerScore](#). Companies offer a variety of formats including online, in-person classes, and private tutoring.

Regardless of whether you prepare on your own or through a structured course, make sure that you are taking practice exams and that you *time yourself*. Practice exams will be most effective if you recreate the test-taking atmosphere, which includes completing each section within the time constraints. Be sure to also take practice exams in a *digital format*--preferably on a tablet--as the LSAT is administered on Microsoft Surface Go tablets. LSAC currently offers [three digital practice tests](#), and commercial test preparation services have been increasing their offerings of mock digital LSATs since the digital format was introduced in July 2019.

If you are registered for a test but feel you are not fully prepared or in a frame of mind to perform well, it may be better not to take the test; law schools will not view your absence on the test date negatively. Plan to be well-prepared and to take the test only once, but if you do not believe your score is representative of your abilities, for example, you were scoring considerably higher on practice tests, you may want to consider retaking the test.

Law schools are required to report the higher/highest of multiple scores of students in their entering class to the American Bar Association. Those scores are then reported to organizations, such as LSAC, for use in their online and print information.

Schools vary, however, in how they consider multiple LSAT scores in making admissions decisions. *Note that though many schools use the higher/highest score in reaching decisions, some of the more competitive schools use the average of multiple scores unless there is a compelling reason to use the higher/highest score.*

Most schools welcome an addendum explaining the point difference in scores, including any extenuating circumstances and a history of performance on standardized tests. LSAC will report the results of all LSATs you have taken within five years; however, you may find some schools willing to consider only scores received within a three- or four-year period.

### *Can I take the GRE instead of the LSAT?*

A growing number of law schools are accepting the GRE in place of the LSAT. Visit the [Educational Testing Service](#) for an updated list of institutions accepting the GRE. Right now, the number of schools is about 40.

Because law schools have only recently begun to accept the GRE, note that, unlike the LSAT, we lack firm data that allows us to identify what competitive GRE scores are for schools.

### **Credential Assembly Service (CAS)**

To centralize and standardize objective application information (GPAs and LSAT scores), ABA- approved law schools require applicants to subscribe to the Credential Assembly Service (CAS). The service organizes and analyzes applicant information in a way that allows law schools to compare academic records from undergraduate schools that use different grading systems.

*Note: The following section describes LSAC's requirements. Please note that these are **not** University policies, and any questions regarding the LSAC or the CAS should be directed to the LSAC.*



### *Transcripts*

Register for the CAS, and then submit transcript request forms, available through CAS, either electronically or by printing and providing a Transcript Request Form to each college or university from which you have earned academic credit. Visit the [Office of Student Services](#) for more information on how to order a BC transcript.

### *Study Abroad Transcripts*

LSAC's transcript requirements regarding study abroad are summarized below and can be found [here](#). These are LSAC's requirements—*not* Boston College's, and any questions should be directed to them. If you enrolled in a study abroad program sponsored by your home institution, and the courses along with grades and credits using your home institution's grading system are recorded on your official transcript, you do not need to send an additional transcript reflecting the study abroad grades/credits. Those grades will be calculated into both the home institution's GPA and the overall GPA.

If you enrolled in a study abroad program *sponsored by another U.S. or Canadian college or university*, in addition to your home institution's transcript, you must have the institution sponsoring the study abroad program send a transcript directly to CAS. List the U.S. or Canadian institution on your CAS registration under "other institutions attended." If the grades and credits appear on the sponsoring school's transcript, using the school's grading scale, then those grades will be calculated into both the sponsoring school's GPA and the overall GPA, but not into your home institution's GPA, as this is "transfer" work.

If you *directly enrolled* in one or more foreign institutions, and the total amount of work is the equivalent of one year or less, do not list the foreign institution when you register for the CAS, and do not have a transcript forwarded to LSAC. You may, however, be required to list your attendance at such institutions on your applications to law schools.

### **CAS Law School Reports**

After students send their applications and other materials to CAS-requiring law schools, the schools will contact LSAC directly to request the applicant's law school report. The reports are prepared by CAS—the only thing students must do is **order and pay for a law school report for each school to which the student applies**. The report will include the following:

- a year-by-year grade and credit summary
- photocopies of all your transcripts
- your GPA for each academic year, your degree GPA from your home institution, and your cumulative GPA reflecting work at your home institution and all other institutions you have attended
- a description of your overall grade distribution
- the mean LSAT score and GPA of students at your undergraduate school who have subscribed to the CAS and your percentile graduation rank among those students
- up to 12 LSAT scores from the past five years, including cancellations and absences
- an average LSAT score, if you have more than one score on file
- copies of your LSAT writing sample

The CAS report may also include an applicant index described in the Admissions Criteria section. Visit [LSAC](#) for more information about CAS Law School Reports.

## The Application

There are several options for submitting applications to law schools. You can apply to any ABA approved law school through the CAS electronic application, which streamlines the process by allowing you to enter common information only once; you then complete each school's individual application and submit your applications electronically.

You can also complete applications located on schools' websites, or call the schools to request hard-copy applications. Addresses and phone numbers of admissions offices are provided on schools' websites. Completing application forms is a fairly straightforward process. Schools will be seeking basic information about you, including your academic background, extracurricular activities, and employment history. You may be asked to list other schools to which you are applying; responding to this question and/or indicating an interest in financial aid will not affect your chances for admission.

Be *truthful and forthright* as you complete the applications. Enclose a resume with your application, but be sure to respond to all of the questions on the applications.

## Personal Statements

Personal statements are requested by all law schools and provide the opportunity to go beyond the objective aspects of the application to discuss who you are and what is important to you.

Schools will be seeking information about your background, personal qualities and leadership skills, and motivation, to learn what is unique about you and what distinguishes you from other candidates with similar GPAs and LSAT scores.

Your goal, then, will be to write a *concise, detailed statement* establishing yourself as an individual. An interesting and personal discussion about yourself, one that reveals your personality and character, will help you come alive to the admissions committee.

Personal statements are typically *two double-spaced pages*, though you may find that some schools will give more latitude. If schools don't provide guidelines on length, it's advisable to submit a statement that's approximately two pages in length. A few schools will limit the number of words permitted and you should abide by their guidelines.

**Proofread** carefully, as any typographical or grammatical errors will detract from the favorable impression the statement might otherwise make. Do not use large words in an attempt to impress readers; instead, use simple language correctly, and rely on well-organized, interesting content to make an impression.

Your statement should be *serious, honest, and sincere*, and the tone should be confident and positive; any negative information (such as disciplinary or academic probation) you feel compelled or are required to discuss should be addressed in other parts of the application or in an addendum.

Law schools will be looking for evidence that you can write a coherent statement. Follow general guidelines for writing essays: there should be introductory and concluding paragraphs; each paragraph should begin with a topic sentence; and there should be a clear line of development through the statement. Ideas should be supported with concrete examples.

***Boston College Career Center's advice regarding personal statements:*** The personal statement is all about the applicant, from the applicant's perspective. We will provide general feedback on such items as theme, structure, flow, transitions, and overall impressions, and we will help students to identify any trouble spots. We will not make extensive changes to grammar and punctuation, rewrite, or restructure the essay. Those matters are better left to the student so that she can present herself in her own words

### **Letters of Recommendation**

Most law schools request that at least **two** letters of recommendation be submitted on behalf of applicants. If letters are not required, it is a good idea, nonetheless, to submit them. Admissions committees will be seeking information not provided elsewhere in the applications. Recommendation letters should include concrete examples of intellectual strength, judgment, motivation, and leadership, along with an appraisal of communication skills and a comparison to peers.

Letters written by members of the academic community carry the most weight, since they can address *your performance in an academic setting and discuss your potential for success in law school*. Law schools value letters that address a student's writing, class participation, research, analytical skills, and other academic abilities. They are especially interested in a professor's assessment of a student, as compared to other students he or she has taught over the years.

At least one letter should be from a professor in your undergraduate major, if possible. As you consider whom to ask, remember that it is better to have an in-depth letter from a teaching assistant or lecturer with whom you worked closely than to have a cursory letter from a renowned professor who barely knows you.

Letters from people *outside academia* may carry less weight, since they may be unable to address the topic of greatest interest to admissions committees: your academic potential. However, if you are an alumnus/a and been in the workforce for several years post-graduation, these letters--from a supervisor, for instance--can be quite strong. Law schools will be particularly interested in how you have spent your time since you graduated from college.

You can submit additional letters even though a school asks for only one or two. Three letters will be acceptable at most schools, and four should be considered the absolute maximum.

#### ***How to ask for a letter of recommendation:***

- Make an appointment to meet with letter writers well in advance of the application deadline. Ask them, "Do you feel you know my work well enough to write a **strong, positive** letter on behalf of my application to law school?" Emphasize strong and positive. If you sense even a little hesitation, move on. Lukewarm letters are not very helpful for law school candidates.
- Once the recommender has agreed to write a letter for you, provide information about your background to assist him/her in writing a detailed letter, including:
  - A cover sheet describing your academic relationship, including courses you have taken, research you have conducted, your experience as a TA, etc.
  - A copy of your transcript
  - A draft of your personal statement (if available)
  - A resume
  - A copies of exams or papers written in his/her class

- Information about submitting the LOR directly to LSAC electronically (via email) or recommendation forms from CAS and a stamped envelope addressed to LSAC, so that the letters will be sent directly to the CAS
- Preferred date for the recommendation to be completed
- Waive your right of access since you may find writers unwilling to write letters if applicants have access to them, and some admissions committee members may discount disclosed letters.
- You can check your CAS account online to determine when the letters have been received and processed. At least 2-3 weeks before a deadline, speak with those writers who have not sent letters yet to remind them politely of the approaching deadline.
- After you have received decisions, send “thank you” letters to your recommenders, and let them know where you have been accepted and where you intend to enroll.

### **Letter of Recommendation and Evaluation Services**

The CAS offers [letter of recommendation \(LOR\) and evaluation services](#). Recommenders send letters directly to the CAS. Once CAS has received the letters, they will be posted to your account. You may solicit as many LORs as you want. You will individually select which LORs you submit to which schools.

To have your letters of recommendation sent directly to the CAS, log into your CAS account and complete the LOR form. At this point you may either: (1) select to have an email sent to your recommender and have her submit her letter and complete the process electronically; or (2) you may print out the recommender form, give it to your recommender and he or she can submit the letter and the LOR form by mailing these documents to LSAC. In either situation, the recommender, not the applicant, submits the letter of recommendation to LSAC for submission to your CAS account.

An evaluation is a questionnaire completed online by the evaluator to rate applicants on both cognitive and noncognitive attributes and skills related to success in law school and the legal profession. Evaluators will also have the opportunity to enter free-form text of up to 3,000 characters. In your CAS account you will have the option to add an evaluator. You will fill out the general information about the evaluator and hit “submit.” The evaluator will receive an email. The evaluator must establish or access his/her online account to complete the evaluation and transmit it to LSAC.

Letters and evaluations will be maintained for **five years** from the time you register for CAS or from the time you take the LSAT, whichever comes last.

### **Dean’s Certifications**

A dean’s certification (or letter/clearance) is required by some law schools to confirm that applicants have not been involved in academic or disciplinary transgressions as undergraduates.

A Dean’s Certification only needs to be provided if the school requests one on its application.

The certification is generally a formality handled by a designated university official such as an academic advising dean, professor, or registrar, in consultation with those offices responsible for judicial administration on campus. Contact the University’s administrative office to request it.

## Filing Your Applications

Use this checklist to ensure you are completing all parts of the application:

- Prepare for the LSAT
- Register for the LSAT and CAS
- Order LSAT prep materials, videos, and publications
- Change your LSAT location or date, if necessary
- Check test center availability and account information in real time
- Obtain your LSAT score by e-mail and view online your answer sheet, score conversion table, and test book (for disclosed tests)
- Check the status of your file online, including your transcript, letters of recommendation and/or evaluations, and law school requests for your CAS report
- Research law schools and application deadlines
- Apply to law schools electronically

Remember that your file is not complete until all parts, including the recommendation letters and CAS report, have been received by law schools.

Here are some additional **strategies** for applying to law school:

- Start early.
- Make realistic choices of schools. Apply to some reach, some target, and some safety schools.
- Carefully read information provided by schools online or in hard copy.
- Follow directions!
- Print copies of your applications to use as drafts.
- Provide complete and accurate responses.
- Make copies of your completed applications.
- Submit fees with your applications
- Respect deadlines.

## Taking Time Off

Taking some time before entering law school can be advantageous for several reasons:

- You will be able to devote more time and energy during your senior year to your academics, rather than to preparation for the LSAT and time-consuming law school applications.
- When you apply to law school, your entire academic record will be available to law schools, not just six or seven semesters. If you are like most students, your highest grades will come later in your undergraduate education.
- Gaining professional experience is appreciated by most schools, and brings a new perspective to you as an applicant.
- Working allows some students the opportunity to save money for the expense of legal education.
- Immediately after graduation from college is often the best time to take advantage of service and volunteer programs like AmeriCorps and the Peace Corps, rather than applying directly to law school.
- Working can give people perspective about whether a career in the legal field is a good fit.

Of course, there are also challenges to taking time off:

- Many students feel that it would be difficult to return to school after entering the workforce.
- It can be difficult to balance the demands of studying for the LSAT and applying to law school while working full-time.

Consider these factors when deciding whether to apply to law school directly after graduation. Do not hesitate to schedule an appointment with the pre-law advisor on [EagleLink](#) to discuss your options.

## Considering Admissions Decisions

Applicants are typically informed by **e-mail or letter** of the schools' decisions; candidates are either accepted, denied, or wait-listed, which means the applicant is considered a desirable candidate and may be admitted later.

Law schools often place applicants on "**hold**" or "**reserve**" prior to reaching a decision and frequently notify candidates of this status. Applications of those on hold or reserve are reconsidered at a later date, usually before the files of those who have been wait-listed.

### Enhancing Your Application

There are several things you can do to improve your chances of admission if you are on reserve or have been wait-listed:

- Write a *letter of continued interest* to the director of admissions to inform him/her of your strong interest in the school and to provide an update on your activities since you submitted your application.
- Send an updated transcript to LSAC so that the school has more of your academic record to evaluate. (You can do this using the same method that you used to order the original transcript.)
- If the school is your *first choice*, state that you will attend if accepted.
- If you are a senior, inform the school of *accomplishments* since you applied, for example, that you have completed your honors thesis or you were accepted into a prestigious honors society.
- If you are currently working, describe your professional responsibilities and other worthwhile activities in which you are engaged; include an updated resume.
- Send an additional recommendation from a professor or employer; however, the total number of your recommendation letters should not exceed four. Also note that, if the initial two letters you sent with your application were written by professors, your application will not necessarily be enhanced by *another* letter from a professor. At this point in the process, seek out a letter writer who can add something new to your application.
- Visit the law school to demonstrate your strong interest; contact the admissions office to arrange for a tour and to sit in on a class or two. Some admissions officers will agree to meet with applicants, but generally these discussions are not evaluative.

Contact the pre-law advisor for additional strategies and tactics.

### Making a Decision

There are several steps you can, and should, take to ultimately make your decision about which law school to attend:

- *Visit the law schools* when deciding among schools that have accepted you. Take tours and attend classes, make an effort to meet faculty and staff, and speak with students to get their

perspective on factors important to you, such as accessibility of faculty, competitiveness of students, career services, assistance of library personnel, etc.

- Follow up with a *thank-you letter* to the admissions office stating what impressed you about the school.
- Talk with students/alumni at schools of interest about their experience. These conversations can be helpful in reaching your decision. Contact the schools to inquire about speaking with current students and whether they have an alumni network you can access.
- Consider **cost and financial aid awards**. If you will be entering law school with debt accumulated as an undergraduate, financial factors can play an even greater role in your decision.
- Schools that accept you will probably ask for a deposit to hold a space for you. Deposits may be due before you hear from all schools. Contact schools that accept you to explain your situation and ask if they would be willing to extend the deposit deadline.
- On May 15 each year, law schools may be provided information concerning applicants' commitments to enroll. Applicants should be aware of policies on multiple deposits set by schools to which they applied.
- Once you have reached a final decision on which school you will attend, **notify schools that accepted** you so that they can offer your place to someone else.

### Reapplying Later

If you are *not* accepted at a law school you would like to attend, consider retaking the LSAT if you feel that you can improve your score, or revising your list of schools if you decide to reapply. Working for a few years can make a difference in the admissions process and can also provide exposure to another career field that might engage your interest.

You are encouraged to refer to the [LSAC Statement of Good Admissions and Financial Aid Practices](#), which will help you understand the practices governing the admissions and financial aid process.



## Financing Law School

Law school is an important investment in your future. Consider the financial aid process as seriously as you do the law school application process.

Before you apply to law school, spend money wisely and pay your bills on time to ensure a *good credit record*. Bad credit will affect your ability to borrow money, because loan companies will review your credit history extensively before granting you a loan. If possible, pay off credit cards and other consumer debt before law school.

Think about your post-law school goals. Salaries for lawyers vary widely, depending on the type of practice and region. **Law school debt will claim a significant portion of your income as a lawyer.** Be sure to also evaluate *why* you want to attend law school. If it is to embark on a lucrative career, you should strongly reconsider. According to a recent study, students who went to law school primarily to obtain high-paying jobs were less likely to perceive their degree as highly valuable.<sup>7</sup>

To keep debt to a minimum, consider state-supported law schools, or schools that offer merit-based aid. If you are considering a career in government or public interest law, investigate **Loan Repayment Assistance Programs (LRAPs)** that help law school graduates repay their education debt.

### Sources of Funding

#### *Personal Savings/Family Support*

If possible, set aside your own funds to help pay for law school. Talk with family members about whether they can help with law school expenses. Some students choose to live at home during law school to avoid paying rent.

#### *Federal Loans*

Many students rely primarily on federal loan programs to finance law school. Total federal aid is available to cover (but not exceed) the law school's student expense budget, which includes tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, transportation, and other expenses. Because you are applying for graduate study, you are considered independent of your parents for these loans.

Some law schools participate in the Ford Direct Loan Program, through which the U.S. Department of Education is the lender. At other law schools, you will choose a lender to obtain the federal Stafford or Grad PLUS loans.

The following federal loans are available to law students:

- **(Unsubsidized) Federal Direct Stafford Loan:** Law students may borrow up to a total of \$20,500 in Federal Stafford Loans each year. The interest rate for these loans is fixed at 6.8 percent annually and a 1% loan fee is deducted at disbursement. Interest starts accruing as soon as the loan is disbursed. These loans have a six-month grace period before repayment begins; they have federal forbearance and deferment options, may be refinanced through consolidation, and may be [repaid under various repayment options](#). These loans may be eligible for inclusion

---

<sup>7</sup> Gallup-AccessLex Institute Study of Juris Doctor Degree Holders, January 2018 <https://www.accesslex.org/resources/examining-value-measuring-engagement-the-long-term-outcomes-of-a-law-degree>

under the federal [Public Service Loan Forgiveness \(PSLF\) program](#).

- **Graduate PLUS Loans for Law Students:** Law students who do not have adverse credit may be eligible to apply for a Graduate PLUS loan. If you do have adverse credit, you can apply with an endorser. The endorser must be a US citizen or permanent resident that does not have adverse credit. The Graduate PLUS loan is federally guaranteed. You can borrow Graduate PLUS funds in an amount up to the school's Cost of Attendance minus the amount of all other financial aid you are receiving (including other loans). Interest accrues while you are in school, and repayment begins following disbursement, but you are allowed to defer repayment until six months after you graduate. The interest rate is 7.9%, and a 4% loan fee is deducted from the disbursement. The interest rate is fixed for the life of the loan. These loans have federal forbearance and deferment options, may be consolidated, and may be repaid under various repayment options. These loans may be eligible for inclusion under the federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program.
- **Federal Perkins Loans.** This loan may be available at some schools to students with high financial need. Each student's award is determined by the school based on information obtained from the FAFSA and availability of funds. The maximum annual loan is \$8,000.

Visit [AccessLex](#) and [LSAC](#) for more information about federal loans, and financing law school in general.

***An important note about the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) Program:*** The program has proven to be uneven and has largely failed to meet expectations since borrowers first became eligible for forgiveness in 2017 (the program was launched in 2007). Borrowers are finding that their applications have been almost always rejected, and that their loans have not been forgiven after ten years.<sup>8</sup> The program, at least in its current iteration, is not a fast-track to loan forgiveness and financial security for those interested in public interest careers.

### *Private Loans*

*Credit* is an important factor in securing private loans. Interest rates, fees, and terms of repayment vary significantly. There are a number of private loan programs available to credit-worthy borrowers who are not eligible for federal student loans. Additionally, some lenders make available postgraduate loans for bar-review study. Eligibility for these bar loans is based on your credit history and the lending institution's willingness to lend.

The terms and conditions of these programs vary greatly. *Pay careful attention* to the explanations found in loan application brochures and consumer information. You can also contact the individual programs or visit their websites for further details. And remember, always borrow the minimum loan amount needed to attend the law school you have chosen.

It is best to work with your law school financial aid office *before* making a decision about loans for law school.

---

<sup>8</sup> Department of Education data shows that 99% of PLSF applications have been denied. See "Why Public Service Loan Forgiveness is So Unforgiving," *NPR*, October 17, 2018 <https://www.npr.org/2018/10/17/653853227/the-student-loan-whistleblower>; "Few qualify for public service loan forgiveness, often due to bad information, lawsuit says," *ABA Law Journal*, July 18, 2019, <http://www.abajournal.com/web/article/few-qualify-for-public-service-loan-forgiveness-often-due-to-bad-information-says-lawsuit>.

### *Grants and Scholarships*

Grants and scholarships are offered by law schools based upon criteria set by the school, which can include academic merit, financial need, ethnicity, specific talents, residency or other qualifications. Check with each law school early in the application process for more information.

Law schools may offer merit scholarships to highly qualified applicants with an offer of admission. When law schools consider your financial need, they may require family income information even if you are considered independent for tax purposes, or for federal education loans.

Some states provide limited grants for law school; there are no federal grants for law students. Certain national foundations and organizations offer grants and scholarships for law school through a competitive application process.

Students should investigate opportunities for university assistantships for second and third year law students at law schools they are considering. Assistantships generally provide a tuition waiver and stipend in exchange for research, teaching, or administrative work, and can be a significant source of financial help. Assistantship programs and availability vary widely depending on the school.

Visit [this resource](#) from Yale Law School website for a comprehensive list of external scholarship and grant opportunities.

### *Earnings*

The American Bar Association no longer sets limits on the number of hours a first-year law student can work per week, although some law schools may individually do so. Many law students obtain summer employment and part-time employment during the school year. This can help reduce the amount of money borrowed.

### *Frugality*

It is often said, “If you live like a lawyer in law school, you will live like a law student once you graduate.” Frugality can be your best friend.

## **How to Apply for Financial Aid**

There are several important steps you need to take if you are applying for financial aid for law school:

- Check your credit. If you will be using Federal Grad PLUS or private loans for law school, order a free copy of your credit report and verify the information. These loans may not be available if your credit history does not meet minimum standards.
- *Apply early for financial aid.* Check each law school’s website to learn financial aid deadlines. Some schools have priority dates for submitting financial aid information; students who apply earlier have a better opportunity to obtain limited grant money.
- Complete your [FAFSA](#) as soon as possible after January 1. Completion of the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) is required for all federal student loan programs. The FAFSA is also used by some law schools to collect information for their own institutional aid. Because the FAFSA requires tax information from the previous year, it cannot be completed before January 1.

- Some schools have separate applications for financial aid, while others use the law school application or the FAFSA. Schools also vary in how they distribute their own funds.
- If you have special circumstances, provide this information to the law school financial aid office. This can be critical for law students who have been working full-time in the prior year or who have unusual medical or family expenses.
- **Do not wait to complete the FAFSA until after you are admitted to a law school.** You can list up to ten law schools where you want reports sent, and update this list with additional schools.
- If your federal tax return will not be ready until later in the spring, you can estimate prior year income on the FAFSA. Parental income is not considered in determining eligibility for federal loans to graduate-level students; you will be directed to skip Section III- Parental Information in the FAFSA.

### **Making the Decision**

Once you have provided all required information, law schools can offer you a financial aid package. To determine your financial need, schools take the estimated contribution calculated by the federal government on your FAFSA and subtract it from the school's student expense budget.

In deciding which law school to attend, *it is important to balance your financial considerations with other criteria*, such as reputation, location, size, faculty, programs and placement success. Compare the net of your projected costs at each school you are considering, offset by any offers of grants or scholarships from the school, to determine the amount you will need to make up through loans or personal funds.

### **Applying for Loans**

Once you have chosen a law school, expect to receive important additional financial information from the school. Even though you have already completed the FAFSA and law school financial aid forms, *you must still apply for the loans*.

Your law school financial aid office will help you identify the correct process for securing federal loans, and private loans if needed. Do your homework to compare fees and repayment terms for all of your loans, using loan calculators available on financial aid websites (see below). Keep good records of all loan transactions. Borrow only what you need, and not more, to keep your debt low and your monthly repayment amount manageable.

### **Financial Aid Resources**

- [LSAC - Paying for Law School](#): An overview of the process of paying for your legal education.
- [LSAC Statement on Good Admission and Financial Aid Practices](#)
- [AccessLex Institute Financial Education Resources for Students](#)
- [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#)

- [StudentAid.gov](https://studentaid.gov): More information on federal student aid
- [FinAid.org](https://finaid.org): Student guide to financial aid
- [AnnualCreditReport.com](https://annualcreditreport.com): Free annual credit report
- [Access Group](https://accessgroup.org): Personal finance and other financial aid information for borrowers
- [Loan Repayment Assistant Programs](https://loanrepaymentassistantprograms.org): Learn more about LRAPs and which schools might offer them
- [Fastweb.com](https://fastweb.com): Financial aid search engine
- [Yale Law School List of External Scholarships](https://yalelawschool.org/list-of-external-scholarships): Comprehensive repository of external law school scholarship and grant opportunities

## Legal Career Checklist

### Freshman and Sophomore Years

- Select a major in a field that both interests you and allows you to excel academically.
- Begin to form relationships with professors, lecturers, and TAs so that they will know your work well enough to serve as recommenders in the future.
- Expand your education by seeking summer jobs or internships in fields of interest.

### Junior Year

- Meet with a pre-law advisor to assess your academic, extracurricular, and work experiences and to discuss the application process.
- Begin preparing for the LSAT; register for the June administration.
- Secure a summer job or internship, if possible, in a law-related field.
- Research law schools and compile a list of tentative schools.

### Senior Year (or Year Before Entering Law School)

- Register for the Credential Assembly Service (CAS). Have transcripts from all undergraduate institutions you have attended sent to the CAS after verifying their accuracy.
- Make sure your CAS report is correct.
- Ask potential recommendation writers if they would be willing to write letters on your behalf. Provide them with sufficient information to write the detailed letters. Then either advise them about setting up an LSAC account to allow them to email your letters directly to LSAC or provide them with the CAS recommendation forms.
- Make arrangements to have dean's certifications sent to schools that require them.
- Attend law school fairs and programs offered by your college or university on the application process.
- Take the LSAT in the fall if you did not take the test in the summer.
- Begin drafting and revising your personal statement.
- Meet with a pre-law advisor, who will help you assess the strength of your application in relation to schools you are considering. Request a critique of your personal statement draft.
- Complete applications by early to mid-November.
- Take the LSAT in December if you did not take it previously or are retaking the test.
- Check with schools to make sure your files are complete.
- Complete the FAFSA and any institutional financial aid applications as soon after January 1 as possible.
- Meet with a pre-law advisor in the spring to assess your options as schools respond to you.
- Take appropriate action on acceptances, wait-list status, and financial aid packages.
- Before leaving campus, have a final transcript sent to the law school you plan to attend and/or to any schools still considering your application.

## Legal Career Resources

The [LSAC website](#) provides a comprehensive listing (Resources for Prelaw Candidates, Bibliography) of resources to help prospective law students explore legal careers, consider legal education, apply to law school, and finance their law school education.

### Law-Related Organizations

- [American Bar Association \(ABA\)](#) is the national organization of the legal profession. The Council of the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar of the ABA is identified by the U. S. Department of Education as the "nationally recognized accrediting agency for professional schools of law." The ABA has issued a [Statement on Preparation for Legal Education](#) that every student should review.
- [Council on Legal Education Opportunity \(CLEO\)](#) assists educationally disadvantaged applicants in preparing for law school. They offer programs at the freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior level for qualified students.
- [Law School Admission Council \(LSAC\)](#) is a nonprofit corporation comprising over 200 law schools in the U.S. and Canada that provides services to the legal education community.
- [The National Association for Law Placement \(NALP\)](#) is dedicated to facilitating legal career counseling and planning, recruitment and retention, and the professional development of law students and lawyers.
- [HEATH Resource Center](#) is a national clearinghouse for persons with disabilities.

The following organizations can provide insight to candidates from underrepresented backgrounds applying to law school:

- [ABA Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession](#)
- [Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund \(AALDEF\)](#)
- [Hispanic National Bar Association \(HNBA\)](#)
- [Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund \(MALDEF\)](#)
- [NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund](#)
- [National Asian Pacific American Bar Association \(NAPABA\)](#)
- [National Black Law Student Association \(NBLSA\)](#)
- [Native American Rights Fund \(NARF\)](#)
- [Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund \(PRLDEF\)](#)
- [LGBT Bar](#)