

APPLYING TO LAW SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Learn where to start and what to expect

The law school application process can be time-consuming and balancing it with the demands of other important parts of your life can be stressful. We're here to help you prepare.

Before the Application

DO WHAT YOU LOVE – you'll tend to thrive! Choose a university program that interests you, since you will usually attain better marks learning something that fascinates you. Be aware that you do not have to be enrolled in a political studies program in order to apply to law school. Schools rarely require specific pre-requisite courses, although they require three years of undergraduate schooling.

CHECK OUT THE PROFESSION by conducting [information interviews](#) with lawyers, current law students or paralegals to learn from their experiences in the field and discuss your career goals. Know the realities of the day-to-day work and how it fits with what you know about yourself. Be realistic and informed by exploring other career options in addition to the role of lawyer.

AIM HIGH ACADEMICALLY – The reality of law school applications today is that marks are an extremely important part of the process. Competitive applicants to Ontario law schools typically have a cumulative undergraduate GPA of an A- (80-84%). Each program may have specific application requirements or may include special categories for applicants to be uniquely evaluated. Check each program of interest individually.

STAY INVOLVED by choosing activities that you find meaningful within your community. The ability to balance academics with other activities such as employment, volunteer work, sports, community and extra-curricular interests is a trait that application committees are looking for in prospective law students. Include a diversity of programs and interests in your extracurricular involvement. Avoid the temptation to do a little of everything and nothing well; instead, commit to some activities over the long-term while showing a progression of responsibility and leadership in your roles.

WRITE THE LAW SCHOOL ADMISSION TEST [LSAT] – Many students elect to take the LSAT the year prior to the year they actually apply, often in June to avoid coinciding with academic stress. LSAT sittings usually occur in January, March, June, July and November. Check www.lsac.org for test dates. For those seeking first round offers, January is the latest date to take the LSAT if you elect to write it. Decide whether your learning style is more conducive to a LSAT preparatory course or to self-study as both methods have worked for students in the past. The [Career Information Area](#) at Career Services includes LSAT preparation guides for current students such as *Cracking the LSAT* by Adam Robinson & Kevin Blemel. Accommodations for disabilities are also possible. Make sure to read up on the test day rules before going in for the exam!

Application Basics

Although the application for each law school varies, the following items often form part or all of the application process. It is estimated that depending on the number of schools to which you apply, the process can take anywhere from 10 to 30 hours to complete so planning ahead is essential for success.

Supplementary Resources

Law School Admission Council
<https://www.lsac.org/>

LSAT
<https://www.lsac.org/lSAT>

Ontario Law School
Application Service [OLSAS]
www.ouac.on.ca/olsas/

Canadian Bar Association
"Practice Tools"
<http://www.cba.org/Publications-Resources/Practice-Tools>

National Committee on
Accreditation/Federation of
Law Societies of Canada
<https://flsc.ca/national-committee-on-accreditation-nca/>

Law Society of Ontario
<https://lso.ca/>

Continuing Legal Education
Society of B.C.
<https://www.cle.bc.ca/>

APPLICATION FORMS – Ontario law schools have a central application service on OUAC called OLSAS. Outside of Ontario, application forms can be found on each school's Faculty of Law website.

DEADLINES for law school applications in Canada are commonly due on *November 1st* each year. Some programs may allow you to submit your LSAT score after submitting your application. Refer to each school's Faculty of Law website.

TRANSCRIPTS – It's up to you to arrange for transcripts to be sent directly from the institutions at which you have studied to the law school(s) to which you are applying. OLSAS requires you, with few exceptions, to use the OUAC Transcript Request Form if you are currently enrolled at an Ontario university. Do this well before the deadline date (Nov 1) to allow for mailing time and factor the fee into your budget.

LSAT – Not all schools require the LSAT, but those who do receive a standard measure of your reading comprehension, logical and analytical reasoning skills. The average LSAT for accepted students is around 160 (80th percentile). However, in most cases, the LSAT is only one of the criteria used in the admission process. Writing the LSAT more than once is acceptable and also treated differently by each school - most take your highest mark; some programs will average your scores, and some want the most recent one. The expiry date for LSAT results is specific to each school (check with them!) but is usually 3-5 years.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH/RESUME/CV – Many schools will ask for a list of all your activities since secondary school. This can include employment, volunteer work, education, awards and accomplishments, extra-curricular, research and other activities. You may also be asked to include the name and contact information of a person who can verify the activity. Ask permission of your verifier first and ensure that you submit current contact information.

PERSONAL QUESTIONS/ESSAY/SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS – Most law schools will ask applicants to submit a personal statement in the form of an essay or short answers about their goals, experiences and fit with the program. This can be time-consuming, so it is wise to start early. Have others read your writing along the way. Flawless grammar and spelling are essential. Many books are available to help you relate your story. Some valuable resources are listed at the end of this tipsheet.

Provide an explanation as to why you have embarked on this career path in an authentic way, while also catering your statement for each Law School. For example: “my volunteer activities...” would be more suitable for one institution while “my involvement in the community...” might connect with values from another school.

REFERENCES – You will typically be required to provide written references from two people. Typically, one of the references will need to be from an academic source. When choosing referees, it is important to distinguish between “I am willing to write you a reference”, and “I am willing to write you a *positive* reference”. Ensure that your referees have enough information about you and the programs to which you are applying to be able to write an effective recommendation. Set up an appointment to discuss your goals, your recent activities and to help them remember specific incidences in which your best qualities stood out. Assist your referee by giving them plenty of lead time (several months), notes on due dates, information about the pertinent features of law programs to which you hope to apply, details on correct process and pre-stamped addressed envelopes. Obtain or download the appropriate form to give to your referees. Once completed, referees are usually required to submit the confidential form directly to OLSAS or the individual law school. Thank them in writing afterwards and let them know your progress. This gesture is appreciated by referees and is helpful for reconnecting with future requests.

INTERVIEWS AND NETWORKING – Few law schools offer interviews as part of the admission process. Those that do tend to do so as part of admission using a special category. However, prospective students are not necessarily unknown to Law Schools at the admission stage. Many students find an opportunity to meet representatives at Law School Forums; plan to come to the *Career Fair: Work and Further Education* sponsored by Career Services in September. You can also arrange for a visit to the Law School or, if possible, drop off your application in person at Law Schools. At the very least, contact with an admissions officer is possible by email or phone. Many students do this to clarify a concern or questions; be aware that doing your homework first by consulting website resources before calling to speak with someone is considered to be “good etiquette.”

Applying Out of Province or Out of Country

In Canada a lawyer who has passed the Bar Exams (having paid the fees and maintained good character) is called to the Bar within that province. Transferring credentials between “common law” provinces has become dramatically easier. Transferring credentials between countries is not easy. It may be easier to transfer between countries that share the British heritage of a common law system versus a civil code legal system. If you are considering attending a law school in the U.S., Europe or elsewhere internationally, seek advice and do lots of research to find out about the possibility of transferring credentials. The ability to work as a lawyer in Canada upon completion of a foreign law degree may be possible but it is by no means straightforward. Check the [National Committee on Accreditation](#) for further details. In the U.S. check to ensure programs are American Bar Approved (see <https://www.lsac.org/>).

Funding

TUITION FEES vary considerably between institutions. Refer to their websites for up-to-date information.

SCHOLARSHIPS/BURSARIES – Most schools provide both scholarships and bursaries if applied for by the admission deadline. Review the Faculty of Law websites for scholarship information or contact Student Awards at the university to which you are applying. There may also be additional scholarships

and bursaries tailored to students of underrepresented populations.

APPLICATION FEES –The cost of applying to law school can quickly add up: LSAT fee, individual application fee and LSAT prep course, if taken. Within Ontario, the central application service [OLSAS] will charge a fee ranging from one school to all 6 schools, plus the cost of requesting official transcripts. Financial help in the form of fee waivers (for admissions or LSAT) is usually reserved for students facing significant financial barriers. Check law schools or the LSAC website for more information.

Canadian Law Schools (Common Law Programs)

Check the LSAC website for a complete list of law programs in Canada (see Links below). The following list is intended as a starting point. Understand the differences between an LLB (Bachelor of Laws degree) Common Law and Civil, a J.D. degree or a joint program. Decide whether an English or French program is more suitable for you. Check with each law school's website to receive the most accurate and up-to-date admissions criteria. Can't find the answer to your query through your own research? Contact an admissions advisor for the Law School program of interest.

University Websites

*French only

Alberta <https://www.ualberta.ca/law>

British Columbia <http://allard.ubc.ca/>

Calgary <https://law.ucalgary.ca/>

Dalhousie <https://www.dal.ca/faculty/law.html>

Manitoba law.robsonhall.com

McGill www.mcgill.ca/law/

Moncton* www.umoncton.ca/umcm-droit/

New Brunswick www.unb.ca/fredericton/law/

Ottawa <https://www.uottawa.ca/faculty-law/common-law>

Queen's law.queensu.ca/

Saskatchewan law.usask.ca/

Toronto www.law.utoronto.ca/

Victoria www.law.uvic.ca/

Western www.law.uwo.ca/

Windsor www.uwindsor.ca/law/

York www.osgoode.yorku.ca

Want to learn more?

Career Services offers [Drop-in Career Advising](#) to answer quick questions related to all aspects of your career planning and job search.

For more in-depth explanations, check the following books:

- *So You Want to be a Lawyer, eh?* by Adam Letourneau
- *50 Real Law School Personal Statements and Everything You Need to Know to Write Yours* compiled by jdMission Senior Consultants
- *The Best Law School's Admissions Secrets: the Essential Guide from Harvard's Former Admissions Dean* by Joyce Putnam Curll (former Dean of Admissions at Harvard Law School)
- *Cracking the LSAT* by Adam Robinson & Kevin Blemel