



Applying to Law School

A guide to get you started

The law school application process can be time-consuming and it can be stressful to balance the demands of it with the other important parts of your life. This is one of many tools that are provided by Career Services to support you in your journey to law school.

Before the Application

Choose your major/media

- Do what you love! You will usually attain better marks learning something that fascinates you.
- Myth - a political studies program is required as a pre-requisite to applying to law.
- Schools rarely require specific pre-requisite courses (however three years of undergraduate is required); however, it's always best to check with each school.
- Go to the source! Check with each school for up-to-date admission criteria. (see University Websites, p. 4)

Check out the profession

- Ask a lawyer for an appointment to learn from their experiences in the field and discuss your career goals.
- Examples of information interviews with lawyers as well as basic background information on law as a career, is available from Career Cruising which you can access through Career Services' website (use the Search function for quick access to Career Cruising).
- To gain perspective on different areas of law, check out legal resources (see Supplementary Resources, p. 4)

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 have a cumulative undergrad GPA of an A- (80-84%). Some schools have their own specific requirements. Special category applicants are evaluated differently.

Stay involved

- Choose 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]

- The year prior to the application year, preferably in June to avoid coinciding with academic stress. Other LSAT sittings occur in September/October, December and February. For the first round offers, December is the latest date to take it. Those on the waitlist may sometimes re-take in February.
 - The LSAT can be written at Queen's. For dates and locations, see Exams Office, Gordon Hall, Room 110.
 - Preparation for the LSAT is important and you will need to decide whether to study on your own or whether to take a course. Both methods have worked for students in the past.
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TIMELINES

LSAT (June, Sept/Oct., Dec, Feb)	Application (Nov-March-check with source)	Offers (Varies by institution)
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Please note, some schools require earlier deadlines to be considered for scholarships, some may have first-rounds (in Nov/Dec) and second-rounds (Feb). Check with specific school websites.

The Application Basics

Although the application for each law school varies, the following items often form part or all of the application process. Be prepared to spend anywhere from 5 to 25 hours to complete your applications (depending on the number of schools to which you apply).

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.

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 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 take the most recent one. The expiry date for LSAT results is specific to each school (check with them!) but is usually 5 years.
- It is now required that all applicants submit a passport-style photo online when registering. This will then be printed on a ticket that must be brought to test centres.

Sketch

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 Statements

- 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. "Perfect Personal Statements", a book available at Career Services (see p. 4), contains good advice and many examples including: relating a personal anecdote, admitting shortcomings, focusing on goals, relating unique life experiences, being committed to a cause, explaining deficiencies or blemishes, presenting a multi-faceted background.
- Strive for authenticity and your voice, and, if possible, customize your statement for each Law School: "my volunteer activities..." would be more suitable for one institution while "my involvement in the community..." might connect with the language of 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 him or her 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 with the National Committee on Accreditation (see Supplementary Resources, p.4). In the U.S. check to ensure that programs are American Bar Approved (check lsac.org).

Funding

Tuition fees vary considerably between institutions:

- The fulltime tuition for Canadian programs in 2014 ranged from \$9,000 (McGill NR) to \$33,000 (U of T).
- Tuition for 2015, on average, cost around \$17,000.
- Most schools provide both scholarships and bursaries if applied for by the admission deadline. Check out the Faculty of Law websites at the various schools for scholarship information or contact Student Awards at the university to which you are applying.
- The Career Information Area at Career Services has books that list scholarships and bursaries.

- The cost of applying to law school can quickly add up: LSAT fee (US\$175+ additional fees for date changes), individual application fee (up to \$90), transcripts (\$12 each) and LSAT prep course, if taken, (up to \$1200).
- Within Ontario, the central application service [OLSAS] will charge a \$200 fee, in 2015 the ranges were \$290 for one school (\$200 OLSAS fee+\$90 school fee) to \$830 for all 7 schools, plus the cost of requesting transcripts (\$12 each).
- 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 the admissions department at the Law School in question.

University Websites

*French only

Alberta lawschool.ualberta.ca/	Queen's law.queensu.ca/
British Columbia www.law.ubc.ca/	Saskatchewan law.usask.ca/
Calgary www.law.ucalgary.ca/	Thompson Rivers http://www.tru.ca/law.html
Dalhousie law.dal.ca/	Toronto www.law.utoronto.ca/
Manitoba law.robsonhall.ca/	Victoria www.law.uvic.ca/
McGill www.mcgill.ca/law/	Western www.law.uwo.ca/
Moncton* www.umoncton.ca/umcm-droit/	Windsor www.uwindsor.ca/law/
New Brunswick www.unb.ca/fredericton/law/	York www.osgoode.yorku.ca/
Ottawa www.commonlaw.uottawa.ca/	

Additional resources available from Career Services

- So, You Want to be a Lawyer, Eh? Adam Letourneau. Writing on Stone Press, 2005. Call #E.PRG.LAW.9
- Perfect Personal Statements. Mark A. Stewart. Peterson's, 2004. Call #E.PERS.4
- Thinking About Law School workshops. Check the career services website for dates.

Supplementary Resources

Law School Admission Council www.lsac.org
 LSAC <http://www.lsac.org/docs/> > "Think About Law School" booklet
 Ontario Law School Application Service [OLSAS] www.ouac.on.ca/olsas/ > Instruction Booklet
 Canadian Bar Association www.cba.org/
 Federation of Law Societies of Canada/ National Committee on Accreditation www.flsc.ca
 Law Society of Upper Canada [Ontario] www.lsuc.on.ca
 Continuing Legal Education Society of B.C. www.cle.bc.ca
 Canada Law Schools www.canadalawschools.ca
 Lawstudents.ca www.lawstudents.ca