

# SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

## College of Arts & Sciences

### Advising & Career Services

#### Applying to Law School

##### The Law School Admission Council

Registration for the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) and setting up a Credential Assembly Service (CAS) account is administered by the Law School Admission Council (LSAC). As stated by LSAC, CAS creates your law school report by combining your academic summary report, LSAT score(s) and writing sample(s), copies of all undergraduate, graduate, and law/professional school transcripts, and copies of letters of recommendation (electronic or hard copies) and/or electronic evaluations. The majority of ABA-approved law schools require applicants to subscribe to CAS because it provides them with a convenient means to standardize the transcript information provided by students. Please note, applications for public colleges in Texas are processed through the Texas Medical and Dental Schools Application Service (TMDSAS.)

##### The Credential Assembly Service

The Credential Assembly Service (CAS) is the online service through which students apply to law school. Registration with CAS is valid for a five-year period beginning on the date Law School Admission Council processes the candidate's registration request. If you register for an LSAT at any time during the five-year period, then the CAS period will be extended five years from your latest LSAT registration.

##### Hard Copy and Electronic Letters of Recommendation and Electronic Evaluations

While hard copy letters of recommendation have been the standard form for many years, electronic letters of recommendation and electronic evaluations are new services. With electronic letters of recommendation, the recommender is sent an email request and submits the recommendation via email instead of through the postal service. When selecting the electronic letter of recommendation option, it is paramount to remember that once you choose whether or not to waive your access to the letters of recommendation, **this selection cannot be changed once the request is sent to the recommender**. Therefore, it is important to carefully consider this option before submitting the application. In electronic evaluations, recommenders rate specific attributes for each candidate on a Likert scale and may provide additional comments. Each school varies in how many letters of recommendation or evaluations they require, so check with each school to which you apply to determine how many you need to obtain. Although schools differ in the number and type of letters or evaluations they require, typically the range is between two and four.

##### The Law School Admission Test

The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) is a five-section, multiple-choice aptitude test, followed by an unscored 35-minute writing sample. The exam lasts approximately three and one-half hours (not including breaks) and tests your abilities in the following areas: Reading Comprehension, Analytical Reasoning and Logical Reasoning. Some applicants prepare for the LSAT exam by attending classes through a commercial test preparation service, others choose self-guided study.

## Schools List

In creating your schools list it is important to identify schools that fit your student profile, especially your cumulative grade point average and LSAT score, personal preferences and career goals. It is recommended that you apply to one of the more than 200 American Bar Association (ABA)-approved law schools. Choosing a school should not be based on a publication's rankings or someone's opinion. Selecting appropriate schools involves evaluation of a number of criteria which may include location, faculty to student ratio, average class size, bar passage rates, clinical programs, joint degree programs, and many other factors. It is also important to explore the tradition through which a school teaches. A common approach is to apply to around ten schools: two reach schools, four to five competitive schools, and two to three safety schools.

## Resume

It is important to develop a solid resume. Your resume should include work experiences (related to the legal profession and otherwise), internships, volunteer experiences, computer and language skills, and leadership experiences. A pre-law advisor can review your resume with you and provide suggestions.

## The Personal Statement

Since law schools do not interview applicants, the personal statement is where you provide insight into your personality, character and motivation. Your personal statement provides an opportunity to distinguish yourself from other applicants, which in turn helps law schools determine if you might be a good fit with the school. While some schools provide prompts, it is helpful to find a self-reflective theme that highlights important information about your personality or interests, and use concrete examples to emphasize these points. If prompted, the personal statement should directly address the topic you are being asked to discuss.

## Dean's Certification

Required by some but not all schools, Dean's Certifications are official statements from every undergraduate institution you have attended identifying your academic and disciplinary standing at the time of graduation. The admissions committee will take into consideration whether you have been suspended, placed on academic or disciplinary probation, disciplined, expelled, or requested or advised to resign from any post-secondary school, college, university, professional school, or law school. Check with each school to see if they require a Dean's Certification, also be referred to as a College Certification or Statement of Dean of Students.

## Financing your Legal Education

The cost for three years of law school can exceed \$140,000. Yearly tuition can exceed \$40,000. Approximately 80% of law school students rely on educational loans to help them finance the cost. In order to qualify for loans, it is essential that you maintain a clean credit history. You are encouraged to contact the financial aid offices at each of the schools to which you are applying to determine their specific financial aid requirements. They will evaluate your eligibility for financial support from various sources. Begin the process early, and be aware that many law schools have very early filing deadlines.

## When to Apply

If you intend to start law school in the fall directly following your undergraduate career, it is best to apply between Halloween and Thanksgiving of your senior year. According to LSAC, roughly one-third of law students enter directly from college. There can be many benefits to taking one or more gap years between your undergraduate career and your first year of law school. Many applicants enter the workforce in order to strengthen their qualifications. A pre-law advisor can assist you in making the appropriate decision for you.