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Preparing for Law School:
Important Steps in the Application Process,
and What to Expect as a Law School Student

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Executive Summary

Applying for law school is a complex process involving multiple steps that must be completed over a period of time of at least several months. This is why careful planning is essential.

Prospective law school students must do their research and start preparing as far in advance as possible. This helps them perform their best work on entrance exams and application essays, while at the same time ensuring they don't miss any critical deadlines.

With so many components involved, the actual process of applying to law school can seem very intimidating. Breaking it down into smaller, focused steps makes it easier to manage, which in turn helps potential applicants feel more confident about their ability to complete the process successfully.

This paper walks readers through the application process, emphasizing important deadlines and describing in detail individual steps and stages in the timeline.

Highlights include:

- ▶ realistic insight into exactly what a potential student can expect of their law school experience, including practical considerations like time management and balancing other obligations
- ▶ details about the variety and difficulty of required law school courses
- ▶ a step-by-step walk-through of the application timeline and critical deadlines
- ▶ descriptions of each of the individual components needed for a law school application, and tips on assembling an application package that best demonstrates your strength as a candidate

This paper can help aspiring law school students feel less overwhelmed by the prospect of applying to law school. They may also be more likely to perform well at the various tasks involved in the process, and can avoid overlooking critical steps or missing important deadlines.

Who Should Read This Paper?

This paper was written for Penn State World Campus students who are thinking about pursuing a law degree. After reading this paper, they should be more familiar with the basic aspects of law school and the law school application process.

Introduction

Many people have at some point dreamed of becoming a lawyer, or have at least wondered what it would be like to attend law school.

A law degree can be a valuable asset in a variety of careers both in and out of the courtroom. Law school graduates are working in a diverse assortment of fields, including media, banking, entertainment, nonprofit/charity organizations, and virtually every other industry imaginable. Earning a law degree can be a major accomplishment, one that can open the door to many exciting and rewarding professional opportunities.

However, many would-be law school students hesitate to pursue this goal because they don't know where to start, or they are intimidated or confused about the process.

If you fall into those categories or are thinking about applying to law school and want to learn more about what's involved, this paper was written with you in mind.

We will walk you through the process of applying to law school, highlighting important deadlines and describing the required application package components. We will also give you an idea of what you can realistically expect life as a law school student to be like, and how you can best prepare yourself for a successful law school experience.

After reading this paper and learning more about the steps involved—broken up into focused, specific tasks that will likely seem easier to manage than you've anticipated—you may feel more confident about your ability to successfully complete the process of applying to law school.

Understanding the Law Degree

After attending law school, law school students become eligible to receive a law degree, also called a juris doctor (abbreviated J.D.). Lawyers often use the title Esquire (sometimes abbreviated Esq.) or J.D. after their name, but do not use the label Dr. unless they have separately obtained a doctor of philosophy degree (abbreviated Ph.D.) in a different field of study. Unlike college professors, most law professors do not have Ph.D. degrees and are not required to have one to teach law.

A law degree, however, is not the same as a license to practice law. Law schools are accredited and governed by the American Bar Association (ABA). Each individual state and territory within the United States governs and administers its license to practice law, usually through its highest court and/or its lawyer bar organization. Each state or territory administers an exam (called the bar exam) which test takers must pass to obtain a license to practice law in a particular state or territory. A test taker must have graduated from law school to be able to “sit” for the exam. Each state or territory also requires bar applicants to pass a “fitness and character” investigation to make sure that lawyers are trustworthy and have not engaged in fraud or other types of serious misconduct that would bring the lawyer’s honesty into question. See, e.g., ABA Standard 504. Honesty and integrity are critical lawyer traits because when representing clients, lawyers often obtain confidential information about their clients and often hold their client’s money in trust accounts, i.e., a special bank account for that purpose, during the pendency of a court case or transaction.

The ABA provides more information about bar exams:

www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/bar_admissions.html

www.ncbex.org/publications/bar-admissions-guide

What to Expect as a Law School Student

Before going any further, we want to give you some insight as to what you can realistically expect law school to be like. This glimpse of the typical law school student experience may help you make a more informed decision of whether this would be a good fit for you. In addition—should you decide to proceed with the application process—you will be better prepared for the challenges you may face as a student, if you are admitted to law school.

Let's say this right up front: Law school isn't easy. We don't want to sugarcoat it. Most students find law school to be very challenging. They also frequently must make sacrifices in their pursuit of a law degree, since this process tends to demand a significant amount of their time and energy. But those who are successful in completing this goal generally say the hard work was well worth it, in order to achieve the well-deserved sense of accomplishment they feel upon graduating from law school.

The law school education

Many accredited law schools only offer law students the opportunity to study law full-time for three academic years. Law school tuition and costs are expensive, and most students give up the opportunity to earn an income while attending law school. Other law schools, particularly those located in or near large urban areas, offer part-time or night-school law programs and permit students to earn a law degree over a period longer than three years. Nonetheless, working while attending law school can be challenging for a few reasons.

First, while work-study programs are available for law students as long as they meet the financial eligibility requirements, according to the ABA, a law student may not be employed for more than 20 hours per week during a semester that the student is taking more than 12 credits. See ABA Standard 303(f). This requirement usually only applies to full-time law students, because most part-time law programs require students to take 12 credits or less.

Second, working while attending law school is also challenging, even for part-time students, because law school courses are rigorous (see next discussion). Earning good grades in law school is often important to obtaining employment opportunities during the summers and breaks, and after graduation. Virtually all law schools except the highest-ranked schools in the country, such as Harvard or Yale, have a required "curve" in required courses to prevent grade inflation and to limit the amount of A, A-, and B+ grades that can be given in a particular course. Students are often ranked at the end of each semester, and that rank is information that certain employers may seek. Grades are most important in the first year of law school, when students are taking virtually all required courses, and when students are seeking their first legal position during the summer between their first and second years of law school.

The rigorous nature of law school classes

Law students take a variety of law school classes, including doctrinal courses, seminars, legal writing courses, practical skills courses and simulation classes, and clinics and

externships with “live client” experiences. The term “doctrinal course” refers to a course that teaches students the substance of a particular area or field of law. These courses typically have one “three or four hour–long” exam at the end of the semester, and the course’s entire grade is determined by the student’s exam performance. Most doctrinal courses have essay exams, but some professors choose to offer short answer, multiple choice, and true/false questions on an exam. In these courses, students are assigned many pages of reading per class period to study and analyze statutes, codes, and/or case law (also called court opinions). Law students, particularly in the first year, often prepare “case briefs” for the court opinions that they are assigned to read.

Because legal writing is a critical skill that all lawyers use every day, with some exceptions, most seminar courses, legal writing courses, practical skills courses and simulation classes, and clinics and externships with “live client” experiences use writing assignments instead of exams to assign grades to students. These courses often teach other important lawyering skills, such as negotiation, interviewing, client counseling, client communication, and trial and appellate oral advocacy.

First Steps: When and How to Start Preparing

When should you start preparing for the law school application process? As early as possible. There are a number of documents and other materials you will need to submit with your application, and gathering these ahead of time will ensure that you are fully prepared and don’t need to scramble at the last minute.

Arrange to take the LSAT

The most difficult and time-consuming part of the law school application process is the LSAT (Law School Admissions Test). This is one of the most critical components of the application packet, and is also the part that will require the most preparation and advance planning.

You cannot wait until the last minute to start thinking about taking the LSAT. As we explain next, it is important to be strategic about planning when to take your LSAT exam. If you

wait too long, you may discover that you are too far along in that year's application calendar/timeline to be among the first considered for admissions and scholarships. Taking your LSAT early lets you maximize your chances for acceptance and scholarship offers.

Important materials you will need

We will go into more detail about each of these items later in the section on the application packet, but some of the documents you will need to obtain/provide for your application include:

- college transcripts
- letters of recommendation
- personal statements

Additionally, it can also be helpful to compile information about any interesting or impressive educational or professional experiences you have had that might be relevant to your application—such as an internship you completed, a community service project you spearheaded, or a volunteer leadership position you held.

Timeline and Deadlines

Most law school applications become available in the fall (usually September) and close in spring, approximately March or April. Most offers are made on a rolling basis. Some schools, such as Penn State Law, will identify how quickly an applicant may hear from them. See pennstatelaw.psu.edu/admissions/jd-admissions/jd-admissions-faq (stating that Penn State Law typically makes decisions within four to eight weeks of the completion of an application). Most law schools require students to accept an offer and pay first and second deposits, which are nonrefundable, by late spring (usually April).

Some law schools offer an early decision process. Keep in mind, a student is usually required to accept an offer from a law school that extends an early decision offer. Thus, a student should only apply for an early decision if the student is certain that he or she wants to attend that law school, regardless of whether other law schools may offer the student some form of financial aid or scholarship.

Most law schools have a wait list. Students are accepted from the wait list on a rolling basis. Some students can be accepted off of a wait list as late as two or three days after the law school semester has started. Most law schools start classes for each academic year in mid-to-late August.

Most law schools will advise students to file an application as early as possible after the application becomes available, to be in the most competitive position for admission, and to receive scholarship monies that the school may offer for need or merit or both.

A law school admissions team will usually not begin reviewing an application until it is complete. The requirements for the application are discussed next in more detail, but the component of the application that will require the most planning ahead is the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT). An applicant should take the LSAT at least three months before the student plans to submit a law school application to allow time to have the test scores sent to each law school by the LSAT administrator, the Law School Admission Council (LSAC). Most students take the LSAT approximately six months to a year before they plan to apply to law school. The LSAT is usually offered four times a year in February, June, October, and December.

While a student could take the LSAT in October or December of the same academic year in which the student will apply to law school, as the LSAT score would arrive before the application period closes, it is best not to do so. If an application does not become final until January (for an October test taker), or March (for a December test taker), those applications will not be reviewed until January and March, respectively. The later in the application cycle that an application is reviewed, the more competition for admission and scholarships the applicant will face.

Some law schools will tell prospective students that they do not begin looking at applications until January even if the law school application opens in the fall. If that information is correct, then a student could take the October LSAT and still have his or her application reviewed in the first batch of applications to be reviewed in the application cycle. Nonetheless, Penn State World Campus advises its students not to do so. For the best results in obtaining admission and scholarship money, whenever possible, law school applicants should take the LSAT in June or earlier before the year in which they plan to apply to law school. Law school applicants should also finalize the other parts of their applications (discussed next in more detail) during the summer, before the application cycle opens in the fall, to ensure that their applications are complete as soon as possible after each law school application period opens.

The LSAC's overview of the application process:

www.lsac.org/jd/applying-to-law-school/overview

A good checklist for the law school application process:

www.lsac.org/docs/default-source/jd-docs/lSAT-checklist.pdf

The Application Package

Each law school may have different requirements for admission. Students must be sure to carefully read each law school's website for application information to ensure that all requirements for filing an application are met in a timely manner. As an example, Penn State Law's application information is located here: pennstatelaw.psu.edu/admissions/jd-admissions/application-requirements.

Generally, the components of a law school application usually include:

1. an application fee
2. an online application
3. an undergraduate official transcript
4. two letters of recommendation
5. a résumé or other summary of an undergraduate's academic and professional experiences
6. a personal statement
7. Law School Admission Test (LSAT) scores

Each component will now be described in more detail.

Application fees, online applications, and undergraduate official transcripts

Students should check individual law school websites for more information about application fees. Most law schools offer students the ability to waive the application fee for need upon request. If information about a waiver is not on the law school's website, a student should email the admissions personnel and ask about the possibility of waiver.

The LSAC administers the online application for most law schools. The first step for students to complete is to register with LSAC. Later, students should register for LSAC's Credential Assembly Service (CAS), which helps students to file their transcripts and recommendation letters with LSAC, who then distributes the information to the law schools to which the student applies. The LSAC's website states that it takes at least two weeks for LSAC to process recommendation letters.

More information about CAS is located here:

www.lsac.org/jd/applying-to-law-school/cas

Letters of recommendation

Law applicants are responsible for finding professors or employers to write letters of recommendation for them to attest to the applicant's personal qualities, such as honesty and integrity, work ethic, desire to learn, time management, or analytical or writing skills. The purpose of the letter is to help the admissions personnel reviewing the application to learn more about the applicant and whether the applicant can handle the rigors of law school. Law school admissions personnel know that law school tuition, fees, and room and board are expensive, and they usually do not take their decision-making power over applications lightly. The admissions personnel seek students who will be a good fit for law school, and who can meet the challenges of intense study of the law, especially during the first year when students are learning a new legal vocabulary, and are expected to read many pages of dense text, and need to quickly learn enough about the law to engage in meaningful discussions in the classroom.

Most students assume that they should obtain a letter from an attorney, judge, or lawmaker who usually can only attest that they personally know the applicant. Those types of letters are not useful to admissions personnel for the reasons described.

Students should begin to establish relationships with professors and employers as soon as possible in their undergraduate years. Students should ask only professors and employers with whom they have a strong relationship to write a letter of recommendation to ensure that the professor or employer will have much rich experience to draw from when writing the letter. The more details and specific examples that the writer of a recommendation letter can provide, the more persuasive the recommendation letter will be.

Personal statements

Some law schools permit law students to write a personal statement about any topic that the applicant chooses. Other schools require students to answer a specific question. Applicants should read the instructions for each law school carefully and should be certain to answer the question asked. Most law applicants can prepare one essay and modify it for all schools to which they apply, as many schools ask students to answer similar questions, such as:

“Prepare a draft of a personal statement for a law school application that addresses factors that have been significant to your development and identity, something that may distinguish you from other law school applicants, or highlights any special achievements or accomplishments. You should feel free to discuss a topic or topics of your choice. You will need

to upload a Word document containing your draft personal statement as a part of your application. The personal statement may not exceed two pages double-spaced.”

See:

pennstatelaw.psu.edu/form/explore-law-application

Students need to pay close attention that they modify each essay carefully. One of the most common mistakes that applicants make is to fail to edit carefully and to refer to a different law school in their personal statements.

Many applicants mistakenly think that the purpose of the personal statement is merely to state when and how they developed an interest in becoming a lawyer. While that information can be helpful, law school admissions personnel are much more interested in learning about who the applicant is as a person, what personal growth opportunities the applicant experienced and seized, and where the applicant’s passion to succeed comes from. Law school personnel also want to know that students have persevered through difficult circumstances, whether personal experiences or academic courses that were challenging, to ensure that applicants have the mental and personal strength to handle the rigors of law school.

Students often tell stories in their personal statements, and those stories can be engaging and draw the reader in to better know the applicant. Three important pieces of advice to keep in mind are:

- add a beginning and an end to the story (i.e., don’t lose the reader in the middle of the story and forget to finish it)
- include personal, but not too personal, details in the story
- have a happy ending even if the events to be discussed are troubling, challenging, or tragic

Similarly, students often begin a personal statement with a theme, but forget to carry the theme all the way to the end. In sum, remember to demonstrate the skill of follow-through in a personal statement. Make sure that the personal statement has both a strong beginning and a strong ending.

Students should show the admissions personnel what makes the applicant unique. Some examples are to:

- show that the applicant understands the rigors of law school and has handled rigor in the past in an academic, athletic, or professional setting
- show the applicant has been a leader
- show the applicant has made an impact on a team or a community
- write about an important event in the applicant's life that shaped the applicant
- write about adversity the applicant faced in life
- write about course work, research, or work experience that excites and challenges the applicant and shows why the applicant will make a good lawyer

Many students are naturally uncomfortable promoting themselves on paper and subconsciously often write statements that focus more on a family member's experience than on the applicant's experience. For the best results, the applicant should stay focused on his or her attributes and explain the personal traits and the perspectives they have gained from experiences they may have shared with other family members. Law school admissions personnel most want to know that a law student is introspective, has thought about what it takes to make it through law school, and has the skills and desire to persevere when law school's assignments are intense and law school exams are on the horizon.

Personal statements should be edited multiple times to ensure that all typographical errors, misspellings, and grammar and punctuation errors are corrected. Many students do ask an adviser or mentor to review a draft of a personal statement to receive advice or suggestions. While that practice is customary and acceptable, law school applicants should still produce their own work product and submit it as part of their application. The application is a representation of the applicant's abilities, and honesty and integrity are important values for prospective lawyers to display in their applications. Law school admissions personnel often try to assess whether an applicant's personal statement truly reflects the applicant's writing ability by comparing the near-perfect writing in the applicant's personal statement to the student's writing under timed conditions in the LSAT writing exam (described next).

Two good websites with more advice are:

www.top-law-schools.com/statement.html

www.usnews.com/education/blogs/law-admissions-lowdown/2014/09/29/what-not-to-do-in-a-law-school-personal-statement

LSAT Exam

The exam is administered by the Law School Admission Council (LSAC). The exam is offered four times a year in February, June, October, and December in all major cities and most major universities across the nation. Information about locations, times, and fees can be located here: www.lsac.org/jd/lsat/test-dates-deadlines. Most law schools accept an LSAT score that is three years old (or less).

The LSAT exam contains three types of multiple choice questions:

- analytical reasoning questions that test the ability to read a set of facts and rules and make sense of them to answer a series of questions
- logical reasoning questions that test the ability to analyze and critically think about arguments made in ordinary language, such as newspapers and articles, to answer a series of questions
- reading comprehension questions

Test takers take five 35-minute multiple choice exams, but only four of them are scored. The fifth is usually an experimental set of questions being pre-tested for effectiveness by LSAC. Students must also complete a 35-minute writing sample (explained next in more detail).

The LSAC provides more information about each type of question, and sample test questions:

www.lsac.org/jd/lsat/about-the-lsat

LSAT writing sample

For the LSAT writing sample, students are asked to read a short writing prompt (approximately two to four paragraphs) that asks them to choose between two alternatives and to write an essay advocating for one alternative. The exam includes detailed information about both alternatives, and the criteria of the decision maker. Students are expected to connect the detailed information about the alternatives to the criteria, much like a law student connects the details of a client's legal program to the applicable rules of law on a law school exam. For example, on previous LSAT writing exams, test takers have been asked to choose between two applicants for a teaching position, or to choose one of two alternative building sites for a new school or hospital.

This exam is currently not graded by the LSAC. However, a copy of the LSAT writing exam is sent to all law schools to which a student has applied. The purpose of the LSAT writing sample is to show the law school admissions personnel the quality of an applicant's writing under pressure and timed conditions.

While law school admissions personnel do not usually grant or deny applications on the basis of an LSAT writing sample, the essay, if well written, could enhance a particular law student's application. For this reason, students should approach the exam as if it were an opportunity to show law school admissions how well the applicant can write and reason.

Tip: From administering mock LSAT writing exams, the Penn State Law's Explore Law program (described next in more detail) has observed that most students write one-sided essays discussing only all of the ways that support one decision or alternative. Instead, a potential law school applicant should use critical thinking skills (which are refined in law school) to explain not only why the first choice that the student is advocating for is correct, but also to discuss all of the reasons why the other alternative is not the best alternative or choice.

As discussed in the personal statement preparation section of this paper, law school admissions personnel sometimes compare an applicant's polished writing in the personal statement with the applicant's writing under time pressure in the LSAT writing sample to confirm that the polished writing in the personal statement reflects the true abilities of the applicant. The admissions personnel are not alarmed when the writing under time pressure is not polished, and understand that writing under test-taking conditions often contains some grammar and punctuation errors that would have been corrected if time for editing had been permitted.

Writing is a very important skill for any professional, and can be particularly essential for lawyers, who often need to make compelling and persuasive arguments. The best time to seek help with writing skills, including grammar and punctuation, is during the applicant's undergraduate education. By doing so, the applicant helps to ensure that his or her application materials will look polished, and more importantly, the prospective law student will reduce the stress and anxiety he or she may face when taking law school writing courses and essay exams.

Boost Your Odds of Success with These LSAT Exam Preparation Tips

Let's start with two seemingly simple yet important tips for preparing for the LSAT:

- Get a full night's rest for several weeks before the exam, including the night before the exam.
- Take several No. 2 sharpened pencils to the exam.

Important: We strongly advise you to resist the urge to just “wing it” when taking the LSAT. Students who take the exam without studying often receive much lower scores. The instructions for each part of the exam are detailed, important, and lengthy. Students who have studied for the exam and are thoroughly familiar with the instructions in advance tend to score much higher on the exam, and have less test anxiety.

The LSAC website contains sample LSAT exam questions. The website also sells books containing previous exams at affordable prices, usually \$10–\$15 per book.

Students often ask how to study for the LSAT and whether to pay to take a professional preparation course. The answer to this question is personal, and will differ from one student to another, depending upon each student's learning style. Students who are accustomed to monitoring their own learning, and juggling both academic and work schedules and deadlines, like most Penn State World Campus adult learners, usually can successfully prepare for the LSAT exam using LSAC past exam test books.

Students who need help to chunk the studying into manageable parts, or have test anxiety that can cause them to fear and then to procrastinate the start of their LSAT preparation, may benefit from enrolling in a professional LSAT preparation course. These courses can be expensive, but the money invested often provides motivation to attend the instruction and practice for the LSAT, and those incentives are beneficial for some students.

Optional (But Highly Recommended) Parts of the Law School Application

There are two other optional parts of a law school application: (1) a diversity statement; and (2) an addendum. Many schools accept but do not require or request these two additional parts of an application. Some law schools invite applicants to write these statements on their websites or in their applications. Other schools may not mention these optional parts of an application on their websites, but all law schools should accept them, and applicants should be aware of them, since they offer a valuable way to deliver relevant information to law school admissions personnel that can tell them something about you, which may not be conveyed elsewhere in your application materials.

Diversity statements

All law schools are interested in enhancing diversity in law school classrooms, communities, and the legal profession. Most law schools, like the ABA, define diversity broadly to include race, ethnicity, age, disabilities, and sexual orientation.

For more information about the ABA's commitment to diversity and its programs promoting diversity, see:

www.americanbar.org/diversity.html

The LSAC, likewise, has a commitment to diversity and provides helpful links here under a “Diversity in Law School” tab:

www.lsac.org/jd/thinking-about-law-school/getting-started

The purpose of a diversity statement is to explain to the law school admissions personnel why and how a prospective student will add diversity to the law school classroom and community. These statements are usually brief, preferably consisting of one double-spaced page (two at the most). Students can use this opportunity to highlight some part of their background—such as professional, personal, or academic experience—to address unique personal qualities and perspectives they have acquired. Some students use this opportunity to explain an adversity they have overcome personally that has provided a broad perspective to their outlook on life.

So as not to be repetitive, a student should avoid discussing the same personal qualities, experiences, or adversities that were discussed in the student's personal statement. A student may, however, assume that law school admissions personnel will read both, so a student may refer to events or qualities that were addressed in the other statement and connect the two statements. Writing both a personal statement and a diversity statement is highly recommended so that the applicant maximizes his or her opportunities to describe as many experiences and personal traits as possible.

As with the personal statement, most people subconsciously focus more on a family member's experience than on the applicant's experience in these statements, because touting one's accomplishments can feel awkward. For the best results, as explained in the personal statement section, the applicant should stay focused on his or her attributes and explain how he or she can add a diverse perspective to the classroom and the law school community at large.

Many websites discuss diversity statement content and offer ideas and advice to stimulate the applicant's creativity before preparation. Here are a few examples:

www.usnews.com/education/blogs/law-admissions-lowdown/2013/06/10/how-to-discuss-diversity-in-your-law-school-applications

chroniclevitae.com/news/266-the-professor-is-in-making-sense-of-the-diversity-statement

tippingthescales.com/2014/01/writing-the-optional-diversity-essay

The addendum

The usual purpose of an addendum is to explain parts of an application that may not appear favorable to the applicant without further explanation. The addendum is usually no more than one double-spaced page in length. The most common reason to write an addendum is to explain some portion of an applicant's academic performance, especially when a student struggled to make the transition into taking college courses for the first time. Other examples include explaining how a family emergency, illness, work obligations, child care, or parenting situations interfered with a student's ability to fully focus on academic performance during a portion of the student's academic record. When possible, the applicant should emphasize other parts of his or her academic record that show the student's true academic abilities before, or preferably after, the event or life circumstance that interfered with

academic performance. Students should use this opportunity to describe the personal growth that they achieved from the event or life circumstance and the academic challenges they faced and overcame in this statement.

Similar to the diversity statement, many websites discuss how to prepare an addendum:

www.usnews.com/education/blogs/law-admissions-lowdown/2014/06/30/when-how-to-write-a-law-school-addendum

www.top-law-schools.com/how-to-write-an-effective-addendum.html

lawschooladvice.com/how-to-write-a-law-school-addendum

Who Makes the Cut? How Law Schools Make Their Decisions

Most law schools do a comprehensive review of the entire content of a prospective student's application because—as mentioned—law schools are looking for applicants who show that they are a good fit for law school, with the skills and personal drive needed to study intensely for three years (or longer, if planning to attend law school part-time). Law schools are ranked by *U.S. News & World Report*, and are concerned about maintaining or improving their “current student profile” or “first-year class profile” to keep or improve their rank. Each law school publishes its “current student profile” on its website. These profiles particularly focus on median GPAs and median LSAT scores, but also provide information about average age of the students, number of applicants vs. students, the percentage of minority students, and the number of students per gender.

pennstatelaw.psu.edu/admissions/jd-admissions/first-year-class-profile

How Prospective Law Students Can Learn about Law Schools

Law schools provide much information online. Law school representatives travel to many forums often held on college campuses across the country to help students learn about law schools. See Penn State Law's current recruiting schedule here: pennstatelaw.psu.edu/admissions-recruiting-map-regions.

Law schools also offer virtual tours or online events (visit pennstatelaw.psu.edu/online-recruiting-schedule) and in-person visits on an individual basis or in groups (see pennstatelaw.psu.edu/university-park-recruiting-schedule).

Most potential law students read online materials, attend forums, and then narrow their list of choices to a manageable number of schools to visit. An applicant can obtain a lot of information about the learning environment at a school by visiting the admissions office, taking a tour, attending some law school classes, and talking to and meeting current law students.

The LSAC also has an online resource for choosing a law school:
www.lsac.org/jd/choosing-a-law-school/customize-your-law-school-search

More Helpful Resources

www.lsac.org/jd/thinking-about-law-school/getting-started: LSAC's main website contains many links to information about law school, legal careers, and the law school admission process and LSAC's role in that process.

www.discoverlaw.org: The LSAC administers this website designed to help students to learn about the law profession, the law school application process, and law school. The website contains sample LSAT exam questions, and seeks to help students from underrepresented groups with access to information about law school and law careers by including videos where minority students and lawyers provide their perspectives about being a law student and a lawyer.

www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/aba_approved_law_schools.html:

On this site, the ABA lists all law schools that it has approved.

www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/pre_law.html: On this site, the ABA provides information about preparing for law school and the skills that lawyers employ in their day-to-day jobs.

Penn State Law's Explore Law Program

For one week in May each year, Penn State Law offers a program for undergraduates to help them to explore whether a career path in law is the right choice for them. The program typically starts mid-month, on the Monday after the law school graduation in May, and ends the following Friday. Tuition and room and board are free. Explore Law is Penn State Law's way to give back to the community by offering the free program to all Penn State World Campus students, and students attending universities or colleges in-residence in Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New York.

The program is held in the Lewis Katz building on Penn State's main campus known as University Park, located near State College, Pennsylvania. Students stay in a dorm on the University Park campus and eat in designated dining halls. During the program, students learn about the law school admissions process in more detail, and learn about student financial aid opportunities from Penn State Law administrators.

Students also receive help with writing personal statements, learn about "case briefing" (described previously), attend a mock class, and participate in interactive discussions with law professors, judges, and practicing attorneys. One goal of the program is to expose students to different fields of law and the many career options that a law degree provides. Students also meet law students who share their personal experiences, and talk frankly about the rigor of law school, and how they manage their time and their finances to be able to attend law school. Participants in the program speak highly of its usefulness, and appreciate the opportunity to network with lawyers and law professors, and meet and form relationships with their peers who are also interested in attending law school. Another goal of the program is to provide students from underrepresented groups with access to information about law school and mentorship.

For more information, please see the current Explore Law website:

pennstatelaw.psu.edu/admissions/explore-law-2016-may-16-20-2016