



Prelaw Handbook



A Step by Step Guide
to Applying to Law School

Prelaw Handbook

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PREFACE

Law school is an experience which can greatly change people. Not only must one learn the nuts-and-bolts details of working as a lawyer, one must also learn to think as a lawyer. Law school is, of course, challenging because it involves learning a new legal language, a new style of analysis and a new approach to problem solving. It can also force students to adopt a whole new perspective on our society. If you would like to learn more about the somewhat complicated process involved in becoming a law student, then read on.

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INTRODUCTION

This handbook has been designed to provide you with basic information about the prelaw program at Clark University and to answer many of the questions that prelaw students most frequently ask. One fact you should know is that there are no absolute answers when dealing with law schools. The factors vary from student to student and from school to school. There are, however, some fundamentals that are relevant to all prelaw students. Keep in mind that this is a starting point – a tool of reference to guide you through the preparation for and application processes to law school.

PRELAW ADVISING AT CLARK

Prelaw Adviser

The Director of Career Services serves as prelaw adviser along with faculty members of the Prelaw Advisory Committee. Most prelaw advising activities originate in Career Services, located on the second floor of Alumni House, 122 Woodland Street. Individual appointments for prelaw advising can be made through this office. The prelaw adviser can assist you in tailoring an individual approach to the law school application process. The adviser communicates with law schools and has access to information such as application, acceptances, and matriculation rates that may be useful when planning an application strategy. The prelaw adviser also writes the dean's recommendation letters for Clark University law school candidates.

Throughout the school year, mailings are sent from this office that invite registered prelaw students to group meetings, workshops, panel discussions, and lectures. These activities are structured to inform you about law as a career as well as to support your efforts to prepare for law school.

Prelaw Advisory Committee

The Prelaw Advisory Committee is comprised of faculty and administrators who work with prelaw students through the law school preparation and application processes. The members serve as auxiliary advisers to prelaw students, particularly in assisting students with their personal statement essays. A list of Prelaw Advisory Committee members is always available through Career Services. Members of the committee are available to review personal statements and discuss application strategy.

Prelaw Society

The Prelaw Society is a Student Council – recognized student organization, and as such operates independently of the Clark Prelaw Advisory Committee. There is, however, a close cooperation between the two. The Prelaw Society (PLS) also cooperates with Career Services, the Alumni Office, and other offices to sponsor events such as guest lecturers, alumni panels, and a mock trial competition. The PLS also offers you a peer group of students who share your interest in the law. Upperclass students, especially graduating seniors, can offer considerable insight.

You may find that you want to take an active role and become part of the PLS's executive board. Not only will this give you an opportunity to be active in prelaw programming, but it will also provide you with leadership experiences. Attend the Student Activities Fair in the fall or spring

of each year to ask to be placed on the membership list. Be sure to include your full name, class, box number, email address, and phone number or email careers@clarku.edu, subject Subscribe to Prelaw List with the same information.

The message is simple: you are responsible for your four years at Clark. You have the opportunity to spend these years in pursuit of not only liberal arts education, but also in pursuit of information about the law profession. Clark offers you both.

DECIDING ON LAW SCHOOL

The law school application process can be stressful and competitive. A strong interest and motivation will help you handle the process. Take advantage of all resources available to you at Clark to research the law school application process and the legal field so that you are sure you really want to pursue law school. The Career Library has several books as well as alumni contacts – all there to provide you with information you will need to make your decision.

Once you decide to apply to law school, the next decision you will need to make is when to apply. Will you go directly after college or will you take a year or two off? There are some very compelling reasons to delay application to law school. If you plan to attend law school directly after college, the law schools will only see your first six semesters of grades during consideration of your application. If your undergraduate record is weak, a year or two in a field of undergraduate employment that allows you to make a significant improvement in your analytic abilities, motivation, judgment, and maturity will greatly enhance your chances for admission to law school. Law schools also seem to favor “older” applicants (the average age of entering law students is 27 and going up).

ACADEMICS

Will a certain major enhance my chances for admission to law school? The answer to this question is No. You should choose a major in whatever topic you are interested in studying. Our research shows that there is no one major that law schools prefer and, likewise, there is no major that they particularly dislike. Because grades are so important, you should major in a subject you like because your grades will probably be higher in that major.

Like most colleges, Clark does not have a “Prelaw curriculum,” although we do offer many law-related courses in many departments through our Law and Society program. The Law and Society concentration can be added to any major. However, the Law and Society program is not required for pre-law students and any students apply to law school without completing this concentration. The best thing you can do to prepare yourself for law school is to study something that interests you. The theory behind this approach is that if you are interested in your courses, you will be motivated to achieve high levels of academic performance. This demonstrated commitment to learning is the most important factor in the law school admissions process.

There are, however, three basic areas in which prelaw students need to develop proficiency:

1. Effectiveness in the comprehension and use of oral and written language.
2. In-depth understanding of human institutions and values.
3. Analytical and critical thinking.

Choosing electives that will strengthen your aptitude in these areas will greatly assist you when you are a student of law. Demonstrating competence in these fields will make you an appealing candidate for admission at law schools.

Language

Language is the most important working tool used by the lawyer. Whether it be effectively negotiating a contract, examining a witness in court, preparing an appellate brief or just grasping the exact meanings of legal provisions, the lawyer must understand the precise meanings of words. To facilitate the development of language skills, students should pursue courses that will give them adequate practice in:

1. Expression: vocabulary, usage, grammar, organized presentation, structure of language, and clarity of statement in both writing and speaking.
2. Comprehension: concentration and effective recollection in reading and listening skills.

Both expression and comprehension require sensitivity to the fluidity of language – the various meanings of words in different times and contexts, shades of meanings, interpretive problems and the hazards in use of ambiguous terms. Also, skilled expression, especially for the lawyer, requires knowledge of the deceptiveness of language – emotionally charged words, catch phrases, hidden meanings, and empty generalizations.

Most Verbal Expression (VE) classes at Clark University, regardless of discipline, stress the fundamentals of language. Student research projects are also the key to developing these skills.

Taking a variety of courses with strong writing and research components can strengthen language skills.

Human Institutions and Values

A good lawyer must have insight into information about the institutions and values which concern the public at large, since lawyers are a force in shaping such institutions. Such insight comes from intensive study to a substantial depth in selected areas, rather than from attempts to skim all the large areas. Your major, minor, and concentrations will have an impact on your development in this area.

Creative Power in Thinking

Perhaps the lawyer's most valuable asset is the power to think clearly, carefully, and independently. The role of the lawyer involves constant problem-solving and sound judgment. Creative power in thinking has, as its prerequisite, the acquisition of skills in research, use of facts, inductive, deductive and analytic reasoning, critical analysis, and the systematic formulation of principles and concepts.

Classes that stress critical thinking can include: English, history, philosophy, geography, and government; all classes in the natural sciences, lab courses in psychology, classes involving research methods in the social sciences; and all courses in computer science and mathematics. You should take challenging courses in all disciplines to strengthen your skills. Courses in philosophy that stress logic and analytic reasoning skills can also be beneficial to the development of critical thinking skills and can help to prepare for the Law School Admission Test (LSAT).

Remember, you should only major in a discipline because you find the subject matter appealing; the key to academic success is to pursue what you enjoy. Whatever your major, you will have ample opportunity to sample other departments when you choose electives. In selecting those classes that fulfill the perspective requirements of the Program of Liberal Studies, you will find that many of them concentrate on the areas outlined and will assist you in your future as a lawyer.

Do grade options have an impact on my chances for admissions?

Law schools do not like to see several pass/fail or credit/no credit classes on an applicant's transcript because they are an obstacle in evaluating a student's academic performance. Whether it is a fair assumption or not, admissions committees may assume that a student elected the pass/fail option because the student anticipated that doing so would allow him/her to do less work in the class and not be penalized for it by having a low grade affect his/her GPA. The other assumption might be that the student feared receiving a low grade in a course with a high degree of difficulty and could avoid doing so by electing the pass/fail options. As a general rule, the first two pass/fail courses are overlooked, but after two, they may recomputed your GPA, counting a pass as a "C" or even a "C-." Taking an internship as pass/fail is generally fine.

Will a few poor grades really hurt my chances for admission?

Don't let anyone kid you – your first-year grades are very important if you plan to apply to law school. But, your “academic trend” is also taken into consideration by law schools. A student who has earned high grades in analytic and advanced courses, but whose GPA has been lowered by a few low grades in less-demanding and introductory courses taken in the first-year, might be regarded as a stronger candidate than the student who has earned a high GPA by taking introductory classes in the junior or senior year. Moreover, law schools may overlook a low grade that was earned in the first or second year if they see an improvement in academic performance in the junior and senior year. On the other hand, law schools will react unfavorably to an applicant with a strong first-year grade point average which drops each successive year due to poor performance in advanced courses.

EXTRACURRICULARS

The extent of your involvement in extracurricular organizations, not your nominal association, is considered both by the law schools and by those who will write your letters of recommendations; mere membership counts for very little. Active participation, as demonstrated by long-term commitment in leadership roles, indicates maturity, motivation, and direction.

Your depth of extracurricular dedication could be an important part of the admissions process. A career in law requires that you work well with people and know how to balance various aspects of your life. A student who strikes a balance between real commitments to a few extracurricular organizations while maintaining a high level of academic achievement will be a strong applicant.

Community Service

Beyond extracurricular involvement, students should be involved with some type of community service because law schools want their students to have sensitivity toward the needs of society. However, the only reasons to be involved in community services is because you care enough to be involved, and a true commitment to your community would then be highlighted in one of your letters of recommendation.

Law-Related Activities, Internships, and Employment

Meaningful involvement in law-related activities can be of great value in two ways. It proves to law schools that your desire to study law is well considered, and it also serves as an excellent way for you to discover the area and extent of your own interest in law. There are a few ways to achieve this end.

1. Join the Prelaw Society. It is an easy way of being involved in a law-related activity on campus.
2. Another way of demonstrating your interest in the law is via legal internships and/or employment. Clark has many legal internships available for academic credit. They range from working in a law firm in Worcester to being a probation assistant. Also, the Washington Center and Washington Semester programs have hundreds of law-related internships available. Some students do law-related internships abroad as well. If you are interested in pursuing an internship, make an appointment with the internship coordinator in Career Services. Legal employment on your summer vacation offers yet another

opportunity for firsthand experience in the field of law and demonstrates to law schools your seriousness about the pursuit of a legal career.

CAREERS IN LAW

Career opportunities for someone with a law degree are plentiful. Many such careers are in areas that you may not even know exist. For descriptions of the many types of law practices and law-related professions, read the literature in the Career Services Library, located on the second floor of Alumni House at 122 Woodland Street.

APPLYING TO LAW SCHOOL

The basic criteria used in determining an applicant's admission are: LSAT score, college records, the quality of your undergraduate institution, letters of recommendation, and the personal statement or essay. Your LSAT score and your cumulative grade point average are the paramount criteria.

When to Apply

Most law schools allow students to begin study only in the fall term. The application should be complete in November of the calendar year prior to the semester when you want to begin law school. For example, if you want to begin law school in the fall of 2009, then applications should be complete by November 2008.

You will note that most law schools have an application deadline in February or March. Do not wait for the deadline! Regardless of what the published deadline is, you should mail in your applications in mid to late November so law schools will have a completed application by December. (Remember they need time to receive your LSDAS report from Law Services, that's why we recommend the June or October/September test dates). Knowing your LSAT score helps to ensure you have selected a reasonable set of schools to which to apply.

The earlier you apply to law school, the better. The logic behind applying early is simply that you stand a better chance of being admitted. If an admissions committee begins reviewing applications in early December when there are many spaces available in the class, it may be more inclined to take a chance on admitting a borderline student than it would be after the application deadline has passed and there is keen competition for the few remaining spaces.

It is important to apply during the year you intend to matriculate. Most law schools do not grant deferred admissions. The few schools that do grant them have significant restrictions on their deferral policies. It is also extremely difficult to transfer from one law to another, so the student should plan on spending all three years at the same law school.

Where to Apply

There are a number of factors you need to consider when deciding where to apply. You need to establish a list of target schools to which you intend to apply. This list should be carefully chosen, based on your preferences in location, the type and size of the law school, and your chances for admission.

You should compile a list of schools that satisfy your personal preferences, based upon considerations such as geographical location, size, rural or urban setting, cost, reputation, and special programs the school may offer. Don't bother to apply to a school you don't want to attend. It is a waste of your valuable time and money. Also, your acceptance at such a school may prevent someone else from being accepted.

Once you have determined your personal preferences for law schools, you should then begin to consider the schools more carefully in terms of your admission possibilities. When targeting law schools, you should investigate the median GPA and LSAT score of the recently admitted students at these law schools. This will enable you to establish whether you will be competitive for admission. It is important that you apply to a cross-section of schools. A cross-section of schools means a few “reach schools” whose average statistics make admission a long shot, but not impossible, a few schools to which you stand a 50-50 chance of being admitted; and one or two “safety” schools where admission seems assured. The prelaw adviser can provide you with information that helps to easily determine which schools make sense based on your scores. Also, refer to the Official Guide to U.S. Law Schools for individual law school data. This guide can also be found online at www.lsac.org.

As mentioned in the introduction to this book, nothing is certain when dealing with law school applications. You need to cover all the bases when you are dealing with legal admissions. All in all, it is not unusual to apply to anywhere from eight to twelve law schools; it is an investment in your future, so plan accordingly.

The Application Process

In order for your application to be ready for review, the law school must have:

1. A completed application (Please note: many schools use the same application, referred to as “common application.” Information concerning what schools accept the common application is available online at www.lsac.org)
2. Transcripts from all colleges or universities where the student took any college level classes.
3. LSAT scores
4. A check for the application fee or a fee waiver form.
5. A personal statement essay (or other essay as indicated).
6. The required number of letters of recommendation.
7. A few law schools (mostly in the Northeast) require a Dean’s letter, which is a check of disciplinary sanctions imposed while the student attended Clark. The Office of Career Services handles all the Dean’s letters for law school.

The Application

Most law schools’ applications ask for routine information such as your full name, social security number, mailing and permanent addresses, undergraduate institutions attended, major and date of degree. While filling out the application is not intellectually taxing, you should exercise care when doing so. Admissions officers will inevitably be disillusioned by an application that is illegible or contains spelling mistakes, typographical errors, cross-outs or type-overs, or worst of all, completion errors. Applications that are incorrectly completed show a lack of care in preparing the application and an inability or unwillingness to follow directions. Be sure to type all applications. Provide the information that is asked for where it is asked for and in the manner it is asked for. Enclose a check made payable to the law school for the amount of the application fee. Your application will not be processed unless you remit this fee. If you are unable to pay the application fee, follow the instructions outlined in the given law school’s application materials or catalogue to obtain a fee waiver. Fee waivers are granted in circumstances of demonstrated need.

Personal Statement Essay

Almost every law school application asks for an essay. The great majority of law schools ask for a personal statement; a few, however, ask a specific question to be answered by you in an essay of specified length. Preparing your personal statement essay is the longest part of the application process. By the time a personal statement is good enough to impress an admissions committee, you may have spent several months doing multiple revisions of the essay.

The critical elements in writing the personal statement are what you say, as well as how you say it. It is assumed that, as a college senior or graduate, you are capable of writing proficiently. Failure to do so, by committing grammatical or usage mistakes and/or spelling errors, will do irreparable damage to your chances for admission.

A good essay is rarely enough to compensate for an otherwise weak application, but it is the factor that helps to positively sway the committee on “middle-of-the-road” cases. The personal statement is the only opportunity you have to allow the admissions committee to get to know you as an individual. The personal statement is the vehicle that permits you to tell the law school anything about you that you want them to know. You should use this opportunity to the fullest advantage. Make yourself come alive; let the committee know something that they could not learn from reading the other parts of the application. Because very few law schools grant personal interviews in the application process, the personal statement is an opportunity to introduce yourself in writing to the selection committee.

You may write on any topic you wish, so long as it is “personal,” expressing information about yourself. This is not the forum to express your opinion on the ramifications of a Supreme Court decision. Nor is the proper place to apologize for weak spots in your application. NEVER be apologetic in your essay. If you do have a weak spot or two in your application for a valid reason, explanations for them should be addressed in your letters of recommendation or in a supplementary statement from you. Let a dean or a faculty member tell the committee that your second semester, sophomore grades were poor because you had mononucleosis, or explain it yourself in a brief statement you add to your application. Through your essay, you should put your best foot forward to impress the committee in a positive way, not to elicit routine sympathy that will not help your chances for admission.

You may want to write on some details of a college activity that indicates your motivation and maturity as well as your abilities. Employment experiences, special family situations, and reflections on your semester abroad are all possible topics. Do not, however, write essays, “Why I Have Always Wanted to be a Lawyer” or “Why I Believe Your Institution is the Best Law School.” The best way to impress the committee is to write on something in a fresh light. Be as specific and detailed as you can. Avoid generalizations and clichés. Communicating an original idea in a clear, logical, and coherent manner will more than suffice.

Here is a final word on the length of your personal statement. Some law schools do not indicate a specific word or page limit for the essay; others do. As a general rule, your essay should fit on

two pages, double spaced using a normal font and normal margins. Admissions officers have to endure reading thousands of application essays. They simply cannot and will not read a three or four page essay; there is not enough time. The good news is that you do not have to prepare the personal statement on your own. You have resources of the Writing Center at your disposal. After that, you should share your essay with members of the Prelaw Advisory Committee for critique. The members of the committee can offer suggestions for improvements.

Letters of Recommendation

Law schools typically require three letters of recommendation. The Prelaw Advisory Committee at Clark suggest that at least two of these recommendations come from faculty members familiar with your analytical abilities, writing abilities, and critical thinking skills. The third letter of recommendation may come from another professor, an internship supervisor, an employer, or someone who is familiar with your academic or job-related skills. These letters should discuss your writing skills, analytical skills, and other academic skills necessary for the successful completion of law school.

The Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS), the same organization which reports LSAT scores to law schools, has a letter of recommendation service. Law school applications should now have all of their recommenders send their recommendation letters directly to LSDAS. The application should give the recommenders the LSDAS form, and the recommender should include the LSADS recommendation form with their letters. Some law schools will not review applicant files until they have received at least two or three letters from the LSDAS letter of recommendation services. Further information on this is available at Career Services.

When obtaining your recommendations, you should approach instructors who are not only familiar enough with your work, but are sufficiently impressed with your academic abilities that they will write a letter in strong support of your candidacy for admission. Your recommenders need to be able to address your quality of work, motivation, maturity, and depth of personal growth. Law schools specifically look for letters that reveal positive information about the applicant's intellectual and analytical abilities, research skills, writing aptitude, commitment to the study of law, responsibility, leadership, and ethical integrity. Recommenders need to be specific about such information, citing examples whenever possible.

Since sometimes faculty members are away from Clark on sabbatical for a semester or a year, the Prelaw Advisory Committee recommends that students do not wait until they are applying to law school to obtain letters of recommendation from their professors. It is always better to obtain letters of recommendation while the student's academic work is fresh in the minds of their professors.

The letter of recommendation is the proper forum for addressing shortcomings in your application. A professor or the prelaw adviser is the person who should explain your history of poor scores on standardized tests or that you had mono during your sophomore year; hence, a semester of low grades. Such an explanation may persuade the law schools to overlook such a weak spot. Remember, your personal statement essay is not the proper forum to reveal such

information. You may want to share all such information with those persons writing on your behalf.

Give your recommenders adequate time to prepare your letters. A month should be considered the minimum amount of time to allow for the completion of your recommendations. If possible, you should approach faculty members from whom you intend to get recommendations in the late spring of your junior year. This will allow them the entire summer to work on your letter. In turn, you will not be delayed waiting for your letters when you are applying in the fall of your senior year. If doing so is not feasible, solicit your letters as early as possible in your senior year to have your applications ready to go out by December. Provide the date by which you must have the recommendations, and you may need to explain the importance of applying early to your recommenders. You certainly don't want to wait until mid-winter to receive your letters.

Dean's Letters

Some schools have a special form known as the "Dean's Certification Form" or "College Questionnaire." The purpose of this form is to verify your status in college. It will ask the dean to provide information on your disciplinary record and an estimate for class rank or percentile rank. (Note: Clark does not rank its students.) While law schools are mainly interested in whether you were a subject of any disciplinary action during your time at Clark, most forms will also invite the dean to add any additional comments which will serve as a supplemental letter of recommendation. The prelaw adviser at Clark completes the Dean's Certification Form. You will need to allow at least two weeks to have the form processed and sent to law schools.

THE LAW SCHOOL ADMISSIONS TEST (LSAT)

Every student applying to law school must take the LSAT. The examination is used by law schools as a predictor of success in the first year of legal studies. The LSAT was originally designed as a means to standardize applicants across schools, given the difficulty in the comparative evaluation of students' grade point averages at different undergraduate institutions.

Unlike the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the Graduate Record Exam (GRE), the LSAT assumes no prior knowledge of any particular area. In other words, it does not test any subject matter that you presumably have studied. Instead, the LSAT tests cognitive, reading and analytical skills, abilities that an attorney must use on a daily basis.

The current LSAT is a multiple-choice exam composed of the five following sections:

Writing Sample

You are given a set of facts covering two sides of an issue. You are then asked to choose one side and write an essay supporting your decision. This section is not scored; it is simply photocopied and sent to each law school to which you apply as an indication of your writing skills.

Logical Reasoning

These two sections contain anywhere from 24-26 questions based on very short arguments. You are asked to evaluate the argument, strengthen it or weaken it, illustrate the premise of the argument, or deduce its conclusions or implications.

Reading Comprehension

Not unlike the reading comprehension section of the SAT, this section contains reading passages. You are tested on your ability to distinguish between major points and supporting evidence, to draw inferences from factual information and detect the logical strengths and weaknesses in the passage. Each passage is followed by questions for a total of 26-28 questions in the section.

Analytic Reasoning (Logic Games)

In this section, you are presented with problem sets. Each problem begins with a set of information or rules. You must organize the information and then answer questions on the program for a total of 22 to 24 questions in this section. You are tested on your ability to recognize relationships and to perform abstract (mathematical-like) reasoning.

Experimental Section

The experimental section is simply an additional section of logical reasoning, the reading comprehension, or the logic games section. It may be located during any part of the exam. The experimental section is not graded and therefore does not affect your score on the LSAT. Since there is really no way of knowing which section is the experimental one, you respond to each section as if it were being scored.

Timing

You are given 35 minutes to complete each section except for the writing sample, for which 30 minutes is allotted.

The LSAT is deliberately a “speeded” exam, designed so that the majority of students do not finish. The score earned under such timed conditions is designed to be an indication of a student’s ability to make logical, critical decisions under pressure. Your best defense against the skewed timing of the LSAT is to be prepared for the test. Familiarity with the directions is helpful since the instructions are lengthy and complex. Familiarity with the question types is invaluable.

PLAN TO TAKE THE LSAT ONLY ONCE

It is not an ordeal you will want to sit through more than once. If you take an LSAT a second time, many law schools have recently begun to take your highest score. Others continue to average your scores, making it difficult to do better enough on the second try to make taking the test again a good option for many students. All scores on the LSAT are reported to the law schools regardless of whether the specific law school accepts the highest score or averages all the scores.

Scoring

Your score on the LSAT is built entirely on the number of questions you answer correctly. There is no penalty for wrong answers; so, feel free to guess. NEVER leave answers unmarked. You may be lucky and guess the correct answer. You have nothing to lose by doing so.

The number of questions you answer corrected is your raw score. Your raw scores is then scaled against other test-takers’ raw scores and finally calculated into a LSAT score ranging from 120 to 180. This score will also be assigned a percentile ranking based on the scores earned over the immediate three preceding years.

Time per section	35 minutes
Number of sections	5 minutes

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| 1) Logical Reasoning | 24-26 questions |
| 2) Logical Reasoning | 24-26 questions |
| 3) Analytical Reasoning | 22-24 questions |
| 4) Reading Comprehension | 26-28 questions |
| 5) Variable* | |

*The variable is a non-scored, experimental section used for pretesting new questions and pre-equating new test forms.

The Score Scale

The scale will extend from 120 to 180, with a mean of 150. It will have 61 distinct score points in it. This should provide a reliable measurement across a broad range of score scale. Reliable measure means that a test taker’s relative position in the applicant pool would be consistent if

tested many times. It should also allow an evident distinction between more-able and less-able test takers.

What is the LSDAS?

LSDAS stands for Law School Data Assembly Service. Law schools require that you register with LSDAS for application. The service compiles and then standardizes all of your academic work over the course of your college career. You register for the LSAT, using the same form in the Law Services Information Booklet. Your registration fee buys you a one year subscription to the service. Once you register with LSDAS, you must arrange to have an official transcript sent to LSDAS by the registrar's office at each institution from which you have received college credit. Fill out a "Transcript Request Form" for each college or university and bring the completed card with you when you request the transcript from each Registrar.

Each LSDAS report includes the following information: your major, honors earned, study-abroad information, your grade point average each year and your cumulative grade point average, your overall grade distribution, the last three previous LSAT scores, your average LSAT score, Clark students' average LSAT score, and Clark students' average grade-point average. The last two pieces of information are reported so that the law schools have information to enable comparison of your statistics with other at your institution.

LSDAS does not release a full report on any specific student to law schools until all the required information is present in the student's file. A full report includes transcripts from all colleges or universities where a student has received academic credit, the last three LSAT scores, the student's personal statement, and letters of recommendation. If any of these elements are delayed in reaching LSDAS, then the student's report will not be released to the law schools until the required elements are present. You may want to remind your recommenders of this fact.

When should I take the LSAT?

The LSAT is administered four times a year, in June, late September or early October, December, and February. The February test date is usually too late for most law school application deadlines, so it should generally not be considered an option. That leaves the option of summer, fall, and early winter test dates.

If you can prepare for the LSAT throughout your junior year and take it in June before your senior year, you will be informed of your scores during the summer and, therefore, have the opportunity to determine at which schools you will have competitive edge for admission. However, you should not take the LSAT unless you are prepared! If, for whatever reasons, you feel that you are not well prepared to take the exam in June of your junior year, by all means, take the entire summer to study intensively and then plan to take the fall LSAT, which will still allow you time to determine appropriate schools and submit applications in late November/early December.

The December LSAT should be a last resort. Unless there have been extenuating circumstances that prevented you from taking the June or September/October test, you should not wait to take the December exam. There are two main reasons not to wait until the December test date. First, your scores take approximately three weeks to get back to you. Since LSAT scores and undergraduate grade point average are the two most important factors in the law school admissions process, you will be at the distinct disadvantages of not knowing your LSAT in the summer or fall. The other reason you should not wait is that you may want to retake the LSAT in December if your June or September test scores are not where you know they should be. Although we did say you should plan to take the LSAT only once, it is always wise to have a back-up date, just in case.

How can I prepare for the LSAT?

The only way to prepare for the LSAT is to familiarize yourself with every component of the test. The National Association of Prelaw Advisers' Handbook recommends two hours of concentrated practice a day for at least three months as the bare minimum. An hour or two every day for six months to a year would be ideal. Please note: Today around 80 percent of law school applicants take a commercial LSAT prep course.

There are a number of ways to study for the LSAT. One of the best ways to prepare for the LSAT is indeed by taking an LSAT review course. For the most part, if you are financially able, a professional prep course may be a good idea if you feel you may benefit from the structure and time management; anything you can do to improve your LSAT score is a good investment. The three most popular professional LSAT prep classes are offered by Kaplan, the Princeton Review, and TestWell. There are many others out there. Prices for such classes range from \$500 to \$1400. Scholarships may be available from the preparatory course based on demonstrated need. Some companies use a sliding fee scale.

Another way to practice is through home study. You can use any available materials for home study. The LSAT/LSDAS Registration Booklet contains a practice LSAT. You may also order previous LSATs on your LSAT/LSDAS registration form. These related LSATs come in what is referred to as "The Official LSAT Prep Packages," complete with an actual, not simulated, exam, answers, and explanations to the questions and correct answers. You may also choose to do home study using commercial preparation books. Arco, Barrons, Martinson, Monarch, Regency, Simon and Schuster, and Princeton Review all have preparation books available for purchase at most bookstores.

Should I take the LSATs once for practice?

NO! Actually, we can't stop you from doing it, but according to Law Services, there is no indication that a person's score on one test date is a better indicator of performance than a score on another test date. It's worth repeating – this is not a test you take once just to see how you would score. You need to be fully prepared for the first time and do your best.

If your score is considerably below where you expected it to be, it may be necessary to retake the test. Check with the catalogues of the various law schools you are considering to see if they count the highest score or if they average all the LSAT scores. Keep in mind, however, that

schools that look at second test scores expect to see a very significant increase on the second exam. A drop in score would be seriously detrimental. Ideally, you will prepare for the LSAT over a long enough period of time that you will not take too much time from your Clark course work. It is important not to detract from your normal academic pursuits and your grade-point average. Please note: at www.lsac.org you can input your GPA and LSAT score and obtain an estimated likelihood of admission to each school.

What if I have a disability that may affect my performance on the LSAT?

Students should contact LSAC for more information regarding the procedures for obtaining special accommodation.

FINANCING YOUR LEGAL EDUCATION

Financing a legal education is not easy. Tuition at law schools varies significantly. Many state schools offer special tuition rates for bona fide residents of the given state. Out-of-state tuition for non-residents at such state institutions still tends to be fairly good buy, as far as cost goes. Private institutions range from the moderately affordable to the outrageously expensive. "The Official Guide to U.S. Law Schools" and other law school reference books can give you an idea of law school tuition ranges. You will have to check with each law school to find out exact amounts for current tuition and related expenses.

What options are available to pay for law school?

There are several ways to finance your legal education. A substantial number of students draw on their family's resources. Family and personal savings are typically insufficient to finance the total cost of a legal education. There are several options for financial aid to assist in meeting the expenses you will face as a law student. There are grants and scholarship that do not require repayment and there are various types of loans for which interest is due.

When do I apply for financial aid?

Each law school has its own deadline for filing financial aid forms. Just list your application deadline; it is foolish to wait until the financial aid deadline to file. You should apply for financial aid at least one month prior to the earliest financial aid deadline specified by one of your target law schools. This reason is quite simple. Most law schools will not analyze your financial aid status until after you are admitted. If you wait until the last minute to ask for financial aid, the law school may have already pledged all of its money to student who applied early. Of course, the system varies greatly from school to school, but as a general rule, you should file your financial aid forms early.

Scholarships and Grants

As scholarships and grants do not have to be paid back, you should look into every possibility to finance your legal education via this funding. The law schools themselves usually endow their own scholarship programs, with funds from alumni, private and corporate donations. Many grants are made available by the state in which the law school is located. The great majority of scholarships and grants are need-based. There are, however, a handful of merit-based scholarships available. These are not only hard to find but are also extremely competitive.

Often, scholarships and grants are used to attract outstanding students, minority students, non-traditional students, and disadvantaged students. The Office Guide to U.S. Law Schools lists a number of sources to research private scholarship listings. Also a number of catalogue-type reference materials on scholarships and grants are on file in the Career Services Library.

Council on Legal Education Opportunity (CLEO)

CLEO is a federally funded program that provides fellowships for law students from economically and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. The program awards tuition and a stipend to 200 students a year. The program requires CLEO fellows to participate in a training program for law students by taking courses the summer before they begin their law school

careers. The summer institute introduces students to the law school environment and builds a foundation for legal writing. It is hoped that such background training will contribute to the academic success of CLEO graduates while in law school. For more information, write CLEO at 1420 N. Street, N.W., Terrace One, Washington, DC 20005, or call (202) 785-4840.

Applying for Financial Aid

If you are applying for financial aid, you should begin by filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), available at the Clark financial aid office, or from the law schools to which you are applying. The FAFSA is a needs analysis tool developed by the U.S. Government. You are asked for information on your income, assets, and other financial resources, to be used to compute how much you and your family should contribute toward your legal education. Many schools will also require copies of tax returns and in some cases, the completion of a supplemental form. This information helps the law school to develop an analysis of what types of aid you will need (i.e. scholarships, grants, loans, work-study) to pay your expenses.

Loans

Perhaps the most common method to obtain funds for law school is through loans. You may decide that your bank offers certain loan programs that are particularly suited to your needs; check with them. More often than not, law students rely on one of three federally guaranteed loan programs: the Perkins Federal Loan, the subsidized Federal Stafford Loan, and the unsubsidized Federal Stafford Loan.

Subsidized Federal Stafford Loan –A certain amount a year is available to students who meet the need criteria. Interest is paid by the federal government while you are enrolled in law school. Repayment of the loan begins six months after you graduate, withdraw, or drop below half-time status. (For current amounts see <http://www.staffordloan.com>)

Unsubsidized Federal Stafford Loan – This loan is not based on student need and any graduate student may take out this loan. Students are allowed to borrow subsidized and unsubsidized loan money up to a certain point (see <http://www.staffordloan.com>). You choose to either pay the interest or allow the interest to accrue while you are in law school.

Perkins Federal Loan – Available to students at some schools, each award is determined by the law school itself with information obtained from your FAFSA. Perkins Loans typically have a low interest rate (see <http://www.ed.gov/programs/fpl/index.html> to make sure). Students must demonstrate need. The federal government pays the interest while you are in school. Repayment begins six months after you finish school or drop below half-time status.

PLUS Loan- Students who cannot pay for school with the above loans, have the option for a PLUS loan. Students are required to fill out the FAFSA. (For current information see <http://www.gradloans.com/>)

Private Loans

There are a number of private loan programs available through lenders including Law Access, Law-Loans, and The Education Resource Institute (TERI). Many of the programs allow you to borrow federal as well as private loans through them, allowing you to track your loan portfolio more easily. Through the LEXIS/NEXIS gateway, you can access an electronic application for Law Access' private Law Access Loan and other federal loans. Loans for Bar-Review study are also available through Law Access and Law-Loans to students who have previously borrowed through these programs. (For current information see <http://www.gradloans.com/private/> or <http://www.accessgroup.org>)

More information, contact addresses, and phone numbers can be found in the Law Services' publication, "Financial Aid for Law School: A Preliminary Guide," available for free through law schools and Law Services.

Federal Work-Study

There are some federal funds available through a program for students to work part-time during the school year and full-time during the summer. Positions are either on-campus in a variety of settings or in off-campus non-profit agencies. Additional information can be requested from any law school financial aid officer.

Debt Management

It is very important to have a good credit history. Your repayment records as reported by financial institutions and retail stores will be seen by lenders who will determine your credit worthiness. The credit bureaus report amounts you borrowed or charged, your outstanding balances and the promptness with which payments have been made. Failure to pay your financial obligations in a prompt and timely manner will jeopardize your eligibility for some education loans. Our best advice – keep credit card balances low and pay on time!

For more information on financing, refer to Law Services' book, "Financing Your Law School Education."

CALENDAR OF THINGS TO DO

First Year

- Even as you begin your liberal arts education, you also begin the ongoing process of law school preparation. You will want to learn about the legal profession and law school.
- Most importantly, you need to build a record of academic achievement. Your record is the most important factor in determining your later options for law school. Now is the time to correct any academic weaknesses. If you are a plodding reader or a mediocre writer, seek out classes that will help to strengthen your skills. Visit the Writing Center; enroll in the Learning Skills course in the spring of your first year. Get help!
- Join the Prelaw Society (PLS) by signing up at the Student Activities Fair or emailing careers@clarku.edu your name, class year, email, and phone number. The PLS is an important source of information concerning prelaw developments, both nationally and on campus.

Sophomore Year

- By your sophomore year, you should register with the prelaw adviser by scheduling an appointment through Career Services. If you are planning to go abroad for your junior year, you need to make arrangements with the prelaw adviser so that your prelaw planning does not get delayed until your senior year.
 - Make an appointment with the internship coordinator in Career Services to discuss the possibilities of law-related internships or summer employment.
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Junior Year

- Begin studying for the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT). It is to your advantage to study all year long and take the June LSAT. Remember to register in advance for the June LSAT to ensure that you get placed at the test center of your choice.
- If you do not take the June LSAT, plan to study further for the exam over the summer and register for the September/October test date in your senior year. When you register for the LSAT, you should also register for the Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS). You can get a Law Service Information Book, complete with LSAT registration forms, in Career Services. When you do register for the LSDAS, please check the box that allows Law Services to release your information to Clark. Your information will be kept in the strictest of confidence and will be of great use to the prelaw adviser in tracking our alumni and advising future prelaw students.
- In the spring of your junior year, you should begin to write drafts of your personal statement. You should show it to a few professors with whom you are comfortable, as well as to the Prelaw Advisory Committee. Don't forget to allow ample time for those reviewing your statement to do so.
- You should identify prospective faculty members from whom you would like a letter of recommendation. If you know that you will ask a particular professor to write you a recommendation, you may want to ask him or her before leaving for summer break. This will allow them adequate time to work on your letter and it will mean that you should not be delayed in getting a copy of your transcript, a draft of your personal statement and a resume to each recommender.

Summer between Junior and Senior Year

- Prepare a list of the law schools in which you are interested, using the materials on the prelaw reading list.
 - If you take the June LSAT, and are unhappy with your performance on that exam, study all summer. Be sure to register for the September/October test date online at <http://www.lsac.org>.
 - Summer is the time to visit each law school of interest and to talk with an admissions officer. The law school representatives have probably heard every conceivable question many times while traveling to college campuses. The best questions to ask are those which are truly most important to you. Think through your criteria for choosing a law school. There are many possibilities – job prospects upon graduation, size and reputation of faculty, camaraderie within the student body, level of competition among students, curricular strengths, clinical programs, and others – but each student will rank these factors differently in terms of importance.
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The following questions are offered as examples, but add some of your own as well.

Questions Concerning a Law School's Admission Process

1. Please describe your review process for applicants' folders.
 2. How did your application pool change last year and what projections are you making for this year?
 3. With my grades and LSAT (tell them specifically), what would be my chances of gaining admission to your school?
 4. How do you evaluate the more subjective factors of an application and how important are they?
 5. What advantages exist for applicants who apply early? What do you consider early?
 6. When do you typically let applicants know your admissions decisions?
 7. (If a state-supported school) How do you treat residency status in the admissions process?
 8. Do applicants with post-college work experience have an advantage over new college graduates in your admission process?
 9. What do you look for in the personal statement or essay to accompany the application?
 10. Can you give me examples of the kinds of recommendations that can make a difference?
 11. What should I anticipate that it would cost over three years to attend your law school?
 12. How do most of your students pay for law school?
 13. How does your office handle financial aid awards? Can I expect to know your aid award before I'm required to pay a deposit?
 14. What merit scholarships do you offer to incoming students?
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Questions about Character/Ambiance of the Law School

1. What are the curricular strengths of your faculty?
2. How much (or what kinds of) contact with faculty would the typical law student have outside of class?
3. How many students are typically enrolled in each entering class?

4. How are first-year classes organized and taught?
5. How many graduates practice law in your state or region after graduation?
6. What factors shape the career interests and options available to your graduates?
7. What complaints do your students have about your law school?
8. What is the atmosphere within your student body concerning competition?
9. How are students selected for your law school journals/reviews?
10. Can students leave their books and notes in a study carrel without fear of theft?
11. When your students say what they like about your law school, what things are frequently mentioned?
12. When students turn down your school in favor of another, what reasons do they cite for doing so?
13. What features do you believe set your school apart from “comparable” schools?

Questions Concerning Career Outcomes

1. What is the job search experience like for your law school’s graduates who want to work here or any specific place?
 2. How many (what percentage) of your graduates have their jobs lined up before December of their final year?
 3. To what extent do your students get their summer jobs through your on-campus recruiting program?
 4. What kinds of jobs do your first-year students line up for their first summer?
 5. To what extent does rank in class affect your students’ job search success?
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Senior Year

- Make an appointment with the prelaw adviser to review your individual application process strategies. Be sure to schedule follow-up appointments as necessary throughout the year. It is your responsibility to seek help. And we are happy to help!
- If you have not already done so, register for the LSAT and with LSDAS. Continue studying for the LSAT.
- Take the LSDAS Transcript Request Card to the Registrar’s Office during the first week of school. This will ensure that LSDAS will have your candidate profile ready to go when your law schools request it.
- Revise your personal statement, based on feedback you have received, as soon as possible. When you have completed the revision, submit it to the prelaw adviser one last time for a final review. This process takes much longer than you may think, so make sure that your personal statement is in final form, ready to be sent to the law schools before the end of September.
- If you have not already done so, solicit your letters of recommendation. Meet with your recommenders to set a deadline. Explain to your recommenders that the deadlines which appear on the forms are not the deadlines you intend to use. You must allow your recommenders ample time to write a strong letter. Do not wait until November to finalize this step in the process!
- Double check all updates you receive from Law Services to verify that they have all of your information listed correctly. Pay careful attention to the LSDAS summary of your transcript. Report any errors or discrepancies to Law Services immediately.

- Once you receive your applications, begin filling them out as if the deadlines were Thanksgiving. Exercise extreme care in completing applications. All applications should be typed. If possible, all of your applications should be completed and mailed no later than early December. If you complete them earlier, then by all means, send them out as soon as they are ready. The earlier you apply, the better, but be sure you have researched schools and can reasonably project. Before actually mailing the applications, you should make photocopies of the completed application for each school in the event that there is a problem with the mail.

Keep in mind that it is your responsibility to see to it that the law schools to which you have applied have indeed received all necessary information. Most law schools provide a number of update-notification postcards in their application materials. Complete all of them with your mailing address, affix proper postage for return and enclose them with your application. When your LSDAS information and recommendations are received by the law schools, you will then receive a postcard notifying you that your application is complete and under consideration. If you do not receive this card, call the admissions office and inquire as to whether your file is complete.

Once your completed applications are reviewed, there isn't very much you can do until you hear from the law schools with their decision. If your grades from the fall semester of your senior year were very good, you may want to send an official transcript to the law schools to update them on your academic progress. If your cumulative CPA went down as a result of your performance during the fall of your senior year, do not send an updated transcript unless you are required to do so.

Maintain regular contact with the prelaw adviser. Keep the adviser updated on where you gain admission, where you are wait-listed, and where you have been rejected. You may want to visit those law schools where you have gained admission and are seriously considering attending so that you are better prepared to make a final decision.

Make sure you monitor the deposit deadlines at the schools to which you have been accepted – some require deposit by April. If you are waiting to hear from a school after April, it may be necessary to send a deposit at a law school than lose your space there while waiting for another school's decision. Discuss such decision with the prelaw adviser before acting on them.

SUGGESTED LAW READING LIST
(Available in the Career Services Library)

Catalogues of ABA-Approved Law Schools. Produced by the Law School Admissions Council and the American Bar Association.

Directory of Law School Joint Degree Programs. Edited by Larissa Brickach, Richard L. Hermann, and Linda P. Sutherland.

How to get into the Right Law School. Paul Lermack, Ph.D.

Law School Admissions Advisor. Ruth Lammert- Reeves.

Law School Essays that Make a Difference. Eric Owens.

Law School without Fear: Strategies for Success. Helene Shapo and Marshall Shapo.

Looking at Law School. Edited by Stephen Gillers.

Pre-Law Companion. Ronald Coleman.

The Insiders Guide to the Top Fifteen Law Schools. Cynthia L. Cooper.

The Law School Buzz Book. Vault Career Library

The Right Law School for You. Produced by the Law School Admissions Council and the American Bar Association.

Financial Aid Resources

Financing Your Law School Education. A publication of Law School Admission Council/Law School Admission Services.

Financial Aid for Higher Education.

Preparation for and Financing of a Legal Education for Disadvantaged Persons.

Financial Aid for Minority Students in Law. Michele S. Wilson.

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Prelaw Information for First/Second-year Students. Dallas, TX: Southern Methodist University.

The Right Law School for You. Law School Admission Council/Law School Admission Services.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Boston College School of Law

Brown University Prelaw Advisory Committee

Colgate University Career Planning Center

Karen Cowman, former Prelaw Adviser at Clark University

Hilles Hughes, former Prelaw Adviser at Clark University

Angel D'Agostino, Pace University Law School, Office of Admission

Dartmouth College Career and Employment Services

Henry Fradella, Class of 1990

McGeorge School of Law, University of the Pacific

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University of Pennsylvania Office of Career Planning and Placement

Neil Schroeder, former Clark University Prelaw Advisory Board

Southern Methodist University Advising Center

Edward Stern, Prelaw Adviser at Boston University

Trinity College Office of Career Planning and Placement

Tufts University Office of the Pre-Legal Dean

Yale University School of Law Office of Admissions

CLARK UNIVERSITY

Worcester, Massachusetts

A Partial List of Law School Acceptances for both current students and for alums
1987-2007

Albany Law School, Albany, NY
American University, Washington, DC
Boston College, Boston, MA
Boston University, Boston, MA
Brooklyn Law School, Brooklyn, NY
California Western School of Law, San Diego, CA
Capital University, Columbus, OH
Cardozo School of Law – Yeshiva University, New York, NY
Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH
Catholic University, Washington, DC
Columbia University, New York, NY
Cornell University, Ithaca, NY
CUNY Law School at Queens College, New York, NY
De Paul University, Chicago IL
Dickinson School of Law, Carlisle, PA
Duke University, Durham, NC
Emory University, Atlanta GA
Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL
Fordham University, New York, NY
Franklin Pierce Law Center, Concord, NH
George Mason University, Arlington, VA
George Washington University, Washington, DC
Georgetown University, Washington, DC
Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA
Hamline University, St. Paul, MN
Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY
Howard University, Washington, DC
Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago-Kent, Chicago, IL
Inter American University, San Juan, PR
Lewis and Clark University, Portland, OR
Loyola University – Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA
Loyola University – New Orleans, New Orleans, LA
McGeorge School of Law – University of the Pacific, Sacramento, CA
Memphis State University, Memphis, TN
Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI
Mississippi College, Jackson, MS
New England School of Law, Andover, MA
New York School of Law, New York, NY
New York University, New York, NY

Northeastern University, Boston, MA
Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL
Nova University, Fort Lauderdale, FL
Ohio Northern University, Ada, OH
Ohio State University, Columbus, OH
Pace University, White Plains, NY
Penn State University, Dickerson, PA
Pepperdine University, Malibu, CA
Quinnipiac University, Hamden, CT
Roger Williams University, Bristol, RI
Rutgers University – Camden, Camden, NJ
Rutgers University – Newark, Newark, NJ
St. Thomas University, Miami, FL
Seton Hall University, Newark NJ
Southwestern University, Los Angeles, CA
Stetson University, St. Petersburg, FL
Suffolk University, Boston, MA
Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY
Temple University, Philadelphia, PA
Thomas M. Cooley Law School, Lansing, MI
Touro College, Huntington, NY
Tulane University, New Orleans, LA
University of Akron, Akron, OH
University of Baltimore, Baltimore, MD
University of Bridgeport, Bridgeport, CT
University of California, Davis, CA
University of California, Hasting, CA
University of Chicago, Chicago, IL
University of Connecticut, Hartford, CT
University of Denver, Denver, CO
University of Detroit, Detroit, MI
University of Florida, Gainesville, FL
University of Georgia, Athens, GA
University of Hawaii, Honolulu, HI
University of Maine, Portland, ME
University of Maryland, Baltimore, MD
University of Miami, Coral Gables, FL
University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA
University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA
University of San Diego, San Diego, CA
University of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA
University of Santa Clara, Santa Clara, CA
University of Southern California, University Park, CA
University of Tulsa, Tulsa, OK
University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA
University of Washington, Seattle, WA

Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN
Vermont Law School, Royalston, VT
Villanova University, Villanova, PA
Washington University – Missouri, St. Louis, MO
Wayne State University, Detroit, MI
Western New England College, Springfield, MA
Widener University, Wilmington, DE
Yale University Law School, New Haven, CT