

LAW SCHOOL APPLICATION GUIDE

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Application Checklist

SPRING (in year you are applying)

- Attend the Applying to Law School and Personal Statement workshops (if offered)
- Open a free online account with the Law School Admission Council (www.lsac.org).
- Prepare for and register for the June LSAT
- Conduct research on law schools
- Update your [DartBoard](#) profile to indicate an interest in the Legal profession to receive information regarding law related events.

SUMMER

- Take the June LSAT administration or prepare for the September, October, or November LSAT (if needed)
- Subscribe to LSAC's Credential Assembly Service (CAS)
- Have official transcripts sent to the Credential Assembly Service (CAS)
- Research, visit, and select law schools
- Prepare personal statement
- Talk with possible Letter of Recommendation writers
- Request a Dean's Certification for schools that require it

FALL

- Attend the Fall Graduate & Professional School Fair (if offered)
- Take any of the Fall LSAT offerings if necessary
- Request a Dean's Certification for schools that require it (if not yet requested)
- Attend Center for Professional Development Law School Information Sessions with admission officers from various law schools
- Attend the LSAC Law School Forum in Boston – participate in workshops and meet law school representatives
- Apply to an appropriate range of law schools
- Request letters of recommendation to be mailed to LSAC's Credential Assembly Service (CAS)
- Complete and submit your application materials **as soon as possible. We recommend applying by December.**
- Take the December LSAT (if necessary)

WINTER

- Complete and file your financial aid applications
- Send an updated transcript with Fall term grades to LSAC

SPRING

- Pay your seat deposit by law school deadline

Pre-Law Advising Contacts in Center for Professional Development

All Advisors at the Center for Professional Development provide law school advising for undergraduates and alumni. Advisors can assist students with career exploration, identifying where to apply, personal statements, choosing schools, and other aspects of the admission process. Undergrads may book appointments through their DartBoard accounts. Alums, please call 603-646-2215 to make an appointment and undergrads may book appointments through their DartBoard accounts.

Preparing for Law School

Begin your law school preparations as early as possible during your undergraduate career. The American Bar Association Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar has provided a statement on [Pre-Law Preparation on their website](#). Explore and examine both the profession and the law school experience. Carefully examine your interests, abilities and goals. Question your preconception about 'the Law,' and weigh your aspirations against the realities of job opportunities and law school admissions. If these considerations do not yet confirm your commitment to a legal career, work a year or two before applying to law schools.

- Meet with the Pre-Law Advisor or any CPD Advisor to help you clarify your career interests.
- Take advantage of the [Dartmouth Career Network](#) and the [Dartmouth Lawyers Association](#) to identify alumni/ae who may be contacted for information and advice about their careers.
- Select Law & Law School Information as Preferences in your DartBoard Profile.

Law School: Now or Later?

In recent years, the Dartmouth applicant pool has contained more recent graduates than graduating seniors and there is no disadvantage to applying later.

Many seniors consider the option of working a year or two before applying to law schools. They question what kind of employment will enhance their chances of admission to law school. Law school admissions officers encourage work experience. The goals of older applicants not applying their senior year of college are generally more focused and, therefore, they are better prepared applicants. Dartmouth graduates have worked in any number of fields before applying, ranging from business and education to the media and the social services. For example, both teachers and paralegals apply to law school.

If you apply as a senior and are not accepted, you can always reapply without prejudice. Plan to take at least two years to gain experience and knowledge in a job you enjoy. Develop some skills that will make your next application significantly different from your earlier ones. In general, unless you are very certain about a career in law and have a strong record going into senior year, our advice is to wait. Don't rush. A challenging job can be a good foundation for your postgraduate education. Feel free to discuss your questions or concerns with the Pre-Law Advisor in Center for Professional Development.

Applying to Law School

If you decide that you will apply to law school, you should begin the application process at least 18-24 months prior to the desired matriculation. Dartmouth's Pre-Law Advisor can help you find the best fit between your interests, credentials, and the range of feasible alternatives. Take the following factors into consideration:

Numerical Indicators

Undergraduate grade point average (GPA) and your score(s) on the LSAT are two important factors in the admissions process. Each of these numbers should be compared to the median at individual schools and to the grids in [The Official Guide to U.S. Law Schools](#). Additionally, Center for Professional Development Resource Center has [Dartmouth College admissions statistics](#) for the previous three years. You can request to see these statistics at our main reception desk.

The Academic Program

Many schools offer a wide variety of options for specialization and dual degree programs. Almost every combination is available at [some institutions](#), the most popular being JD/MBA and JD/MA in areas such as history, international relations, economics, and government. Please note clinical programs, law journals, and study abroad options.

The Law School Environment

Typically, every fall, admissions representatives visit Dartmouth to discuss their programs with students by attending the Graduate & Professional School Fair or holding information sessions. These events are advertised on the Dartmouth [Center for Professional Development website](#). In addition to information sessions, although interviews are usually not a part of the admissions process, you will find visits to law schools very informative. If of interest, make an appointment to sit in on a class. Discussions with law students and professors can help you assess the school. If you are planning an academic career or a judicial clerkship, it is important to select schools which most commonly graduate students who become professors and judicial clerks. For applicants with specific professional objectives, looking at the schools' elective courses, clinical programs, and law journals can be useful. Most schools' websites and catalogs contain profiles detailing percentages of graduates entering major law firms, corporations, law-related positions, the judiciary, federal and state government, and private practice. When you speak with current law students, ask about placement opportunities, including summer jobs available to first-year students. We recommend that you consider carefully the following criteria as you make your application decisions:

- Likelihood of admission
- Quality and accessibility of faculty
- Reputation
- Method of instruction
- Enrollment and class size
- Overall cost and the availability of financial aid
- Special programs and clinical opportunities
- Size and diversity of the student body
- Location, housing, and kinds of recreation available
- Facilities, especially the library
- Ambiance of the law school
- Extracurricular programs
- Career placement
- Bar passage rate (percentage of graduates who pass the bar)

The competitiveness of the admissions process varies among schools. Rankings of schools are controversial, especially if the criteria are not defined. There is no optimum number of applications one should file. The application process is not only lengthy and time-consuming, it is also costly. Please apply to a range of schools.

Application Procedures

Application Components

- Law School Admission Test (LSAT)
- LSAC Credential Assembly Service (CAS)/Law School Report
- Official Transcript(s)
- Applications from individual schools (free electronic individual school applications available from LSAC)
- Letters of recommendation
- Personal statement
- Resume (can be two pages – expanded version)
- Diversity Statements (optional)
- Addendums (if needed)
- Other Materials: Citations; Dean's Certification (required by some schools), additional essays

Application Fees and Fee Waivers

The LSAC website includes information about [LSAT and Credential Assembly Service fees](#). Information about **fee waivers** for the LSAT and CAS is also available [online](#) and in the *LSAT and LSDAS Registration/Information Book*. You must apply online through the LSAC website and LSAC recommends that you submit your completed fee waiver online application at least six weeks prior to the regular registration deadline for a particular LSAT. If you also require a fee waiver for an application fee contact the admissions office at a law school of your choice to determine if the school participates in the fee waiver program and how it wants you to submit your application. Get an early start during spring or summer, well before you plan to apply. Procedures for requesting application fee waivers are described in the individual law school catalogs.

Law School Admission Test (LSAT)

The test is offered nine times in any testing year. Please note that only the June, September, and November tests are “Disclosed Tests” in which you will receive a breakdown of your score. All other tests offered are “Undisclosed Tests” and you will only receive your raw score. Our office advises that you take a “Disclosed Test” for your first time taking the LSAT. Visit the LSAC website for a [list of current Dates and Deadlines](#). Most schools accept scores of tests taken up to five years before applying, although some law schools *may* require more recent test scores. We advise that you should take that test no later than October in the test year in which you are applying to law school. Taking the test the previous June, however, gives you the added advantage of knowing your score before the application process begins. It also allows you time to repeat the test in the Fall if you’re unhappy with your score. Remember that all scores are reported to law schools, and while most schools tend to look at the highest score, some schools review all scores and not just the highest. We highly recommend you not take the test if you are not adequately prepared. Our advice is to take the LSAT once, but we see many students taking it twice. The range of possible scores on the LSAT is 120-180. We recommend using the official Law School Admission Council (LSAC) materials to prepare for the LSAT. Test-taking strategies and a sample LSAT are in the *LSAT and LSDAS Information Book*. Additional preparation materials may be ordered online from the Law School Admission Council. Commercial test preparation courses are offered at Dartmouth and in most metropolitan areas. Before you enroll in a course, make sure you really need it. Study carefully the information, advice and sample questions in the *LSAT and LSDAS Information Book*, and then take the sample test. For best results, time yourself and do the entire test at one sitting. Learn from your mistakes, and then try one or more additional tests. If this strategy is **not successful**, then consider commercial preparation courses.

Important Changes to the LSAT (Effective September 2019):

- The LSAT is now completely digital. For information about these changes, please follow this link: <https://www.lsac.org/lsat/taking-lsat/about-digital-lsat>
- The Writing Section of the LSAT is no longer before offered at the time of the test. Applicants must complete the writing section of the LSAT on their own time within 1 year of the testing date. Applicants will need to download software on their computer and must have a camera and microphone equipped to showcase their surroundings. Law School applications will not be complete until the Writing section has been submitted to LSAC. For more information about the Writing Section, follow this link: <https://www.lsac.org/lsat/taking-lsat/about-lsat-writing>

Application Forms and Catalogs

LSAC provides free electronic applications to all applicants after they register for the LSAC CAS. Applicants can complete applications online for all of the ABA-accredited schools using their LSAC account. Applications are usually available from law schools near the end of the summer. If you want to begin your applications before fall term, consult the school catalogs and sample applications from the previous year. Get a head start on the essay or personal statement section. Note the application and financial aid deadlines so that you can organize your individual timetable. Law schools utilize a rolling admission method. Aim to have your **applications submitted in December**, well ahead of the stated deadlines.

LSAC Credential Assembly Service (CAS)

Law schools require applicants to subscribe to the **Credential Assembly Service (CAS)**. The CAS prepares and provides a report for each law school to which you apply. Information contained in the report includes an undergraduate academic summary, including copies of all undergraduate, graduate, and law school/professional school transcript(s), LSAT score(s) and your writing sample copy, and copies of letters of recommendation processed by LSAC. This information along with your application, personal statement, and letters of recommendation is used to make a decision on your application. Register for the Credential Assembly Service (CAS) online at www.lsac.org. Fees and services are explained online. Right now, each time you submit a CAS, there is a \$45 fee. CAS subscriptions are valid for **five years**.

Transcripts

Complete the **Transcript Request Form** available from your LSAC online account. Log into your account and go to Apply/Credentials/Transcripts, and click on Transcript Request Form. Also complete the Dartmouth College Registrar Transcript Request Form available online at (http://www.dartmouth.edu/~reg/transcript/transcripts_about.html). Submit **both** forms to the Registrar in person, by fax or mail. Questions regarding transcripts should be directed to the Registrar’s Office (603-646-2246). Transcripts must be ordered at least one week in advance of the required mailing date. You must order transcripts from every academic institution in which you have been enrolled. Although credit for coursework completed elsewhere is recorded on your Dartmouth transcript, grades are not; consequently, transcripts from all institutions you attended must be sent to LSAC’s Credential Assembly Service (CAS). It takes LSAC approximately two weeks to process a transcript from the time it is received.

Citations

LSAC forwards citations to law schools with your Dartmouth transcript. You do not need to send your citations to the law schools separately. Please contact the Registrar's Office with any questions about citations. (603-646-2246; http://www.dartmouth.edu/~reg/transcript/transcripts_about.html).

Letters of Recommendation

Before requesting letters of recommendation, consult the law school applications for specific instructions. Most schools **require at least two academic recommendations** and typically accept no more than four. Applicants usually request letters from professors in which you did academically well and have a strong relationship with. In addition, letters from supervisors in a job are often relevant. There are no absolute rules, but as a guideline, three academic letters are not too many, provided they present different information and describe substantively your skills and accomplishments. More than four letters, however, may be excessive. Since recommendations are weighed heavily in the admissions decisions, make your choices carefully, gathering strong evaluations from persons who have had an opportunity to observe your academic strengths and your personal qualities. Make sure you are reading each law school application closely so you can submit the adequate number of letters.

Contact your professors early. Make an appointment with each of your recommenders to discuss your course work, interests, as well as your plans for law school. Plan on providing your recommenders with the following: resume; transcript; personal statement draft (if written); a statement on why you are choosing to go to law school; a summary of what you learned from your experience with the writer; and a copy of a paper you wrote for their class (with their comments).

Specify a reasonable and agreed upon deadline for the completion of your letter. Professors are busy and they write letters out of interest in you and in your future. Given the Dartmouth calendar, a writer may be on leave when you need to have your recommendations, so check their schedules early. It may take more than one reminder and a longer time than you might expect, so allow **at least four weeks from the time of request**. Aim to have your file complete by **November 1**.

All letters of recommendation must be sent to LSAC, unless a law school to which you are applying states otherwise.

LSAC's Letter of Recommendation Services

LSAC's Letter of Recommendation (LOR) is offered as a convenience to Credential Assembly Service (CAS) registrants, recommendation writers, and law schools.

Use of LSAC's LOR service is optional unless a law school to which you are applying states that its use is required. These services allow you to use your LSAC.org account to have your LORs sent to law schools based on each school's requirements or preferences. Be sure to check the letter of recommendation requirements for each law school.

Any letter sent to LSAC with an incomplete LSAC Letter of Recommendation Form or without a form will be returned to the recommender. LSAC will not accept letters sent by the candidate.

LSAC must receive your letters at least two weeks prior to a school's application deadline to ensure that the school receives your letters before its deadline. Be sure to inform your recommenders of the importance of sending their letters promptly. You are encouraged to have your letters sent to LSAC as soon as possible after you have registered for the Credential Assembly Service (CAS). This will help ensure that schools receive your letters in a timely manner. Remember that you can have letters sent to LSAC before you decide on the law schools to which you apply.

Reminders: Any letter sent with an incomplete form, without a form, or without the recommenders signature will be returned to the recommender. **Letters cannot be signed electronically.**

- You should always check the specific letter of recommendation requirements of each law school.
- Letters sent to LSAC remain the property of LSAC and will be neither returned to nor copied for the candidate.
- You should check the status of letters in your online LSAC account.

Personal Statements

Most applications include an open-ended question about your accomplishments and career goals. Even if not required, it is wise to provide one. The essay is your opportunity to present your personal attributes, accomplishments, passions, and interests to the admissions committee, since interviews are not part of the process. A good essay might be the deciding factor in an admissions decision; an unconvincing or unremarkable essay can adversely affect your chances of admission.

The most effective essays convey a personal dimension. They describe an individual, distinguished by intellectual motivation and accomplishment, social concerns and contributions, and personal values. You may want to develop the essay around an experience, an accomplishment or an interest. It may help to imagine yourself in an interview situation with the admissions officer, or simply talking to a good friend whom you have not seen for a while. What do you want the admissions officers to know about you? In general, avoid second-guessing what lawyers do or discussing legal issues unless pertinent to your experience. Above all, be sure your essay is interesting and well written. Since the essay is evidence of your writing ability, be careful about grammar and spelling. Limit yourself to two to three typed pages, double-spaced. Review the Personal Statement handout in the Appendix of this Guide for Additional Information.

Deadlines

Our office encourages you submit your applications in **December or earlier**, well ahead of the deadlines. Most admissions officers begin to read applications in December and schools with rolling admissions begin to announce their decisions in January or February. The earliest deadlines are usually between January 1 and February 1. When fall term grades have been released, send an updated transcript to LSAC using the LSDAS Transcript Request form. This information will be incorporated into your file and updated transcript reports will be sent to the law schools.

Dean's Certifications

The primary purpose of a Dean's Certification is to obtain information about academic and disciplinary misconduct (or lack thereof). The Dean's Certification includes your dates of attendance at Dartmouth, major, minor, graduation date, SAT score, and current or final GPA. It will include any major disciplinary sanctions (i.e. Conduct: Suspension or Separation; Academic: Probation, Suspension, or Separation). It is not College policy to report the specifics of the proceedings. If you have experienced a major disciplinary sanction please make an appointment with the Pre-Law Advisor. **Check each individual Law School for their Dean Certification requirements.** At Dartmouth, one of the deans in the Undergraduate Deans Office attests to the applicant's academic and personal record as part of the Dean's Certification. To obtain a Dean's Certification you must print and complete the Dean's Certification request form from the law school website and submit the form to the Undergraduate Deans Office in person (125 Carson in Baker Berry Library), by fax (603-646-6166), or mail (6064 Carson Hall Level 1 Suite 125, Hanover, NH 03755). The Dean's Office will send your Dean's Certification to the law school. LSAC does not process dean's certifications. If you have any questions as to who signs your Dean's Certification form, please contact the Dean's office.

Because of the high volume of requests the Class Deans' office receives, expect 2-3 weeks for your Dean's Certification to be processed.

Admissions Decisions

Most law schools begin to announce decisions in January and February. By the beginning of April, you should know your status at most schools. If you are notified that your decision will be placed on "hold" or that you'll be placed on a "wait list", acknowledge the notification and send any relevant current information, including an updated transcript, an additional letter of recommendation, a brief account of your present academic work, especially if you are writing a thesis, any new honors/awards, and accomplishments and new responsibilities in your job if you are working. "Hold" status implies that your application has been reviewed, and that the school has not made a decision. This may be because a school wants to see a larger percentage of the applicant pool before making a decision. "Wait list" status implies that the law school believes that you are qualified to be a member of the entering class, but that there were too many other candidates who were even more qualified. Many times students are admitted off the wait list through late in the spring and summer. If you find yourself on hold or on a waitlist at a school, please discuss your options with the Pre-Law Advisor.

Financial Aid

Most financial aid is administered through individual law schools, and most awards are based on financial need. Although most financial aid packets have a large loan component, some merit scholarships are offered. Read individual law school catalogs for procedures for applying for specific scholarships and for financial aid policies. Contact the financial aid office at the law school if you need further information. Many schools have **loan repayment assistance programs (LRAP)** for graduates who choose to enter low paying or public-interest law firms.

If you wish to be considered for **federal aid**, you must complete the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** form, available from the law school's financial aid office and online at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>. The new form is usually available in January and should be completed as soon as possible after January 1. Individual institutions will require additional financial aid forms to be completed. Please be sure to read the institution's financial aid information and deadlines carefully.

Pre-Law Resources

Selecting Law Schools

LSAC's Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools: http://officialguide.lsac.org/release/OfficialGuide_Default.aspx
 ABA-Approved Law Schools: www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/aba_approved_law_schools.html
 NALP, prelaw portal: www.nalp.org/prelaw_portal
 U.S. News Law School Rankings: www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/grad/rankings/law/lawindex_brief.php
 Law School Admission Council: www.lsac.org

LSAT Information

(Center for Professional Development does not endorse or recommend any particular test-prep program.)

Law School Admission Council: <https://www.lsac.org/>
 Blueprint LSAT Preparation: <http://blueprintlsat.com/>
 Khan Academy: <https://www.khanacademy.org/>
 Kaplan: www.kaptest.com
 The Princeton Review: www.princetonreview.com
 PowerScore: www.powerscore.com
 TestMasters: www.testmasters.net

Applicant Resources (including diversity initiatives)

American Bar Association - Preparing for Law School: www.abanet.org/legaled/prelaw/prep.html
 LSAC's Discover Law: Initiative to encourage racially and ethnically diverse students to discover career opportunities in law and choose a path in undergraduate school to help them succeed. (<http://discoverlaw.org>)
 LSAC's Information for Racial/Ethnic Minority Applicants: www.lsac.org/id/diversity-in-law-school/racial-ethnic-minority-applicants
 Council on Legal Education Opportunity (CLEO): www.cleoscholars.com

Financial Aid and Scholarship Sources

Dartmouth Scholarship Advising Office: www.dartmouth.edu/~scholarship
 LSAC: Financial Aid for Law School: www.lsac.org/id/financing-law-school/financial-aid-overview
 Free Application for Federal Student Aid: www.fafsa.ed.gov
 U.S. Department of Education Federal Student Aid: <http://studentaid.ed.gov>
 FinAid: Sponsored by the National Association of Student Financial Administrators (www.finaid.org)
 FastWeb: Resource for local, national and college-specific scholarships (www.fastweb.com)
 The Access Group: A non-profit group that provides education financing to eligible students (www.accessgroup.org)
 Yale Law School Outside Scholarships: <https://law.yale.edu/admissions/cost-financial-aid/financial-aid-forms-resources/outside-scholarships>

Legal Career Information

American Bar Association: www.americanbar.org/aba.html
 The Association for Legal Career Professionals (NALP): Legal career planning and recruitment information (www.nalp.org)
 Equal Justice Works: Information on law careers in public service (www.equaljusticeworks.org)
 FindLaw: Comprehensive set of legal resources including section for students (www.findlaw.com)
 Hieros Gamos: A comprehensive law and government portal (www.hg.org)
 Internet Legal Research Group: Information concerning law and the legal profession (www.ilrg.com)
 Law.com: News, legal information and e-law services (www.law.com)
 Dartmouth Lawyers Association: www.dla.org

Center for Professional Development Resource Center

Admissions Statistics Notebooks: Profiles of national and Dartmouth applicants' outcomes at each school
 Dartmouth Career Alumni Network: Networking database, searchable by graduate school and degree (<http://alumni.dartmouth.edu/alumnicareers>)
 *The NAPLA/SAPLA Book of Law School Lists: Contains information on academic programs, clinical programs, admission policies, student organizations, scholarships, and more.
 Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools: American Bar Association and Law School Admission Council
 Other resources available: LSAT study guides, legal career information, guides to law school admissions, and personal statement writing tips.