

PREPARING FOR LAW SCHOOL



Career Development Center
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INFORMATION FOR PRE-LAW STUDENTS

Entering a career in the law requires serious thought and planning. Admission to law school is very competitive and preparation should not be taken lightly. This packet of information and other resources located in the Career Development Center are designed to answer many of the common questions pre-law students may have. They are NOT a substitute for meeting with a pre-law advisor to discuss individual needs and concerns. After reading through the information here, plan to schedule an appointment with one of the members of the Pre-Law Advisory Committee to address your specific concerns.

Contained in this packet you will find a suggested planning guide for pre-law students, information on the LSAT, the application process, and a grid to help you decide which law school best fits your qualifications. Once you have decided which law schools you would like to attend, you will probably need some assistance with the application and testing process and advice on how to best approach your personal statement. Don't hesitate to schedule an appointment to address these personal needs.

The Pre-Law Advisory Committee, is a group of faculty and administrators who have completed Pre Law Advisor training through the Northeast Association of Pre-Law Advisors (NAPLA). They represent a variety of academic backgrounds. The Pre-Law Advisory Committee is available to answer any law school related questions during posted office hours or by appointment. Information on LSAT/LSDas, careers in the law, law schools, and related pre-law materials can be found in the Career Development Center, located in Campbell Hall 200.

Pre-Law Advisory Committee

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Career Development Center Resources

Campbell Hall 200, 815-1452, www.ycp.edu/careerdevelopment

- Review of Personal Statements, and assistance with LSDAS & the Law School Application Process
- LSAT Registration booklets, ABA/LSAC Official Guide to ABA Approved Law Schools, and *The Advisor* magazines
- Law School Preparation Workshops are held each semester
- Periodic emails regarding Pre-Law related information, events and opportunities – register through www.ycp.edu/careerdevelopment

SUGGESTED READING

While there are a number of books about various aspects of the application process which can be useful, there is one book that provides different yet essential information into Law School itself:

“One L”, by Scott Turow, Grand Central Publishing 1997.

One L provides significant and realistic insight into the actual law school experience and demands, and is a must read for anyone considering law school. Although based upon the authors experience at Harvard Law, attorneys agree that the book is relevant to the experience at all law schools.

SUGGESTED PLANNING GUIDE FOR PRE-LAW STUDENTS

FRESHMAN & SOPHOMORE YEARS

- Take courses of interest as well as General Education requirements
- Solidify a major (and strongly consider at least one minor)
- Learn how to write effectively and improve your ability to write about, devise and deduce arguments with evidence and proof
- Earn a high GPA

JUNIOR YEAR - FALL

- Attend a Law School Preparation Workshop through Career Development

JUNIOR YEAR - SPRING

- Register with LSDAS
- Prepare for the LSAT (Practice Tests, Courses, Prep Books). It is very important that you prepare intensively for this exam!
- Plan to take LSAT in June – register by late April
- Read the “Official Guide to U.S. Law Schools” (available in Career Development Center, 3rd floor Student Union) and consider the schools to which you may apply
- Think about whom might write your letters of recommendation

JUNIOR YEAR – SUMMER

- Send transcript(s) to LSDAS
- Decide on competitive, safety and long-shot schools to which you will apply
- Draft a generic personal statement
- If possible, visit the law schools that interest you or attend a Law School Forum

SENIOR YEAR – AUGUST, SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER

- Secure application materials
- Talk with potential references about your interests and choices
- Request letters of reference
- Take or re-take the LSAT in October if necessary – register in mid-August
- Create a resume for your Law School applications and have it reviewed by Career Development

SENIOR YEAR - OCTOBER/NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

- Complete and submit applications from early December to early January. If you took the June LSAT, you should be able to submit earlier than this. Send Law School Application Matching Forms to each law school to which you are applying. These forms can be found in your Information Book. LSDAS reports will be produced only after this form is received from the law school. A Candidate’s Report will be sent to you.

SENIOR YEAR – JANUARY

- Undergraduates should send 7th semester grades to LSDAS. LSDAS will then issue new reports to the law schools which request these grades.
- Check on the status of your application to law schools within 9-10 weeks from the time the application should have been completed. Many law schools send acknowledgment cards when your application file is complete. If you haven't received such notification, follow up.

FEBRUARY - ON

- Acceptances and rejections begin to arrive – schools with rolling admissions policies may notify you earlier. As soon as you are admitted to the law school of your choice, notify all other law schools where you applied.
- Keep your pre-law advisors informed – this helps us help you and other applicants, both now and in the future.

THE LSAT

The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) is a half-day, standardized test administered four times each year at designated testing centers throughout the world. All American Bar Association (ABA)-approved law schools, most Canadian law schools, and many other law schools require applicants to take the LSAT as part of their admission process. It provides a standard measure of acquired reading and verbal reasoning skills that law schools can use as one of several factors in assessing applicants.

Many law schools require that the LSAT be taken by December for admission the following fall. However, taking the test earlier—in June or September—is often advised. Some schools place greater weight than others on the LSAT; most law schools do evaluate your full range of credentials.

Test Format

The test consists of five 35-minute sections of multiple-choice questions. Four of the five sections contribute to the test taker's score. The un-scored section, commonly referred to as the variable section, typically is used to pretest new test questions or to pre-equate new test forms. The placement of this section will vary. A 35-minute writing sample is administered at the end of the test. LSAC does not score the writing sample, but copies of the writing sample are sent to all law schools to which you apply.

What the Test Measures

The LSAT is designed to measure skills that are considered essential for success in law school: the reading and comprehension of complex texts with accuracy and insight; the organization and management of information and the ability to draw reasonable inferences from it; the ability to think critically; and the analysis and evaluation of the reasoning and arguments of others.

The three multiple-choice question types in the LSAT are:

- *Reading Comprehension Questions*
- *Analytical Reasoning Questions*
- *Logical Reasoning Questions*

Repeating the Test

Test takers frequently wonder whether they can improve their LSAT score by taking the test a second time. If you believe that your test score does not reflect your true ability—for example, if some circumstance such as illness or anxiety prevented you from performing as well as you might have expected—you should consider taking the test again. However, if your score is a fairly accurate indicator of your ability, it is unlikely that taking the test again will result in a substantially different score. You should also be aware that there is a chance your score will drop. Law schools must have access to your complete test record, not just your highest score. If there is no reason to believe that one score represents a truer estimate of an applicant's ability, schools are advised that the average score is probably the best estimate of ability—especially if the tests were taken over a short period of time.

NOTE: LSAC does not automatically inform law schools of a candidate's registration for a retest. It is your responsibility to inform law schools directly about your registration for additional tests.

Limitations on Test Taking

You may not take the LSAT more than three times in any two-year period. This policy applies even if you cancel your score or if your score is not otherwise reported. LSAC reserves the right to cancel your registration, rescind your admission ticket, or take any other steps necessary to enforce this policy.

LSAT PREPARATION INFORMATION

There are a number of providers of LSAT preparation materials, which range from study books and software, to courses (on-line and in person), to personal tutoring, with a corresponding range of costs from \$100 (books and software) to over \$4000 for personal and customized tutoring.

As the test taker, you need to evaluate your needs, establish goals and determine both a timeline and budget that meets those needs. Preparation should be conducted over time, and should include both indirect and direct methods.

Indirect Method: Vocabulary Enhancement

All standardized tests are based upon vocabulary and critical thinking, thus all test takers will benefit from increased focus on their verbal skills through reading. While college students may read significant amounts of pages through their coursework, it is typically very specific to their academic program, thus the breadth of their vocabulary does not always increase. To prepare for standardized tests, we recommend that test takers increase their reading and thereby increase their vocabulary through this reading. Read either the New York Times or the Wall Street Journal, cover to cover, once a week over a period of months prior to the test.

Direct Method: Specific LSAT Test preparation

Below is brief information on the leading national providers of LSAT (and other graduate school test) preparation programs. Please visit their websites for current options, locations and pricing information. *Please note that there are other LSAT prep resources available, please research options in your geographic area.*

Get Prepped: www.getprepped.com

Offers video (\$225) through personal tutoring (\$1299)

Courses offered in large metropolitan and university areas including: Philadelphia, New York City, and New Brunswick NJ.

Kaplan: www.kaptest.com

Offers On-Demand (\$499) through personal tutoring (must call for pricing)

On Site Courses primarily offered at colleges in region including: Franklin & Marshall, Johns Hopkins and Widener School of Law. 'LSAT Advantage' course cost approximately \$1400

Princeton Review: www.princetonreview.com

Offers on-line options (starting at \$999) through private tutoring (over \$5000)

On site courses offered at colleges including: Gettysburg, Johns Hopkins and Towson (\$2399)

APPLYING TO LAW SCHOOL

Your application should tell the story of who you are, including the background and experiences—both personal and educational—that makes you stand out from other applicants. The people in the admission office who are reading applications want to know what you will bring to the classroom, what challenges/disadvantages you have overcome, and what experiences have shaped your perspective. Through your application, you should seek to set yourself apart. To do that you must provide all relevant information about what you can bring to the law school experience.

What is involved in applying to law school?

Take the test—but not until you're ready. It's important to take the test as early as possible before law school application deadlines. (These deadlines may vary, so you should contact individual schools that interest you to find out what their application deadlines are. Plan to take the LSAT in either June or September/October, ideally.) Allow yourself plenty of time to take practice tests under timed conditions. Think in terms of months, not weeks.

What is the best prelaw major?

There is no particular major, course of study, or kind of bachelor's degree required for admission to law school. In general, you should use your undergraduate education as an opportunity to explore and work on your intellectual development. It's not necessary to take law-related courses as an undergraduate. Virtually all law schools consider a variety of majors and look closely at an applicant's overall background before making an admission decision. What matters most is that you do well in challenging courses that require you to synthesize information and to write. Keep in mind that the kind of skills you must develop for law school include effective oral and written communication, analytical reasoning, and problem-solving skills. Your undergraduate education should include courses in which those skills are taught or are required.

What undergraduate grade point average (UGPA) is required for admission?

As with LSAT scores, no single answer applies for all law schools. There is a wide range of UGPAs among applicants accepted to ABA-approved law schools. In general, you should strive for a strong undergraduate GPA from a progressively challenging course load. Your overall UGPA is as important to law schools as the kinds of courses in which you enrolled. Many law schools also examine your performance trend throughout undergraduate school. That means they may discount a slow start in a student's undergraduate career if he or she performs exceptionally well in the later school years. Similarly, admission committees may see an undergraduate's strong start followed by a mediocre finish as an indication of less potential to do well in law school. You may have an opportunity to comment in your personal statement about any performance decline or any dramatic turnaround in your performance, as well as any events in your personal life that may have affected your grades. However, be sure to follow precisely the individual application instructions.

When should I apply to law school? (Is it okay to wait until the deadline to apply?)

There are several reasons to complete your law school applications and take the LSAT as *early as possible*. First, you will have more time to fill in any gaps in your application file. Second, you might have more time to evaluate the schools that have accepted you—or to apply to other schools that you had not previously considered. Third, you will reduce the chance that a problem or error in paperwork might delay the review of your application. Admission offices are usually flooded with paperwork at the application deadline so submitting materials in November and December is suggested.

How should I decide where to apply?

Begin by gathering as much information about a variety of law schools as possible. We emphasize gathering information about a variety of schools because it is imperative that you not limit your selection of schools initially.

Gather information from [Law School Forums](#), held each fall in various cities nationwide; graduate and professional school days on law school campuses; publications including *The ABA-LSAC Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools* available from LSAC and accessible online at the LSAC home page; your undergraduate prelaw advisor; and the law schools themselves.

As you evaluate the schools, you should pay particular attention to locale, school reputation, school atmosphere, retention/attrition rates and cost.

Once you collect all your information, you should apply to at least one school in each of the following categories: your dream schools, or ones you would love to attend but whose LSAT scores and GPAs are somewhat higher than your own; your realistic schools, or ones where your application will be in the mainstream of the applicant population; and your safe schools, or ones that are most likely to admit you.

It's never too early to find out about the schools that may interest you, but don't decide which ones to apply to until you assess yourself as an applicant and thoroughly research various law schools. Because law school admission is a highly selective process, it is imperative that you think about how interesting you will seem to law schools. Try to develop a realistic sense of how attractive you are to the schools to which you apply. This step will help you yield the best results from your law school selections. Some law schools may offer admission to students with low numerical qualifications AFTER successful completion of a course that is usually offered in the summer before first-year classes begin, but admission is not guaranteed.

How do I register with LSAC?

As a law school applicant, you will need to register with the Law School Admission Council before you take the LSAT and apply to individual law schools. The easiest way to register (and get more information about the application process) is through their website.

What should I know about writing a personal statement?

Each candidate to law school has something of interest to present. The essay or personal statement, a required part of all law school applications, is your opportunity to tell the admission committee about yourself. Be brief, be factual, be comprehensive, and be organized. You are a storyteller here. You want a living person—you—to emerge. This is your chance to become vivid and alive to the reader, to demonstrate your ability to write and present a prose sample in a professional manner. Any noteworthy personal experience may be an appropriate subject for your essay. You must do more than simply state it; describe your experience briefly but concretely, and tell why it had value to you, whether it is a job, your family, a significant accomplishment, or your upbringing. If you have overcome a serious obstacle in your life to get where you are today, by all means let the admission committee know about it.

NAPLA LAW SCHOOL LOCATOR 2010-2011

JOSEPH BURNS, BOSTON COLLEGE

The NAPLA Law School Locator is an extension of the Rochester Locator developed by Professor Arthur S. Goldberg. Its purpose is to help applicants quickly assess the LSAT and GPA expectations of different law schools

and identify schools from across the country that they may wish to research further as they choose the schools to which they will apply.

While LSAT and GPA are only two of the many criteria that law schools consider in admitting students, they are perhaps the most basic. The Locator matrix groups schools according to the median LSAT and GPA of their entering classes. If you locate the cell in which your own GPA and LSAT scores fall, you can identify those schools at which you are "competitive" (a fifty-fifty chance or better) for admission based on numbers alone. It is at this set of schools that your personal statement, letters of reference, and other qualitative credentials play the greatest role in determining whether you will be admitted and the schools in this cell and the immediately adjoining cells should make up the bulk of your applications. If you find schools here about which you know little you may want to discuss them with your pre-law advisor and do more research on them in the schools' catalog or web page, in the ABA-LSAC Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools, on the official LSAC.org website, or at the Law School Forum nearest you. It is important to note that the Locator is meant to help you find new schools for consideration and not to exclude any schools from your list.

In addition to several competitive schools, each applicant should apply to one or more "safe" schools where your quantitative credentials make it very likely that you would be admitted. The cells containing such "safe" schools are located to the left and below your "competitive" cell.

A good application strategy will also include some "reach" schools where numbers alone suggest that you will not be admitted. Such schools are located above and to the right of your "competitive" cell. All law schools admit a few applicants with unusual experience or characteristics even if they do not meet the usual LSAT and GPA expectations. In choosing "reach" schools for application therefore you should consider the kinds of experience or achievements you have that match the interests, goals or special programs at a particular law school. In your application, personal statement, and letters of reference you should emphasize why you think these make you especially qualified for admission to that school. In this way, you will give yourself the best chance for admission to a school that typically looks for higher numbers.

A reasonable application strategy therefore will include schools from at least three and probably more different cells. It is important to note that LSAT and GPA expectations are not in any way indicative of the educational experience at a law school or the suitability of that school for any individual. The Locator cannot rank the quality of law schools, nor can it tell you which the best school is for you. It simply provides a rough indicator of the competitiveness for admission at different schools, only one of many criteria you should consider in selecting the schools to which you apply. (A good discussion of the variety of criteria to be considered is included in the section on "Choosing A Law School" [Chapter 5, pages 17-21] in the *2011 ABA-LSAC Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools*, and on the LSAC.org website.

LOCATOR MATRIX

					C	A
3.8						
3.6		I	F	D	B	
3.4	L	J	G	E		
3.2	O	M	K	H		
	P	N				
	150	155	160	165	170	
	LSAT SCORE					

The data on LSAT and GPA medians used in the Locator is drawn from the **2011ABA-LSAC Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools** and is based on admissions to full-time programs for Fall 2009. **An interactive on-line version of the Locator based on 25th percentile LSAT and GPA scores** is available on the Boston College Career Center website at the URL address: <http://www.bc.edu/offices/careers/gradschool/law/lawlocator.html>.

RELATED WEBSITES

Law School Admission Council On-line is the official website of the LSAC, which administers the LSAT. Here you can find information on LSAT registration, financing graduate school and Law School Forums.
www.lsac.org

American Bar Association has information on ABA Accredited Law Schools www.abanet.org

Internet Legal Research Group has a Law School Information Index with sources for ranking and analysis as well as links to Law Schools www.ilrg.com/schools.html

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