

Applying to Law School

This tipsheet breaks down the elements of applying to law school including research, gaining experience, and building a strong application to help you confidently navigate the application process.

In this tipsheet, you will learn:

- How to prepare before applying to law school
- The elements of the application process and strategies for strong applications
- Where to find additional resources

Before Applying

Learn about the profession: As with any career, it is important to understand the profession—what the work looks like, the opportunities, the challenges, etc.—and if you would like that kind of work. Research the areas of law which interest you the most. Find opportunities to explore the legal profession through networking with people in the field, gaining experience in a law office if possible, or job shadowing.

For more information about reaching out to professionals, see our "Informational Interviews" tipsheet: <https://careers.queensu.ca/jobs-experience/career-support-tips>

Gain experience: Experiences such as extracurricular activities or relevant jobs can look good on an application, but any experience that builds your analytical and research skills as well as your interpersonal and communication skills can help demonstrate your suitability for a career in law. If you have a specific interest in an area of law, consider finding experiences that build your knowledge in that area or allow you to connect with a relevant demographic. For example, participating in community service programs working with youth, immigrants, former convicts, or Indigenous communities can provide insights into the legal challenges these groups face.

Other extracurricular activities might include:

- Joining a pre-law society/club
- Going to workshops, seminars, public lectures or conferences
- Participating in Model United Nations
- Volunteering with legal aid organizations
- Research and academic projects
- Moot court/mock trial competitions
- Joining other student organizations

Explore schools: Each law program will have their own website with detailed information about the program and application process. Finding out about the process is important,

but it is also important to understand the culture of the school itself and the opportunities including mentoring/networking and career placement. Research schools and speak to current and former students to understand the program better.

Research costs: Applying to law school can include many expenses such as the cost to apply to a program as well as any test preparation. Also, consider the cost of tuition and fees as well as the local cost of living when doing your research into various law programs. Financial aid or scholarships may be available.

Research required career qualifications: The process of becoming a lawyer has many steps including education, articling, and passing the bar exam. The practice of law is often specific to the local, provincial and federal laws of the jurisdiction where you are licensed to practice. Where you go to law school may impact your ability to practice in certain areas. If you go to law school out of province or internationally, research carefully what the requirements are to practice law in the location where you intend to build your career.

Get organized: Deadlines and applications requirements vary from school to school. Determine how long you will need for each part of the application (when you need to take the LSATs, when you should be connecting with professors for references, etc.). Use a method that helps you keep track of these details and manage the time it takes to complete the application, while balancing your other priorities.

Academic Requirements

Undergraduate Degree: Most law schools require applicants to have completed a minimum of three years of undergraduate study. Common pre-law majors include political science, history, philosophy, and economics. However, there is no specific major required for law school. Courses that develop critical thinking, writing, and analytical skills are beneficial.

GPA requirements: Getting into law school is competitive, so it's advisable to maintain a strong GPA throughout your undergraduate career. Law schools have different methods for calculating GPA requirements, so it is important to review the requirements of each school carefully.

Law School Admissions Test (LSAT): The LSAT is a standardized test that assesses reading comprehension, logical reasoning, and analytical thinking. Most Canadian law schools require the LSAT and have minimum acceptable scores. Having a strong score can make your application more competitive. The test is administered by the Law School Admission Council (LSAC). Accommodations which may be available for the LSAT are outlined on the LSAC website: <https://www.lsac.org/lsat/register-lsat/accommodations/accommodations-may-be-available-lsat>.

Application Basics

Applications for law schools in Ontario go through the Ontario Law School Application Service (OLSAS). The OLSAS website details the application instructions and requirements shared by Ontario law schools, but each university may have additional instructions; it is important to research each school for these details as you would for application information for schools outside of Ontario.

References/Letters of Recommendation: For Ontario law schools, applicants typically need to submit two letters of recommendation. When considering potential references, choose people who can speak to your skills, character, and the quality of your work. Throughout your undergraduate degree, take time to make genuine connections with your professors and supervisors. When applying, reach out to your references to discuss what you would like them to highlight. Contact them early in the application process to give them ample time to complete your reference documents.

Transcripts: Whether you are applying through a central application service like OLSAS or directly to the program, you will need to request official transcripts of your education. These transcripts will be sent either electronically or through the mail directly from your undergraduate institution to the law school or application service. This process can take time, particularly if you have received your education outside of Canada. Make sure to request these transcripts early in the application process.

CV or Resume: Some law schools require a resume or CV. Consider how your experience, education, and skills relate to both succeeding in law school and a career in law. Highlight any relevant legal experience, internships, volunteer work, and extracurricular activities that demonstrate your commitment to the field of law.

Personal Statements/Essays: You may have to submit a personal statement or answer a series of questions as part of the application. These materials often ask about your goals, experiences, and how you will succeed in the program. Make sure your answers or essays are organized and use specific experiences to help the admissions committee see your unique abilities and qualifications. Tailor your statement to each law school to reflect why you are a good fit for their program.

Supplementary Materials and/or Requirements: Law schools may have additional requirements. These may include things such as proof of English proficiency, a diversity statement, or writing samples. Interviews are not standard for the application process for Canadian schools. However, some schools may include them to better understand an applicant's skills, interest, and fit with a program.

Indigenous Applicants

Many law schools in Canada recognize the unique challenges faced by Indigenous students and offer specific admission processes as well as support systems to encourage their participation in legal education. These processes and supports may include dedicated admission categories, mentorship programs, and scholarships. Within the application process, each school has different criteria, but most require proof of Indigenous identity and demonstration of connection with your Indigenous community, which you can show through your personal statement, CV, references, or supplemental material.

Expanding Career Possibilities

Getting into law school is competitive and it can be a significant investment of time and resources. The results can be very rewarding. However, pursuing law school is not an option for everyone. If law school is not feasible for you, there are many fulfilling career paths which utilize the same skills and interests and allow you to contribute meaningfully to society while building your professional career.

Consider exploring related fields such as paralegal studies, legal research, or alternative dispute resolution, which allow you to engage with legal principles and contribute to justice. Reflect on what initially drew you to the study of law; how can those motivations translate into other professions? Careers in public policy, advocacy, human resources, social services, or government administration offer opportunities to effect change and support individuals and communities. Teaching, nonprofit work, or roles in international development also provide avenues to make a positive difference in society.

Assess your interests, strengths, and long-term goals to find a path that aligns with your desire to help others and contribute to the greater good. Career Coaches offer 1-1 appointments to help with this process and can provide additional resources for career exploration. Visit [MyCareer](#) for the drop-in schedule and appointment bookings.

Additional Resources

Law School Admissions Council: [The Law School Admission Council | LSAC](#) (lsac.org)

Ontario Law School Application Service (OLSAS): [OLSAS Application Guide | Ontario Universities' Application Centre](#) (ouac.on.ca)

Canadian Bar Association: [Canadian Bar Association - Home](#) (cba.org)

Federation of Law Societies of Canada: [Federation of Law Societies of Canada - Governing Canada's Legal Profession](#) (flsc.ca)

Law Society of Ontario: [Law Society of Ontario Home | Law Society of Ontario](#) (lso.ca)

Continuing Legal Education Society of BC: [The Continuing Legal Education Society of British Columbia | CLEBC](#)