

2019/2020



# Legal Careers

Cornell Career Services • 103 Barnes Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853 • 607/255-5296



Cornell University

# 2019-2020 Legal Careers Calendar

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<b>September 16</b>	<b>Optimizing Your Law School Application Process</b>	Breaks down the application process: LSAT, selecting law schools, CAS, letters of recommendation, personal statements, and timetable	<i>115 Rockefeller Hall</i>
<b>September 19</b>			<i>142 Goldwin Smith Hall</i> <i>4:45 p.m.</i>
<b>September 25</b>	<b>Professional and Graduate School Day</b>	Meet and speak with admissions representatives from law schools across the country	<i>Barton Hall</i> <i>4:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.</i>
<b>October 1</b>	<b>Writing Personal Statements for Law School</b>	Advice on what law schools look for, topics to consider, and statement structure	<i>142 Goldwin Smith Hall</i> <i>4:45 p.m.</i>
<b>January 30</b>	<b>Financing Your Legal Education</b>	Information on requirements, how to apply for loans, types of loans, repayment, and maximizing financial aid.	<i>TBD</i>
<b>February 11</b>	<b>Applying for a Paralegal/Legal Assistant Position</b>	Suggestions for identifying prospective employers and conducting an effective job search	<i>TBD</i>
<b>March 10</b>	<b>What to do When You Are on Reserve or Waitlisted at Law Schools</b>	Strategies for enhancing your credentials and improving your chances of admission	<i>TBD</i>
<b>April 9</b>	<b>Thinking About Law School? Prelaw Briefing on the Application Process</b>	Steps for preparing to apply to law school during the senior year or following graduation	<i>TBD</i>

**Prelaw Services at Cornell are listed on the inside of the back cover**

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Diversity and inclusion are a part of Cornell University's heritage. We are a recognized employer and educator valuing AA/EEO, Protected Veterans, and Individuals with Disabilities.

# Introduction

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The *Legal Careers Guide* provides information to help you determine whether a career in law is right for you, to aid you in preparing as an undergraduate for legal study, and to assist you in applying to law school. The *Guide* is designed to help you at each step of the process by providing accurate and up-to-date information.

We would like to express our appreciation to Jane Levy, who served for many years as Coordinator of the Prelaw Advisory Network and originally wrote this guide; to Laurie Pugliese, Director of Law School Credential Services, Law School Admission Council, for her review of information on study-abroad transcripts; and to Kristine Goggan, Senior Administrative Assistant, Cornell Career Services, for her assistance in producing the *Guide*.

Greg Foster  
Career Development Manager,  
Law School and Graduate School

# Deciding on a Career in Law

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A J.D. (Juris Doctor) degree can lead to a wide range of law-related careers and can open doors to careers in government, business, higher education, and numerous other fields. There is little doubt that the study and practice of law can be intellectually stimulating; the most basic functions of the legal profession call daily upon reasoning, analytical, and communication skills. The possibility of bringing about social change, defending basic human rights, and expanding access to justice attracts many who are dedicated to making a positive impact on the lives of people they serve. An expectation of prestige and high salaries has also been a consideration in deciding on a legal career, though the market, and the delivery of legal services, is evolving.

You should explore the realities of working in the legal profession fully before reaching a decision. Legal work can require spending considerable time completing tedious, painstaking research and repetitive administrative tasks. Hours can be very long and often include weekends. Depending on the type of law you might practice and where you work, salaries may not meet your expectations. Therefore, it is essential to evaluate both advantages and disadvantages of the profession before making this important decision.

## Exploring Your Interest

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Before beginning the application process, then, consider carefully if a law degree is right for you. Your decision should not be made by default because you are not sure what else to do. There are a number of ways you can explore the field of law:

- Register to receive e-mails about law-related programs and opportunities by completing a brief Student Profile on Handshake at: [career.cornell.edu](http://career.cornell.edu). Under your "Career Interests," select Law for the question "Which type of graduate programs interest you?"
- Talk with a career counselor and take interest assessment tests at your college career services office, to learn if your values and interests are aligned with what is required in the legal field.
- Conduct research on legal careers using Cornell Career Services resources in Barnes Hall.
- Investigate online resources that provide information on legal careers, law schools, and other law-related topics through the Cornell Career Services website at: [career.cornell.edu](http://career.cornell.edu).
- Participate in Cornell's CUeLINKS ([cuelinks.cornell.edu](http://cuelinks.cornell.edu)) to shadow alumni in their workplaces or to arrange information interviews (see below).
- Intern with a law firm or law-related organization to gain exposure to the field, experience the work environment and to develop skills relevant to law school and the practice of law.
- Conduct information interviews to learn about the legal profession. Talk with lawyers who are family members, family friends, or Cornell alumni. Inquire about these issues:
  - \* personal attributes needed to be successful in a legal career;
  - \* satisfactions and dissatisfactions of the field;
  - \* impact of a legal career on personal lives;
  - \* employment outlook in a challenging job market.
- Speak with lawyers who left the practice.

- Discuss the law school experience with current law students and sit in on a class. Visit Cornell Law School's website and register online at: [lawschool.cornell.edu](http://lawschool.cornell.edu)... Admissions... Visit Cornell Law.
- Take a position as a paralegal or legal assistant in a law firm, or work in a law-related organization, before applying to law school, to confirm your interest in the field. No special training is required, and Cornell Career Services can assist you with your job search.

## **Realities of a Legal Career\***

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An important step in making your decision is to learn about the significant changes in the market for new lawyers in recent years. Employment statistics for the class of 2018, based on data from 33,719 respondents (98.5% of all graduates), reveal that there was an increase in the rate of employment for positions in which bar passage was required, when compared to figures from 2017, from 68.7% to 70.1%. However, this change should be considered in light of the fact the total number of law graduates decreased by 701.

The American Bar Association reports that “[t]he employment market for law graduates has stabilized since 2012-13 and is showing incremental improvement. For the class of 2018, the aggregated school data shows that 78.6 percent of the 2018 graduates of the 200 law schools enrolling students and approved by the ABA to offer J.D. degree were employed in full-time long-term Bar Passage Required or J.D. Advantage jobs roughly 10 months after graduation. That compares to 75.3 percent of the graduates reporting similar full-time long-term jobs last year. The higher percentage of students so employed, however, results from both a modest increase in job and an approximately 2 percent decrease in the size of graduating classes. The actual number of full-time long-term Bar Passage Required or J.D. Advantage jobs increased by 714 (2.74 percent) year-over-year, going from 26,293 in 2017 to 27,007 on 2018”

Keep in mind that these statistics reflect the experience of graduates from all law schools in 2017 and 2018. You should investigate employment outcomes at schools of interest that are available on the American Bar Association's website at: [employmentsummary.abaquestionnaire.org](http://employmentsummary.abaquestionnaire.org). If, after careful consideration of the realities of a law career, you continue to be committed to the prospect of a career that will require you to think logically, critically, and creatively; to address some of the major social issues that confront our times; and to play a part in shaping legal institutions that influence the future, then becoming a lawyer may well prove to be a rewarding and fulfilling career choice for you.

\*Sources:

- [https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/legal\\_education\\_and\\_admissions\\_to\\_the\\_bar/statistics/2018-law-graduate-employment-data.pdf](https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/legal_education_and_admissions_to_the_bar/statistics/2018-law-graduate-employment-data.pdf)
- <https://www.americanbar.org/news/abanews/aba-news-archives/2019/04/aba-legal-education-section-releases-employment-data-for-graduat/>

# Preparing for Law School

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Admissions committees look at a variety of factors and trends in your academic record in an attempt to predict how you will perform in law school. There is no "prelaw major," and unlike medical school, there are no specific educational requirements for entrance into law school. Your curriculum should provide a diverse background. Choose classes that challenge your ability to think and reason logically, that require you to research subjects thoroughly and write extensively, and that sharpen your ability to analyze material. Developing your research and organizational skills as an undergraduate will benefit you in law school. For more information, see the American Bar Association's *Preparing for Law School* at: [americanbar.org/groups/legal\\_education/resources/pre\\_law.html](http://americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/pre_law.html).

## Developing Skills

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The following disciplines can help develop skills that are necessary in law school and will serve a future lawyer well:

- Social sciences offer insight into human behavior, social processes, and institutions. Courses that give you a better understanding of diverse cultures will help prepare you for a legal career.
- English and communication courses help you improve your written and oral expression.
- Mathematics and philosophy classes provide background in logic and reasoning, as well as problem-solving skills.
- Physical sciences require systematic analysis of evidence and inductive reasoning.

Undergraduate law-related classes may allow you to get a feel for law as a general subject. They usually do not cover the material in the same depth or embody the intensity and rigor of law school courses, so they are not especially accurate indicators of your ability to succeed in the study of law or whether you will like law school.

## Selecting a Major

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Choose a major that interests you and double major if you like, but be aware that this is not necessarily a positive factor in the admissions process. Though most law students do not "major" in specific areas—typically specialization occurs in law firms or other legal environments following law school—there are areas of law you may want to prepare for as an undergraduate. For example, if you are considering a career in patent or intellectual property law, you may want to major in engineering or science. Natural resources can provide a good background for environmental law. Learning one or more languages and taking courses in international studies will help lay the groundwork for a career in international law. Courses in economics, business, and accounting are especially useful in the areas of corporate and tax law.

## Compiling an Impressive Record

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A solid GPA, particularly within your major, is expected, but solid performance across a variety of subjects will demonstrate your intellectual curiosity and ability that would be advantageous in the study of law. Admissions committees will give serious consideration to the variety and depth of your coursework as evidence of your interests and motivation. The key to compiling an impressive transcript is to challenge yourself by taking classes at increasingly difficult levels and studying

diverse subject areas. Taking courses on a pass/fail basis may encourage you to explore subjects or levels of instruction you might otherwise avoid for fear of a low grade; keep in mind, however, that taking a number of courses pass/fail may be perceived negatively. While grades earned during study abroad or summer sessions elsewhere may not be calculated into your GPA for law school, admissions committees will see your transcripts for study elsewhere.

In general, lecture courses provide a good foundation for further instruction, while seminars allow you to present, discuss, critique, and defend more specific ideas. Seminars also give you the opportunity to interact with faculty. It can be difficult at a large university such as Cornell to identify faculty members who can write detailed and substantive letters of recommendation in support of your application to graduate or professional school. Make the effort to cultivate relationships with faculty. Interaction with faculty can meaningfully enhance your academic experience and can yield recommendations or evaluations; make yourself stand out as an individual by attending office hours, asking questions in class, and conducting research with faculty.

## **Other Activities**

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Law schools will be interested in your extracurricular activities, leadership experience, summer jobs, internships, and public service, since they seek well-rounded candidates for admission. Select activities that interest you, not those you think will impress admissions committees. Be sure not to devote so much time to your activities that you sacrifice your GPA, which is far more important in the admissions process than activities.



# Determining Where to Apply

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With 203 fully or provisionally accredited law schools in the United States, how do you decide where to apply and ultimately which school to attend? It will be important to balance factors that address your personal preferences with those that affect your chances of admission. Do not let the search for "long shots, good chances, and sure things" govern your selection process. Begin by assembling a list of law schools based on criteria that are important to you, then revise your choices according to your chances of admission. This systematic approach should help limit frustration and confusion during the process of applying to law school. Selecting schools carefully will also help reduce the time and expense of applying to an excessive number of schools.

Determine what is most important to you as you evaluate law schools and decide on a list of potential schools. Make sure your research is thorough and includes discussions with current students at law schools that interest you. After you complete your research and compile a list of schools, meet with a prelaw advisor (see Prewlaw Services at Cornell on the inside of the back cover) to discuss schools of interest to you.

## Criteria for Selection

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Consider the following factors, and determine which are important to you:

**National/Regional Schools:** Does the school attract applicants from across the country and abroad, or are most students from the region in which the school is located? Do most students want to work throughout the country or in the school's region following graduation?

**Faculty:** What are the academic and experiential backgrounds of faculty? How accessible are they? What is the faculty-student ratio, the number of full-time vs. adjunct faculty, and the number of female and minority faculty? Are they publishing and involved in on-going legal matters?

**Facilities and Resources:** Is the school affiliated with a university? Do students have access to courses from a range of academic disciplines to supplement their legal curriculum? Is the library equipped to permit students to conduct intensive research and study? How helpful is the library staff? How accessible are electronic databases such as Lexis and Westlaw? In general, do the facilities provide a comfortable learning environment?

**Student Body:** What is the size of the entering class? What does the admissions profile tell you about the student body? Where did students study as undergraduates and what are their geographic backgrounds? Is there diversity in interests and personal/cultural backgrounds? What is the overall atmosphere—are students friendly or overly competitive? Is there much interaction with fellow students outside the classroom?

**Special Programs:** What courses are available in specialized areas? Are you interested in joint degree programs, and are they available? What opportunities exist for practical experience, including clinics, internships, etc.? What specialized institutes, journals, or organizations exist in your areas of interest? Does the school demonstrate a commitment to women and minorities through special programs?

**Career Services:** What advising and resources are available to help you find a job? Is career advising available? How many employers recruit at the law school and who are they? What assistance is given to students not interested in working in law firms? What is the bar passage rate for recent graduates? What percentage of the class has positions at graduation? In which types of positions and geographic areas are they employed? What is the percentage of graduates holding judicial clerkships? An excellent resource for investigating employment outcomes at law schools is the ABA Employment Summary Reports at: [americanbar.org/groups/legal\\_education/resources/statistics.html](http://americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/statistics.html).

**Student Life:** Is housing provided for first-year students? If not, does the school offer assistance in locating off-campus housing? What is the cost of living? What types of cultural opportunities are there? Does the school provide recreational facilities? What opportunities are available to family members or significant others who may be with you while you are attending law school?

**Costs:** What are tuition, housing, and transportation costs? Is financial aid exclusively need-based, or are merit scholarships available? If merit scholarships are offered, are they guaranteed for three years, or are there criteria you must meet each year? What percentage of students maintain their scholarships over three years? (For terms and conditions of conditional scholarships, refer to ABA Required Disclosures on each school's website.) Does the law school offer student debt assistance associated with public service?

## **Reputation**

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The issue most often discussed by prospective law students, yet the most difficult to define, is reputation. A number of factors contribute to a school's reputation, including faculty, facilities, career services, reputation of the parent university, etc. Though a number of law school rankings are available, most factors evaluated are not quantifiable, and therefore you should not perceive the rankings necessarily as accurate or definitive. Selectivity at law schools, however, is one factor that can be quantified; you can gauge a school's relative selectivity by comparing the number of applicants accepted to the overall number of applications. Standard 509 of the American Bar Association Standards and Rules of Procedure for the Approval of Law Schools requires ABA-approved law schools to disclose consumer information related to admissions. Look for this information on the ABA's website at: [abarequireddisclosures.org](http://abarequireddisclosures.org).

Schools can be divided roughly into three groups:

- Schools with national reputations that tend to appear in various "top ten" lists. They draw students from a national pool and offer geographic mobility to graduates.
- Schools with good regional reputations that are attended primarily by students from the region, who may want to remain in the area following graduation, but who may also seek positions throughout the country.
- Local schools that draw students primarily from the immediate area who want to practice there following graduation.

For more on evaluating schools, refer to LSAC's *Thinking About Law School* at: [lsac.org/docs/default-source/publications-\(lsac-resources\)/thinkaboutlawschool.pdf](http://lsac.org/docs/default-source/publications-(lsac-resources)/thinkaboutlawschool.pdf).

## **Non-Traditional Alternatives**

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Be aware that some law schools offer alternatives to fall admission in a full-time law program. Evening divisions and part-time programs allow students to work and study law simultaneously, earning a J.D. in four years. A few schools on the quarter system allow students to enter mid-year. Summer entry and/or summer courses can accelerate the degree program from three to two-and-a-half calendar years. And finally, some law schools have created summer trial programs, which allow conditionally accepted applicants to prove themselves capable of legal study in time for fall entrance.

## **Online Resources and Publications**

There are a number of resources designed to help you research and evaluate law schools. Cornell Career Services offers links to online resources through the Link Library at: [career.cornell.edu](http://career.cornell.edu) and print resources in the Library in 103 Barnes Hall. Below are some of these resources, and a more complete listing of the Library's law-related holdings is appended to this guide.

- **Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools** includes the ABA's Standard 509 Required Disclosures Information Reports with information on the American Bar Association-approved law schools and Law School Employment Summary Reports, updated annually. Access the information at: [americanbar.org/groups/legal\\_education/resources/aba\\_approved\\_law\\_schools/official-guide-to-aba-approved-law-schools.html](http://americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/aba_approved_law_schools/official-guide-to-aba-approved-law-schools.html).
- **2018 LSAC (Law School Admission Council) Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools**, available at [lsac.org](http://lsac.org) and updated in April 201, offers various search tools and includes links to law schools' websites and to ABA statistics.
- **DiscoverLaw.org** is LSAC's website for diversity in law programs and includes a number of resources for applicants from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds and information on LSAC's summer PLUS programs on law school campuses.
- **Law School Transparency Score Reports** at: [lstreports.com/schools/](http://lstreports.com/schools/) and filter data by law school from many sources.
- **NALP-Association for Legal Career Professionals** offers an online directory of law schools at: [nalp.org/nalpdirectoryoflawschools](http://nalp.org/nalpdirectoryoflawschools).
- **Catalogs and bulletins** published and distributed by law schools are available through their websites and by contacting the schools.
- *The Wilson-Stern Book of Law School Lists 2017-18 Edition* provides information about joint degrees, areas of strength identified by law schools, treatment of multiple LSAT scores by individual schools, schools that grant one-year deferrals, bar passage rates at a number of schools, schools that award non-need-based scholarships, etc. *The Book of Law School Lists* is available in the Career Services Library and online at: [kaptest.com/static/img/pdf/2015-NAPLA.pdf](http://kaptest.com/static/img/pdf/2015-NAPLA.pdf).
- *Boston College Law School Locator* allows students to view schools where they are likely to be competitive for admissions based on LSAT and GPA. The Boston College Law School Locator is available online at: <https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/offices/careers/pdf/Law%20School/2016%20Law%20Locator%20Final.pdf>

## CornellResources

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- **Professional and Graduate School Day**, held each fall, is attended by representatives of approximately 90 law schools who speak with students about their schools and admissions policies, and distribute bulletins and application materials. The 2019 event will take place on September 25.
- **The Action Report** summarizes GPAs, LSAT scores, and admissions decisions for Cornellians who applied to law school the previous year. Information from the summary report is appended to this publication; you can obtain more detailed information by scheduling an appointment with a prelaw advisor.
- **Survey responses** of Cornellians studying at law schools across the country provide information about their experiences and offer advice to current applicants. Responses include contact information in many cases for further discussion and are available in the Career Services Library in 103 Barnes Hall.

# Understanding Admissions Criteria

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Most law school admissions committees use a combination of objective and subjective criteria, described below and in the next section, to evaluate applicants.

## Objective Criteria

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**Law School Admission Test (LSAT):** Applicants take the LSAT, a half-day standardized test, during one of nine test administrations offered between June, 2019 and April, 2020 by the Law School Admission Council. Scores, which range from 120 to 180, are used by law schools as a common measurement of potential for success in law school.

**Undergraduate Grade Point Average (GPA):** Applicants submit undergraduate transcripts to the Credential Assembly Service (CAS), which converts grades to a cumulative grade point average using a set of consistent values. The GPA offers admissions committees another numerical basis for comparing applicants.

Law schools consider the objective criteria—the GPA and LSAT score—the selection criteria that most accurately predict how applicants will perform in their first year. Some schools weigh these factors equally in the admissions process, while others give either the LSAT or the GPA somewhat greater weight. It is important to remember, however, that most law schools do not make admissions decisions solely on the basis of objective criteria. Subjective criteria, listed below, take on importance once applicants' GPAs and LSAT scores qualify them for closer scrutiny.

## Subjective Criteria

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**Personal Statement:** Applicants submit a personal statement as part of the application process for almost all law schools. Admissions committees look for a concise, detailed, well-written statement revealing the applicant's individuality. They want to learn from the statement who the applicant is and what makes the applicant qualified to study at their law schools.

**Letter of Recommendation:** Most law schools require applicants to submit letters of recommendation from professors or employers to gain a different perspective on the applicant's academic strength, intellectual curiosity, motivation, communication skills, and personal qualities. Establish an account at [lsac.org](http://lsac.org) to use LSAC's Letter of Recommendation Service, which offers a convenient way for recommenders to submit letters, and for you to distribute them to schools where you apply.

**Experience:** This factor may encompass a wide range of pursuits—from undergraduate curricular and extracurricular activities, to internships, to full-time work experience, etc.—that demonstrate the applicant has skills and abilities relevant to the study of law and will contribute to the diversity and strength of the class.

There are, of course, other factors that may be used to evaluate applicants, depending on the policies of individual schools. For example, most law schools have special recruitment programs to increase minority participation in the legal profession, and some state schools may reserve seats for state residents. Review schools' websites to learn about their selection criteria. You may want to contact schools about your specific concerns.

# Applying to Law School

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The previous section described criteria used by law schools to evaluate applicants. This section revisits those criteria from a different perspective, spelling out in greater detail what you as an applicant can do to file a strong and complete application.

## Law School Admission Test (LSAT)

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The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) is required for admission to all American Bar Association-approved law schools. Nine administrations of the LSAT, by the Law School Admission Council, will occur between June, 2019 and April 2020 and is offered in September, February and April at Cornell. Detailed test information—dates, sites, registration forms, fees, and deadlines—and registration are available on the LSAC website at: [lsac.org](http://lsac.org). Fee waivers for the LSAT and other essential applicant services are available for applicants with a demonstrated inability to pay for them. Use the fee waiver application at the [lsac.org](http://lsac.org) website.

It is advisable to take the LSAT during the summer or fall of the year you apply. Scores from the November administration will reach law schools in time to meet application deadlines at all schools. Please consult a pre-law advisor if you intend to take the LSAT in the first four months of 2020 and matriculate into law school in the Fall 2020. It's also wise to check with schools where you're applying before planning to take the January, February or March tests.

By taking the test in September, you will be able to see your LSAT score before applying by early November, which should be your goal. If you take the October or November test, however, plan to submit at least some applications around the time of the test; you can then submit additional applications after you learn your LSAT score. If you will be taking or re-taking the test in January, the same advice applies.

The LSAT consists of five 35-minute sections of multiple choice questions. Four of the five sections contribute to your score. These include one reading comprehension, one analytical reasoning, and two logical reasoning sections.

The unscored section, usually referred to as the variable section, is used to pretest new questions or evaluate new test forms. The placement of this section varies, and you won't know which section is unscored until you receive your score report.

The LSAT also includes a 35-minute, unscored writing sample. The writing prompt presents a decision problem, and you are asked to choose between two positions or courses of action, and defend your choice. There is no "right" or "wrong" position; the writing sample lets you demonstrate your argumentative writing skills. Law schools are looking at the reasoning, clarity, organization, language usage, and writing mechanics you display in your sample. Copies of your writing sample are sent to all schools to which you apply.

Your score is computed on a scale of 120 to 180, based on the number of questions you answer correctly; there is no deduction or penalty for incorrect answers, so it is advantageous to guess even if you don't have time to consider a question carefully.

In general, LSAT questions attempt to measure your ability to read complex material accurately and critically, and process information effectively to draw logical, reliable conclusions. The LSAT does not test you on a specific body of knowledge; instead, it evaluates your ability to use skills relevant to the study and practice of law—skills that you likely already possess. You should, however, practice to develop those skills further and to familiarize yourself with the types of questions asked. It is essential to spend adequate time preparing for the LSAT, since your score can improve significantly. Using multiple strategies to prepare has proved to be most effective.

The best approach is to work through examples and explanations carefully, then take actual disclosed tests under simulated conditions while observing time limits. *The Official LSAT Handbook*

provides an introduction to the LSAT and the skills it's designed to test. Information on how to purchase *The Official LSAT Handbook*, *The Official Lsat PrepTest*, *The Official LSAT SuperPrep II*, and previously administered tests are available at lsac.org. Commercial books are also available and can be used as supplements to LSAC materials; however, since commercial book publishers can't legally use copyrighted test materials, the questions can be inferior or even misleading.

Begin your preparation with LSAC materials and then assess your progress. If you feel you would benefit from a more structured program of study, you may want to consider taking a commercial test preparation course. Commercial courses are expensive and the quality of instruction can be uneven, so it is important to learn who will be teaching the course and what materials will be used. Additionally, LSAC now collaborates with the Khan Academy to present LSAT Prep free of charge. Information regarding this program can be found at: [khanacademy.org/prep/lsat](http://khanacademy.org/prep/lsat). Talk with others who have taken the LSAT to learn from their experience, especially concerning the effectiveness of courses you may be considering. Such courses can be helpful in motivating you to study and in building your confidence.

If you are registered for a test but think you are not fully prepared or in a frame of mind to perform well, it's probably better not to take the test; law schools will not view your absence on the test date negatively. If you decide several weeks in advance of the test that you want to change the test date, you can make the change at lsac.org for a fee.

Prepare well and plan to take the test only once. However, if you do not believe your score is representative of your abilities, for example, because you were scoring considerably higher on practice tests, you may want to consider re-taking the test. American Bar Association guidelines require that when there are multiple scores, law schools report the highest score when reporting admissions statistics, and many schools use the highest LSAT score in making admissions decisions rather than the average.

When you register for the LSAT online and establish an online account, correspondence from LSAC, including reporting of your LSAT score, will be sent electronically. You will receive a score report from LSAC about three weeks after the test, which includes your score (on a scale of 120-180) and your percentile ranking. If the test is disclosed, a copy of the test questions with list of responses, a copy of the answer sheet, and a score conversion table will be available online. It should also be noted that a growing number of law schools now utilize the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) as a substitute admissions examination for the LSAT. The GRE is not yet widely accepted by law students, however, and it is critical that the applicant consult individual law school admissions policies before deciding to take and submit the GRE to law schools, rather than the LSAT.

## **Credential Assembly Service (CAS)**

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To centralize and standardize objective application information (GPAs and LSAT scores), ABA-approved law schools require applicants to subscribe to the Credential Assembly Service (CAS). The service organizes and analyzes applicant information in a way that allows law schools to compare academic records from undergraduate schools that use different grading systems.

Register for the Credential Assembly Service (CAS) at [lsac.org](http://lsac.org); the subscription continues for five years. (It's not necessary to register for the LSAT and the Credential Assembly Service at the same time.) Once you have registered, send or take transcript request forms, obtained from CAS, to each college or university from which you have earned academic credit.

If you enrolled in the Cornell-in-Rome Program, any Cornell Summer or Winter Program through Cornell School of Continuing Education, the Cornell-in-India Nilgiris Field Learning Center (NFLC) Program, the Industrial and Labor Relations (ILR) Credit Internship, the Chinese Language Program (FALCON, no longer offered), the China and Asia-Pacific Studies Program (CAPS), the Intensive Arabic Program in Jordan (IAP, no longer offered), or a Management Internship program through Cornell's School of Hotel Administration, you do not need a separate transcript for this study-abroad work. The grades and credits for this coursework will be listed on your Cornell transcript and will be

treated as Cornell work by LSAC. If you enrolled in the Cornell-Nepal Study Program, the Industrial and Labor Relations (ILR Program with University College.

Dublin, the Bologna Consortial Studies Program (BCSP), the Berlin Consortium for German Studies (BCGS), the Consortium for Advanced Studies in Barcelona (CASB), the Consortium for Advanced Studies in Seville (CASA, formerly the Michigan-Cornell-Penn Program in Seville) the EDUCO Program (Emory, Duke, Cornell, and Tulane in Paris), the Kyoto Consortium for Japanese Studies (KCJS), Cornell in Cuba Program (CASA), the Cornell in Cuba Research Program, the Cornell-in-East Asia Program, or any exchange program through a Cornell college, LSAC will include only the grades and credits earned on the US grading scale when summarizing your Cornell transcript.

Courses graded on an international scale are considered "transfer" work. A separate transcript is required for this work only if the total amount of this international transfer work exceeds the equivalent of one year of U.S. or Canadian work, and you are applying to a law school that requires the use of the authentication and evaluation feature of the Credential Assembly Service (CAS). In most cases, you will not be required to submit an international transcript for these programs to LSAC, as the total amount of international work completed will likely be one year or less.

If you enrolled in a study-abroad program sponsored by another U.S. or Canadian college or university, you must have the college or university sponsoring the study-abroad program send a transcript directly to LSAC. List the U.S. or Canadian institution when you register for the Credential Assembly Service under "Other Institutions." If the grades and credits appear on the sponsoring school's transcript using the school's grading scale, then those grades will be calculated into both the sponsoring school's GPA and the overall GPA, but not into your home institution's GPA, as this is considered "transfer" work.

If you directly enrolled in one or more international institutions, including through Cornell Abroad or a college-based exchange program, and the total amount of work is the equivalent of one year or less, do not list the international institution when you register for the Credential Assembly Service, and do not ask the international institution to send a transcript to LSAC. Note that you may be required to list your attendance at such institutions on your applications to law schools.

Be sure to verify the accuracy of your Cornell transcript via Student Center. Official transcripts will be sent to CAS for analysis; therefore, you do not send transcripts directly to law schools. Once your LSAT score is available, the Credential Assembly Service prepares a law school report that schools request when they receive your application. The report will include the following:

- a year-by-year grade and credit summary;
- photocopies of all your transcripts;
- your GPA for each academic year, your degree (Cornell) GPA, and your cumulative GPA reflecting work at other institutions you have attended;
- a description of your overall grade distribution;
- the mean LSAT score and GPA and your percentile graduation rank among students at your undergraduate school who have subscribed to the Credential Assembly Service;
- up to 12 LSAT scores, including cancellations and absences;
- an average LSAT score, if you have more than one score on file;
- a copy of your LSAT writing sample.

LSAT scores are reported by LSAC for approximately five years following test administrations. Some law schools, however, require that a score be obtained within a few years prior to applying; information about requirements is available from the individual schools.

## Applications

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The most widely used approach to completing and submitting applications to law schools is CAS's electronic applications on the LSAC website. While not a "common application," electronic applications allow you to enter information commonly requested by law schools only once; information entered on the first application will automatically be filled in on all of your other applications. You then respond to school-specific questions. Electronic applications allow you to begin applications even if you haven't made final decisions on schools.

Completing application forms is a fairly straightforward process. Schools seek basic information about you, including your academic background, extracurricular activities, and employment history. Many schools will also ask for the names of your recommenders, the date(s) on which you took (or plan to take) the LSAT, your intention to apply for financial aid, and any criminal convictions on your record. You may be asked to list other schools to which you are applying; responding to this question and/or indicating an interest in receiving financial aid will not affect your admissions chances. Be truthful as you complete the applications. Most schools request a resume, but you should not use it as a substitute for responding to questions on the applications.

## Personal Statements

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With the exception of a few law schools, interviews are not part of the application process, primarily because of the number of applicants in relation to staff time. In lieu of evaluative interviews, personal statements requested by most law schools provide the opportunity to go beyond the objective aspects of the application to discuss who you are and what is important to you.

Schools will be seeking information about your background, personal qualities, and leadership skills to learn what is unique and distinguishes you from other candidates with similar GPAs and LSAT scores. Your goal, then, will be to write a concise statement establishing yourself as an individual. An interesting and personal discussion about yourself—one that reveals your personality and character—will help you "come alive" to the admissions committee.

Some schools ask a specific question or suggest a topic for the statement, but most leave the theme open-ended. Your statement should not merely reiterate what is on your resume, but instead should highlight and expand upon what has been particularly important in your life. It is fairly common to write a single basic statement, then adapt it to meet the requirements of schools. The best approach is to focus on one or two, but not more than three topics. Limiting the scope of your statement prevents it from becoming a laundry list of activities, diluting your strengths and your impact. Select significant events or experiences in your life that demonstrate your growth or change, tenacity, and distinctive qualities, then elaborate on those.

Personal statements are typically two double-spaced pages, though you may find that some schools give more latitude in the length. If schools don't provide guidelines on length, it's advisable to submit a statement that's approximately two double-spaced pages. A few schools limit the number of words permitted, and you should abide by those guidelines. Proofread carefully, as any typographical or grammatical errors will detract from the favorable impression the statement might otherwise make. Do not use large words in an attempt to impress readers; instead, use simple language correctly, and rely on well-organized, interesting content to make an impression. Your statement should be serious, honest, and sincere, and the tone should be confident and positive; any negative information you feel compelled or are required to discuss should be addressed in other parts of the application or in an addendum. If you write an addendum, describe succinctly the problem or issue, what steps you took to address it, and what the outcome was.

Law schools will be looking for evidence that you can write a coherent statement. Follow general guidelines for writing essays: there should be introductory and concluding paragraphs; each



paragraph should begin with a topic sentence; and there should be a clear line of development through the statement. Ideas should be supported with concrete examples. Rather than explicitly stating your strengths, let the reader draw inferences from descriptions of your accomplishments. Do not title your statement, risk humor that may fall flat, include quotes, focus primarily on another person, write a treatise on a legal issue, or speculate at length on your career in law. Be sure to get feedback from objective readers, for example, prelaw advisors, people who will give you constructive criticism without fear of hurting your feelings.

## **Letters of Recommendation**

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Most law schools request that one or two letters of recommendation be submitted on behalf of applicants. If letters are not required, it's a good idea, nonetheless, to submit them. Admissions committees will be seeking information not provided elsewhere in the applications. Recommendation letters should include assessments and examples of intellectual strength, analytical ability, research skills, maturity, judgment, motivation, and leadership, along with an appraisal of communication skills and a comparison to peers.

Letters written by members of the academic community carry the most weight, since your instructor can assess your performance in an academic setting and discuss your potential for success in law school. At least one letter should be from a professor in your undergraduate major, if possible. As you consider whom to ask, remember that it is better to have an in-depth letter from a teaching assistant or lecturer with whom you worked closely than to have a cursory letter from a renowned professor who barely knows you.

Unless you have been in the work force a few years, letters from people outside academia often carry less weight, since they may be unable to address the topic of greatest interest to admissions committees, which is your academic potential. Law schools are generally less impressed with letters from politicians, state supreme court justices, etc., since the letters tend to be effusive and contain little substantive information; often the letters are not written by the individuals, but rather by people on their staffs. If you would like to submit additional letters even though a school asks for only one or two, this should be fine. Three letters will be acceptable at most schools, but four should be considered the absolute maximum. To verify the number of letters to submit to schools, see "Services Required or Recommended by Law Schools" on the LSAC website.

Approach potential letter writers well in advance of the application deadline. Ask if they know your work well enough to write a positive letter on behalf of your application to law school. If the answer is yes, provide sufficient information about your background to help the writer craft a detailed letter:

- a cover sheet describing your academic relationship, including courses you have taken, research you have conducted, your experience as a TA, etc.;
- a copy of your transcript;
- a resume and draft of your personal statement (if available);
- copies of exams or papers written for the class;
- the date by which you will need the letter.

Be sure to discuss waiving your right of access to the letters. You may want to waive your right since you could encounter writers unwilling to write letters if applicants have access to them, and some admissions committee members may discount disclosed letters. As you will probably not have access to letters, be sure your recommenders are enthusiastic about writing letters for you; if you sense any hesitation, even if he or she agrees, thank the person but don't follow through.

LSAC offers a letter of recommendation (LOR) service. After you establish an LSAC.org account and register for the Credential Assembly Service, indicate the names and contact information of your recommenders and specify the number of letters each will submit. For letters you want sent to all schools, indicate "General" when asked by CAS for a description of the letter; for letters targeted to

a certain school(s), for example, the letter writer attended that law school and wants to recommend you to it, your description would say "For Stevens Law School." Select your law schools and specify the letters that should be sent to each one using an ID number.

Recommenders can send letters, along with recommendation forms you print from the lsac.org website, directly to LSAC. Alternatively, you can inform letter writers that they will receive an e-mail from CAS requesting that they complete and upload a letter for you. CAS then duplicates and forwards letters to law schools to which you are applying.

Letters will be stored for five years from the time you register for CAS or from the time you take the LSAT, whichever comes last. If it is possible but not a certainty that you will be applying to law school in the future, you may want to establish a credentials file (online at Interfolio.com) to maintain letters of recommendation and other documents.

## **Dean's Certifications**

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Dean's Certifications are required by some law schools to confirm that applicants have not been involved in serious academic or disciplinary transgressions as undergraduates. Certifications are generally handled by a designated university official, such as an academic advising dean or registrar, in consultation with those offices responsible for judicial administration on campus. Cornell officials responsible for Dean's Certifications in each undergraduate college or school are listed in "Prelaw Services at Cornell," located on the inside of the back cover.

## **Filing Applications**

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In recent years, Cornellians have applied to an average of twelve law schools if they were seniors and ten if they were recent grads. There is no hard-and-fast rule about the number of schools to which you should apply; your decision should be based on how realistic your choices are, how much time and money you have to spend on applications (most schools require an application fee), etc. In general, it is advisable to apply to one or two schools where it is almost certain you will be accepted, several schools where you have a good chance of being admitted, and a couple of schools you would like to attend, but where your chances for admission are not especially good.

While some law schools offer early-decision or early-action programs that have deadlines as early as mid-October, most schools review applications on a rolling basis beginning in late November or early December. Given the highly competitive admissions process, you should aim to submit your applications by early November, if possible. Submitting your applications then can be a slight advantage at many schools. Remember that your file is not complete until all parts, including the recommendations along with the CAS report, have been received by law schools. If you are taking the November LSAT, or taking/re-taking the test in January, plan to submit a few applications by early November, even though your file will not be complete until your LSAT score is available several weeks following the test. After receiving your score, you can determine whether to apply to more schools based on your score and your undergraduate record.

There are some additional tips and strategies to consider when you are applying to law school:

- Start early and respect deadlines.
- Make realistic choices on schools.
- Read carefully information provided by schools online or in hard copy.
- Follow directions.
- Print copies of your applications to use as drafts.
- Provide complete and accurate responses.
- Make copies of your completed applications.
- Submit fees with your applications.

## Taking Time Off

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You may want to wait a year or two, or even longer, before going to law school. Many Cornellians who eventually attend law school do not go immediately. Taking some time before entering law school can be advantageous for several reasons:

- You will be able to devote more time and energy during your senior year to your academics rather than to preparation for the LSAT and time-consuming law school applications.
- When you apply to law school, your entire academic record will be available to law schools, not just six or seven semesters; if you are like most Cornell students, your highest grades come later in your undergraduate education.
- Many grads benefit from taking a break after four challenging years at Cornell.
- You will have the opportunity to confirm your interest in law by working as a paralegal or legal assistant, or in another position in a law-related field, while at the same time gaining professional experience that may help you in your job search following law school.

# Considering Admissions Decisions

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Since the timetable for reviewing applications and informing applicants of decisions varies from school to school, notification of decisions can come any time from December to May, or even later. Applicants are informed of the schools' decisions via e-mail or letters sent through U.S. mail; candidates are either accepted, denied, or wait-listed, which means the applicant is considered a desirable candidate and may be admitted later.

Law schools often place applicants on "hold" or "reserve" prior to reaching a decision and frequently notify candidates of this status. Applications of those on hold or reserve are reconsidered at a later date, usually before the files of those who have been wait-listed.

## Follow-Up Actions to Enhance Applications

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There are several things you can do to improve your chances of admission after you apply:

- Write a letter or send an e-mail message to the director / dean of admissions within two weeks of applying to inform him or her of your strong interest in the school and to provide substantive reasons for wanting to attend.
- Write to the director / dean of admissions later in the process to update your application; for example, inform the schools that you completed your honors thesis or were accepted into an honorary.
- Send a final transcript from Cornell to CAS; your academic record will be updated and sent to each school to which you applied.
- State that if accepted you will attend, **but only if** the school is your first choice.
- Describe your professional accomplishments and include an updated resume, if you are currently working.
- Send an additional letter of recommendation from a professor or employer; however, the total number of your recommendation letters should not exceed four.
- Visit the law school to demonstrate your strong interest; contact the admissions office to arrange a tour, sit in on a class, etc. Some admissions officers will agree to meet with applicants, but generally these discussions are not evaluative. Follow up in a letter or e-mail message to describe your impressions of the school and to restate your interest.

## Making a Decision

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As you begin to hear from law schools, you should review LSAC's *Statement of Good Admission and Financial Aid Practices* at: [lsac.org/docs/default-source/publications-\(lsac-resources\)/statementofgoodadm.pdf](http://lsac.org/docs/default-source/publications-(lsac-resources)/statementofgoodadm.pdf). The site can help you navigate the process of juggling wait lists, acceptances, and scholarships, and consider ethical issues surrounding these application outcomes.

It can be invaluable to visit law schools when deciding among schools that have accepted you. In addition to taking tours of the schools and attending classes, make an effort to meet faculty and staff, and speak with a number of students to get their perspective on factors important to you,

such as accessibility of faculty, competitiveness of students, career services, assistance of library staff, etc. (See earlier discussion in the “Determining Where to Apply” section.) If you are not able to visit, refer to the survey responses of Cornell alumni who have attended law schools, which are maintained in the Cornell Career Services Library in 103 Barnes. You may also want to ask admissions offices to identify Cornell alumni at their schools from whom you can obtain firsthand information about their experience at the schools. Typically, the schools will ask the alumni to contact you. You might be able to identify Cornell alumni who are also alumni of the law school through CUeLINKS and LinkedIn.

You will also want to consider cost and financial aid when making a decision. Some law schools are relative bargains because they are state schools or private schools with low tuition located in areas where the cost of living is lower. If you will be entering law school with debt accumulated as an undergraduate, the financial factor can play an even greater role in your decision. You may receive a sizable scholarship as part of your financial package from a school attempting to attract you. For terms and conditions of scholarship offers dependent upon academic performance in law school, refer to ABA Required Disclosures on each school’s website.

If you are deciding between a highly regarded school and a less prestigious one that interests you, keep in mind that more highly ranked schools may provide better opportunities after graduation. Large firms focus their recruiting efforts there, and salaries of graduates tend to be higher. How you perform in law school is a significant factor in determining where you work following graduation. For accurate, up-to-date information on employment outcomes at law schools, refer to the ABA Employment Summary Reports at [employmentsummary.abaquestionnaire.org](http://employmentsummary.abaquestionnaire.org). Ultimately, you should balance the factors most important to you with those concerning prestige and opportunities. It will be important to decide what is the best school for you and where you can thrive as a law student.

Schools that accept you typically ask for a deposit to hold a space for you in the class. Deposits may be due before you hear from all schools. Contact schools that accept you to explain your situation and ask if they would be willing to extend the deposit deadline. Also, consult with a prelaw advisor who can help you weigh your options. Once you have reached a final decision on which school you will attend, notify other schools that accepted you so that they can offer your place to someone else.

Be aware that LSAC begins notifying participating law schools on May 15 about which applicants have deposits/commitments at multiple law schools.

## **Reapplying Later**

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If you are not accepted at a law school you would like to attend, consider re-taking the LSAT if you believe you can improve your score, or revising your list of schools if you decide to reapply. Working for a few years can make a difference in the admissions process and can also provide exposure to another career field that might engage your interest.

# Financing Law School

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Even before you apply to law school, it will be important to evaluate the cost of legal education in relation to a challenging legal market, especially for new lawyers. A law degree is an investment in your future, but it can also result in a significant financial obligation you'll need to manage in the future. If you, like most law students, will incur high debt in obtaining your legal education, you're likely to find that debt claiming a significant portion of your income as a lawyer. Therefore, it is critical to consider carefully why you want to pursue a law degree as well as what the impact of a large debt burden will be on your life following law school.

Approach the process of paying for law school as seriously as you do the law school application process itself. To keep your debt to a minimum, consider state-supported law schools or schools that offer merit-based aid. If you are thinking about a career in government or public-interest law, investigate loan repayment assistance programs (LRAPs) that help law school graduates repay education debt. And, before you apply to law school, spend money wisely and pay your bills on time to establish a good credit record, as bad credit will affect your ability to borrow money. If possible, pay off credit cards and other consumer debt before applying to law school.

## Sources of Funds

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A good place to begin investigating funding is the *Financing Law School* page on LSAC's website ([lsac.org/jd/financing-law-school/financial-aid-overview](http://lsac.org/jd/financing-law-school/financial-aid-overview)). Be sure to view the "Paying for Law School" infographic accessible on the *Financial Aid: An Overview* page there, which discusses the various kinds of loans and assistance available. Below is a listing of the most common funding sources for legal education.

### Personal Savings/Family Support

If possible, set aside your own funds to help pay for law school. Talk with family members about whether they can help with law school expenses. Consider ways to reduce costs; for example, some students live with family members during law school to avoid paying rent.

### Federal Financial Aid

Many students rely primarily on federal student aid programs to finance law school. Graduate and professional school students are considered financially independent of their parents for the purposes of determining federal aid eligibility. Federal aid is available to cover (but not exceed) the law school's student expense budget, which includes tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, transportation, and other expenses. Because you may not borrow more than the cost of attendance at your school, minus any other financial aid you receive, you may receive less than the annual maximum amounts described below.

- **Direct Stafford Loans.** Students can borrow up to \$20,500 per year directly from the U.S. Department of Education. You are not required to demonstrate financial need. Interest accrues from when the loan is first paid out.
- **Direct PLUS Loans for Graduate and Professional Degree Students.** Many law students choose Direct PLUS loans instead of private loans to cover their remaining financial need beyond the \$20,500 available through Direct Stafford Loans. Law students who do not have an adverse credit history are eligible for these loans; it is not necessary to demonstrate financial need.
- **Veterans Educational Assistance.** The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs administers educational benefit programs for veterans that may be available to help finance law

school. For more information, check with the Department of Veterans Affairs at [gibill.va.gov/](http://gibill.va.gov/) and veterans affairs offices on campuses of law schools to which you are applying.

- **Campus-Based Aid**
- **Federal Work Study.** Federal work-study funds are awarded by the schools to provide part-time jobs for graduate students with financial need. Many students work on campus for their schools; the program also encourages community-service work in qualifying private nonprofit organizations and public agencies, and work related to the recipient's course of study.

### **Private Loans**

Credit is an important factor in securing private loans. Interest rates, fees, and terms of repayment vary significantly. It is best to consult with your law school's financial aid office before making a decision about loans for law school. Beware of direct marketing from private lenders. It is possible to finance your legal education entirely through federal financial aid programs described above, which are regulated by the federal government and typically have lower interest rates.

### **Grants and Scholarships**

Law schools offer grants, scholarships, and loans based on criteria set by the schools, which can include academic merit, financial need, ethnicity, specific talents, residency, or other qualifications. Check with each law school early in the application process for more information. When law schools consider your financial need, they may require family income information even if you are considered independent for tax purposes, or for federal education loans. Law schools may offer merit scholarships with an offer of admission to highly qualified applicants.

Some states provide limited grants for law school; there are no federal grants for law students. Certain national foundations and organizations offer grants and scholarships for law school through a competitive application process.

**LSAC's *Statement of Good Admission and Financial Aid Practices*** at: [lsac.org/docs/default-source/publications-\(lsac-resources\)/statementofgoodadm.pdf](http://lsac.org/docs/default-source/publications-(lsac-resources)/statementofgoodadm.pdf) provides guidance in responding to scholarship offers, for example, if you receive multiple offers; in committing to schools then deciding to accept another school's offer; in paying deposits; etc.

### **Earnings**

The American Bar Association sets limits on the number of hours per week a first-year law student can work. After the first year, many law students obtain summer employment and part-time employment during the school year. This can help reduce the amount of money borrowed.

## **Applying for Financial Aid**

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**Review *Applying for Aid Step by Step*** on the LSAC website at: [lsac.org/jd/financing-law-school/applying-for-aid](http://lsac.org/jd/financing-law-school/applying-for-aid), which provides a detailed guide to the financial aid application process.

**Check your credit.** Before you begin your financial aid application, request a free copy of your credit report at [annualcreditreport.com](http://annualcreditreport.com) so that you can identify and clear up any problems. Good credit is required for the Direct PLUS loans and private loans.

**Apply early.** Check each law school's website for financial aid deadlines. Some schools have priority dates for submitting financial aid information; students who apply earlier have a better opportunity to obtain limited grant money.

**Complete FAFSA soon after October 1** of the year before you would attend law school. The FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid at: [studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa](http://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa)) cannot be completed before October 1. Completion of the FAFSA is required for all federal student loan programs. FAFSA is also used by some law schools to collect information for their own institutional aid. Some schools have separate applications for financial aid, while others use the law school application or the FAFSA. Schools vary in distributing their own funds.

If you have special circumstances, inform the law school's financial aid office. This information can be critical for law students who have been working full-time or who have unusual medical or family expenses. Do NOT wait to complete FAFSA until you are admitted to a law school. You can list up to ten law schools on the FAFSA, and update this list with additional schools. Parental income is not considered in determining eligibility for federal loans to graduate-level students; you will be directed to skip Parental Information in the FAFSA.

**Making the Decision.** To determine your financial need, schools take the estimated contribution calculated by the federal government on your FAFSA and subtract it from the school's student expense budget. Law schools may require parental financial information for institutional grants, loans, and scholarships; be aware that law schools have specific policies and procedures regarding independent status for the allocation of institutional funds. In deciding on a law school, it is important to balance your financial considerations with other criteria, such as reputation, location, size, faculty, programs, and employment success. Compare your projected costs at each school you are considering, offset by any offers of grants or scholarships from the school, to determine what you will need to make up through loans or personal funds.

**Applying for Loans.** Once you have chosen a law school, expect to receive important additional financial information from the school. Even though you have completed the FAFSA and law school financial aid forms, you must still follow additional steps to receive your loans. Your law school financial aid office is the best resource to help you with the process of securing federal financial assistance and any private loans, if needed.

Do your homework to compare fees and repayment terms for all of your loans, using loan calculators available on financial aid websites. Keep good records of all loan transactions. Borrow only what you need, and not more, to keep your debt low and your monthly repayment amount manageable.

#### **Online Financial Aid Resources:**

- **LSAC's Financing Law School section:** [lsac.org/jd/financing-law-school/financial-aid-overview](http://lsac.org/jd/financing-law-school/financial-aid-overview)
- **Federal Student Aid:** [studentaid.ed.gov/sa/](http://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/)
- **Access Group:** [accessgroup.org/financing-your-education](http://accessgroup.org/financing-your-education)
- **ABA's Student Loan Repayment and Forgiveness section:** [americanbar.org/groups/legal\\_education/resources/student\\_loan\\_repayment\\_and\\_forgiveness.html](http://americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/student_loan_repayment_and_forgiveness.html)
- **Public Interest Law Resources:** [equaljusticeworks.org](http://equaljusticeworks.org)
- **LSAC's Loan Repayment Options:** [lsac.org/jd/financing-law-school/repayment-options/](http://lsac.org/jd/financing-law-school/repayment-options/)
- **FinAid! The SmartStudent Guide to Financial Aid:** [finaid.org](http://finaid.org)
- **FastWeb scholarship search:** [fastweb.com](http://fastweb.com)



## Appendix A

# Legal Career Checklist

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### Freshman and Sophomore Years

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- Select a major in a field that both interests you and allows you to excel academically.
- Begin to form relationships with professors, lecturers, and TAs so that they will know your work well enough to serve as recommenders in the future.
- Complete your User Profile in Handshake to stay informed about law-related opportunities. At a minimum, in the Career Interests section be sure to indicate that you're considering law school after graduation; and that you'd like to receive information on legal careers from CCS.
- Explore your career interests by seeking summer jobs or internships.
- Complete a profile in CUeLINKS to connect with Cornell alumni in the legal field.

### Junior Year

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- Meet with a prelaw advisor to assess your academic, extracurricular, and work experiences; and to discuss the application process.
- Begin preparing for the LSAT; if you are ready, register for the June administration at lsac.org. Attend Law School Day in September and other programs and workshops throughout the year.
- Secure a summer job or internship, if possible, in a law-related field.

### Senior Year (or, Year Before Entering Law School)

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- Register for the Credential Assembly Service (CAS) at lsac.org; request that transcripts from all undergraduate institutions you've attended be sent to CAS after verifying their accuracy.
- Make sure your CAS report is correct.
- Ask potential recommenders if they would be willing to write letters of recommendation (LOR) on your behalf; provide them with recommendation forms and/or arrange for LSAC to send an e-mail to letter writers to begin the LOR process.
- Request that Dean's Certifications be completed for schools that require them; refer to Prewal Services at Cornell on the inside of the back cover to learn whom to contact in your college.
- Take the LSAT in September, October or November if you have not already taken the test.
- Attend Law School Day on September 25, 2019, as well as other programs and workshops on the application process; refer to the Legal Careers Calendar on the inside of the front cover.
- Begin drafting and revising your personal statement.
- Meet with a prelaw advisor (see Prewal Services at Cornell on the inside of the back cover) to discuss the strength of your application in relation to schools you are considering. Request a review of your personal statement draft.
- Apply using the electronic applications at lsac.org (covered by your CAS fee).
- Complete applications in November, if possible.
- Check with schools to make sure your files are complete.
- Write a follow-up letter to schools to update your application and express your continued strong interest in the schools.
- Complete the FAFSA and other needs-analysis forms, such as Need Access, in addition to any institutional financial aid applications as soon after October 1 as possible.
- Ask that financial aid transcripts be sent from Cornell to all schools to which you are applying.
- Meet with a prelaw advisor in the spring to assess your options as schools respond to you.
- Take appropriate action on acceptances, reserve or wait-list status, and financial aid packages.
- Request that Cornell's Registrar's Office send a final academic transcript to CAS for distribution to the law school you plan to attend and/or to any schools still considering your application.

## Appendix B

# Legal Career Resources

Available at the Cornell Career Services Library in 103 Barnes Hall or online, as noted.

### Careers in Law

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*Becoming a Legal Mediator.* Nora El Zokm. New York, New York, LearningExpress, LLC, 2010.

*Careers in International Law.* Salli A. Swartz. Chicago, Illinois: ABA Publishing, 2008.

*Guide to a Successful Career as a Paralegal or Legal Staff Member.* LawCrossing. Booksurge, 2006.

*Law Firms Yellow Book.* New York: Leadership Directories, Inc., 2008.

*Law and Legal Information Directory 17<sup>th</sup> Edition.* Laurie J. Fundukian, ed. Farmington Hills, Michigan: Thomas Gale, 2006.

*The Official Guide to Legal Specialties.* Lisa L. Abrams. Chicago, Illinois: Harcourt Legal and Professional Publications, 2000.

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## Applying to Law School

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## **Additional Resources**

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**Survey responses** of Cornellians at law schools across the country.

**Notebooks** with career information, law school rankings, and scholarship opportunities, for example, "Resources for Minority Students Considering Law."

## **Law-Related Organizations**

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- **American Bar Association (ABA)** is the national organization of the legal profession. The Council of the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar of the ABA is the "nationally recognized accrediting agency for schools of law." ([americanbar.org](http://americanbar.org))
- **Council on Legal Education Opportunity (CLEO)** assists economically and educationally disadvantaged applicants in preparing for law school. ([cleoscholars.com](http://cleoscholars.com))
- **HEATH Resource Center** is a clearing house for persons with disabilities. ([heath.gwu.edu](http://heath.gwu.edu))
- **Law School Admission Council (LSAC)**, a nonprofit corporation comprising accredited U.S. law schools, provides services to the legal education community. ([lsac.org](http://lsac.org))
- **National Association for Legal Professionals (NALP)** is a professional organization that provides information about placement and recruiting trends. ([nalp.org](http://nalp.org))

## Appendix C

# 2017-2018 Action Report Summary

Data is provided by LSAC for Cornellians (senior and Alumni) who applied to law school to begin in 2018. The complete report is available at Cornell Career Services in 103 Barnes Hall.

	All Graduates	Seniors	Grads (1-3 yrs.)	Grads (>3 yrs.)	Other
Total Number of Applicants	312	69	153	82	8
Average Highest LSAT score	162.7	163.4	164	159.4	164.9
Average GPA	3.52	3.68	3.54	3.33	3.8
Average Number of Applications per Applicant	9.93	11.67	10.80	7.71	1
Number Accepted to One or More Law Schools	265	66	131	67	1
Average Number of Admissions per Applicant	3.21	3.81	3.59	2.29	.12
Number Registered at a Law School	230	60	115	55	0

### Schools to Which 65 or more Cornellians Applied

Law School	Applicants	Admitted	Matriculated	Mean LSAT*	Mean GPA*
Boston University	85	23	4	166.6	3.61
Columbia University	148	30	14	170.9	3.76
Cornell University	138	46	14	166.1	3.80
Duke University	112	25	4	169.8	3.81
Fordham University	96	37	15	165.4	3.52
George Washington University	84	30	4	165.3	3.56
Georgetown University	143	31	5	167.8	3.81
Harvard University	137	19	12	172.5	3.90
New York University	153	40	15	170.5	3.82
Northwestern University	87	12	2	168.5	3.77
Stanford University	76	6	4	170.2	3.88
Univ. of California-Berkeley	91	18	2	166.8	3.82
Univ. of California-Los Angeles	91	35	7	168.5	3.71
University of Chicago	93	16	2	171.3	3.86
University of Michigan	107	18	5	167.4	3.86
University of Pennsylvania	146	19	7	169.7	3.72
University of Southern California	66	18	2	166.8	3.85
Vanderbilt University	72	25	1	166.8	3.74
University of Virginia	101	11	2	169.5	3.66

\*Mean LSAT's and GPAs are provided for Cornellians who were admitted at these schools

# Prelaw Services at Cornell

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Cornell's Prelaw Advisory Network is composed of advisors who can talk with you about your interest in a legal career and advise you on the law school application process. To receive e-mails about law-related programs and opportunities, complete a User Profile at [career.cornell.edu](http://career.cornell.edu). See instructions on page 21.

College of Agriculture & Life Sciences	Prelaw Advisor	Jennifer DeRosa, Assistant Director of Career & Academic Support, <a href="mailto:jd242@cornell.edu">jd242@cornell.edu</a> , 140 Roberts Hall, 255-2257
	Dean's Certifications	CALS Student Services at 607-255-2257 or <a href="mailto:cals-studentservices@cornell.edu">cals-studentservices@cornell.edu</a> .
College of Architecture, Art, & Planning	Dean's Certifications	Student Services Office, <a href="mailto:aap-academicservices@cornell.edu">aap-academicservices@cornell.edu</a> , 235 Sibley Hall, 255-4376
College of Arts & Sciences	Prelaw Advisor	Diane Miller, Associate Director, Career Development Center, <a href="mailto:djm15@cornell.edu">djm15@cornell.edu</a> , 172 Goldwin Smith Hall, 255-4166
	Dean's Certifications	Robin Perry, Administrative Assistant, <a href="mailto:rrp2@cornell.edu">rrp2@cornell.edu</a> , KG 17 Klarman Hall, <a href="http://as.cornell.edu/deans-certification-law-school-0">as.cornell.edu/deans-certification-law-school-0</a>
College of Engineering	Dean's Certifications	Cindy Pakkala, Administrative Assistant, Undergraduate Programs Office, <a href="mailto:crp5@cornell.edu">crp5@cornell.edu</a> , 167 Olin Hall, 255-8240
College of Human Ecology	Prelaw Advisor	Deanne Maxwell, Associate Director, Student & Career Development, <a href="mailto:dhm8@cornell.edu">dhm8@cornell.edu</a> , Academic Surge A, Room 123, 255-2532
	Dean's Certifications	Registrar's Office, <a href="mailto:hereg@cornell.edu">hereg@cornell.edu</a> , 255-2235
IRL School	Prelaw Advisor & Dean's Certifications	Rebecca Schimenti, Assistant Director of Advising, ILR Office of Student Services, <a href="mailto:kfh4@cornell.edu">kfh4@cornell.edu</a> , 101 Ives Hall, 255-2223
SC Johnson College of Business-Dyson		See College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, above
SC Johnson College of Business-Hotel	Prelaw Advisor	David Sherwyn, John and Melissa Ceriale Professor of Hospitality Human Resources & Professor of Law, <a href="mailto:dss18@cornell.edu">dss18@cornell.edu</a> , 541 Statler Hall, 255-1711
	Dean's Certifications	Hotel School Registrar's Office, <a href="mailto:ha-registrar@cornell.edu">ha-registrar@cornell.edu</a> , 541 Statler Hall, 255-9393
Cornell Career Services	Prelaw Advisor	Greg Foster, Career Development Manager, Law School & Graduate School, Cornell Career Services, <a href="mailto:gjf48@cornell.edu">gjf48@cornell.edu</a> , 103 Barnes Hall, 255-6928

# Cornell Career Services

103 Barnes Hall • 255-5296 • [career.cornell.edu](http://career.cornell.edu)