



CENTER FOR CAREER & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Applying to Law School

A law school application consists of: your undergraduate GPA, LSAT score, resume, recommendation letters, and the application itself. You may also include addenda to discuss grade trends, standardized testing conditions, or criminal records. With the help of the Center for Career & Professional Development (CCPD) and faculty pre-law advisor Dr. Joseph Hower, you can leverage 21st century career-readiness skills to construct a well-managed professional life as an attorney, beginning with applying to law school.

Choosing Schools

You should examine why you want to attend law school and your realistic chances of gaining admission to different schools. *LSAC Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools* (officialguide.lsac.org) provides a starting place. Consider reputation, location, facilities, teaching methods, combined graduate/law programs, placement and bar passage rates, costs, clinical programs, faculty, part-time or evening divisions, class size, and student-to-faculty ratio. Your list should include at least one school where your chances of admission are high and at least one that's a "reach" school. Your Southwestern professors and CCPD can help you evaluate your list of possible schools. Visit as many law schools as possible. During spring, many law schools have admitted student days.

The Application

First, set up your gateway to the entire law school admission process: the Law School Admission Council (LSAC) account. Your LSAC account number will be your primary identifier for all LSAC services. You will use your LSAC account to register for the LSAT, receive your scores, use the Credential Assembly Service (CAS), submit law school applications to U.S. law schools, and check the status of your applications. **Be sure your LSAC application information is correct. If there are mistakes, correct them as soon as possible!**

Each law school may require other information regarding recommendations, resumes, or personal statements. Read all requirements thoroughly *before* you begin to submit materials. Consult the law school, CCPD, or a professor if you have any questions. Send applications as early in the application season as possible.

While several schools have early decision or early admission programs, others will not open applications until late September or early October. After obtaining all of your applications, keep good records on application deadlines and procedures. **You must also keep a copy of each completed application.** When you take the bar exam during your first year of law school, you are required to submit a copy of the application to the bar examiners.

CREDENTIAL ASSEMBLY SERVICE (CAS)

The Credential Assembly Service (CAS) streamlines the admission process by allowing you to send your credentials once to LSAC rather than to each school to which you apply. Through CAS, LSAC summarizes your credentials and combines them with your LSAT scores and writing samples into a report to send to your prospective law schools. CAS includes access to electronic applications for all ABA-approved law schools, most of which require that applicants use CAS to apply. The basic steps for assembling your CAS file can be done in any order, but they must all be completed before any law school reports will be sent.

- Make sure there is a reportable LSAT score in your LSAC file
- Provide LSAC with information about schools you attended
- Make sure all required transcripts are sent to LSAC
- Make sure required recommendation letters are sent to LSAC
- Pay the \$195 fee for the Credential Assembly Service (your account will remain active for five years)

Read the instructions in your CAS registration materials carefully. After registering with CAS, contact schools you attended and request official academic transcripts be sent directly to CAS. Transcripts for concurrent registration courses taken during high school or courses at a community college must be sent by the school granting the credit. CAS will calculate an overall GPA for you. This GPA may differ from your Southwestern GPA if you have many transfer hours. Finally, you should send reference letters to CAS. Check the status of your CAS file online to determine which letters and transcripts have been received, and see whether a school has requested your file and when the file is sent.

After receiving all of your credentials, CAS will compile a Law School Report and send you a copy. Check all of the information to be certain no errors exist. You will also receive a list of mathematical formulas that some law schools use to calculate an index for the admissions process. Schools to which you have applied will then request a copy of your Report directly from CAS. Note that CAS does not send your resume or personal statement to law schools. You must send them directly to each law school.

Mastering the LSAT

The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) tests your reading comprehension and analytical and logical reasoning skills. Administered through LSAC, the LSAT is a remotely proctored

online exam offered multiple times per year. Most applicants plan to take the LSAT by June of the year preceding law school entry in order to send completed applications as early as possible. Many schools practice rolling admissions, giving early applicants an advantage. After registration, don't throw the LSAT Registration information away! You'll need to refer to it later.

Prepare for the LSAT and plan to take it only once. Don't take the test unprepared, and don't take the real test for practice. Schools treat multiple scores differently but most will average all scores. The actual LSAT costs \$200. Many LSAT preparation methods exist, including private courses—either in-person (\$1000+) or online (\$600-1200)—self-prep (\$50-375), and private tutoring (\$2000+). Practice LSATs are available on campus each semester.

LAW SCHOOL RESUMES

Unless forbidden, you should send a resume with each law school application. This resume will generally be longer and more detailed than a resume used in a job search. A typical senior will have one-and-one-half to two pages. Good examples of resumes are available on the CCPD website. The resume should fully inform the reader about your community service, employment, extracurricular activities, special programs, and academic honors. You should include information about where you went to high school but you generally don't include details about high school activities. CCPD is always ready to review your resume and offer suggestions.

PERSONAL STATEMENTS AND ADDENDA

Your grades and LSAT scores give the committee some idea of your academic abilities. Your resume shows what you've done and where you've been. Because most law schools do not interview applicants, a personal statement is your only chance to provide additional information to the admissions committee. Spend time reflecting on your life, the events and people that have impacted you, and the things you consider important. Write a statement that lets the reader know more about you. Different people will give you different advice on what to include in your statement, so always consider the source of information. Before you send materials, have CCPD, Dr. Hower, academic advisors, and/or trusted professors read them and offer objective comments.

If you had a poor semester or low LSAT scores, you may wish to discuss this in your application. Only address these issues in your personal statement if they are the essence of the story you wish to tell the committee. Overcoming low grades or doing poorly on the LSAT will not be the thesis of most statements, however. You may include an addendum with your application that discusses only the reasons for poor performance and how you overcame that hurdle. Reasons may include illness, financial problems, lack of study skills, or lack of motivation. If you wish to prove that the LSAT is not a good indicator of your future performance, you may wish to discuss your SAT/ACT scores and how those scores did not predict your success at Southwestern. Once again, CCPD is happy to review these addenda.

REFERENCE LETTERS

Reference letters can serve a crucial role when the admissions committee must decide between you and another applicant. Generally, you will need three letters. Choose evaluators who know you and can speak first-hand of your abilities. At least one letter should be from a faculty member at Southwestern with whom you have taken a class. Faculty can compare you with other students whom they've taught, discuss your writing and analytical abilities, and remark on your behavior and attendance in the classroom.

Letters from friends and acquaintances will not hurt your admissions chances, but generally don't improve them.

OTHER CONCERNS

Several issues may arise during the application process, ranging from questions about trends in grades to minor legal indiscretions. Never assume you should gloss over any incidents in your past. Remember that the Bar Examiners will receive a copy of your law school application from the law school when you enroll to check for honesty and consistency. Failure to disclose scholastic probation or a minor criminal violation on your application could result in you being denied admission to the bar. All infractions of the law must be reported, **even if they were expunged or if you received deferred adjudication.**

All additional documents, including your personal statement and addenda, should have your name and Social Security number near the top of the page. Keep a file to monitor the progress of each application and apply well in advance of deadlines.

Recommended Application Timetable

APRIL/MAY

Prepare and register for the June LSAT. Begin researching law schools and identify possible choices. Start collecting references. Meet with faculty and CCPD pre-law advisors.

JUNE

Take the LSAT. Continue research and finalize law school choices. Update your resume.

JULY/AUGUST

Receive LSAT scores. Begin writing your personal statement. Keep track of which references you have received and send thank-you notes to the writers.

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER

Subscribe to the CAS. Have official transcripts from every school you've ever attended sent directly to CAS. Begin completing applications. Keep copies of all application materials and correspondence. Forward reference letters to CAS.

SEPTEMBER/NOVEMBER

Take—or retake, if necessary—the LSAT. Complete remaining applications. Receive notification from CAS that Law School Reports have been mailed to law schools. Rank law schools on your list.

SPRING SEMESTER

Receive offers of admission. Apply for scholarships and financial aid. Tour law schools that have offered admission. Inform the CCPD of admissions offers and which school you have selected.

Additional Resource

- CCPD pre-law website: <https://www.southwestern.edu/career-services/graduate-school/law-school/> (includes various test-prep providers)