Preparing to Apply to Law School

PUTTING ALL THE PIECES TOGETHER

THE LAW SCHOOL APPLICATION

A. Transcripts and Your GPA
Admissions committees require official transcripts from every higher education institution attended, both undergraduate and graduate. Students must submit ALL transcripts, even if only one or two courses were taken at a school other than NYU. To be competitive, applicants should strive for a minimum 3.5 cumulative undergraduate GPA; however, a higher GPA may be required for many top tier law schools. (Consult the ABA Official Guide to Law Schools to find the target GPA for schools of interest.)

B. Law School Admissions Test (LSAT)
The LSAT is the standardized test required for law school admissions. The test is offered four times per year (February, June, October, and December) and consists of five 35-minute sections of multiple choice questions, and a 35-minute writing sample. Questions are divided into sections measuring reading comprehension, analytical reasoning, and logic skills. The writing sample is not scored, but it is forwarded to law schools for review. We advise taking the LSAT in June of the application year, with October as a backup date. Applicants should strive for a minimum score of 160 (out of the maximum of 180), but many law schools prefer a much higher score. (Consult the ABA Official Guide to Law Schools for additional information about target LSAT scores for schools of interest.)

C. Personal Statement
Most law schools do not offer admissions interviews, so the personal statement may be the only time for a student to speak directly to the admissions committee. Before writing the statement, students should think carefully about what they would like the admissions committee to know about them, reflect on their values and motivations, and any other relevant information that may not be reflected in their résumé and transcript. The personal statement is a writing sample, so it should be free of typos, and grammar and punctuation errors. Consult the Writing Center for assistance, and plan to attend one of the personal statement writing workshops sponsored by CAS Preprofessional Advising.

D. Recommendations
Two letters of recommendation from instructors are highly recommended for students applying in their senior year of college and recent graduates. Letters should speak to a student’s academic performance, intellectual promise, creative abilities, writing and research skills, communication skills, etc. One additional letter may be submitted by another recommender (an internship supervisor, for example) who can speak to a student’s leadership ability, professionalism, work ethic, and/or personal character.

E. Résumé and Experiences Outside of the Classroom
Law schools prefer well-rounded applicants who have done more than simply attend classes during their time at NYU, so students should submit a résumé that highlights their education, research, awards and accomplishments, professional experiences, community service, and extracurricular activities. Students are strongly advised to consult with a career counselor at the Wasserman Center for assistance with creating a résumé that speaks to their strengths.

F. Dean’s Certification
Some law schools require a Dean’s Certification form to verify a student’s good standing in the NYU academic community. CAS students seeking certification should visit http://prelaw.cas.nyu.edu/page/certification for instructions on getting these forms completed. Students in other NYU schools should consult the Dean’s Office in their school.

G. Timing of Applications
Submit all applications by late November. Many law school deadlines are in January, February, or even as late as March, but since applicants are generally admitted on a rolling basis, it is best to apply in advance of the deadline.
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PRELAW FAQs

Q: Do law schools prefer certain majors or courses?
A: Law schools do not prefer a specific major, but do value certain skills as well as a well-rounded liberal arts education. Students should choose a major that interests them, and should focus on refining their analytical thinking, critical reasoning, expository writing, oral communication, and research skills. Students can develop these skills and gain foundational knowledge in a variety of disciplines, including History, English (and world literature), Politics, Psychology, Social and Cultural Analysis, Economics, Sociology, and Philosophy.

Q: When should I take the LSAT? Can I take it more than once?
A: We advise students to take the LSAT in June of their application year, so that their scores can be obtained a few months prior to submitting applications. Students who feel unprepared for the June exam should take the exam no later than October. Students should use practice tests as an indicator of readiness and strive to take the LSAT once. Law school admissions committees vary in how they treat multiple scores (some emphasize the highest score, others average scores together). Please visit each school’s website for more information on their multiple LSAT score policies. To register for the LSAT and create a Credential Assembly Service (CAS) account, visit www.lsac.org.

Q: How can I obtain strong letters of recommendation? When do I ask for them?
A: Start getting to know your professors early in your academic career. Take advantage of office hours and appointments with faculty. During those meetings, ask questions about readings and topics covered in class, so that a rapport can be established before requesting a letter. It is helpful to provide recommenders with a résumé, a personal statement, and perhaps an unofficial transcript. Be sure to ask recommenders well in advance of application deadlines, and send thank-you notes after applications are submitted. We advise students planning to apply to law school after graduating from NYU to open a CAS account and have letters sent in now, while it is still easy to contact professors.

Q: How important are professional experience and extracurricular activities?
A: We encourage students to participate in clubs and organizations that connect to their passions and foster opportunities for leadership experience. Choose to join a couple of organizations, and become very involved with them rather than being minimally involved in numerous clubs and activities.

Q: How well do CAS students fare as applicants?
A: Approximately 88% of our students applying as college seniors are accepted into at least one law school. The CAS alumni applicant acceptance rate is nearly 85%. The national acceptance rate is 71%.

Q: I want to attend law school later. Should I apply now and defer admission?
A: Deferring law school means delaying an offer of admission for one year. Law schools vary widely in how they process deferment requests, so check individual school websites for their policies. When in doubt, the best time to apply to law school is when you are ready to attend, and your credentials are as strong as possible.

The Preprofessional Advising Center invites students to join the prelaw listserv to receive our weekly email newsletter, The Legal Brief, by sending a blank email from their NYU email address to join-cas-prelaw@lists.nyu.edu. Students should also familiarize themselves with our website: http://prelaw.cas.nyu.edu. Students with additional questions or a general interest in being prelaw at NYU are encouraged to contact our office by emailing prelaw@nyu.edu, calling (212) 998-8160, or visiting the Silver Center, Room 901.