

# LAW SCHOOL

Lawyers influence a nation and its people by facilitating the democratic practices of the country. In law school, students are given the opportunity to develop analytical, creative, and logical thinking abilities, strengthen their reading and debating skills, analyze legal issues through the lens of changing law and public policy, and advocate the view of individuals and diverse interest groups within the legal system.

## Introduction to Law School

Typically, law school consists of three years of full-time study or four years of part-time study. Topics include civil procedure, constitutional law, contracts, criminal law, criminal procedure, business law, and intellectual property law (patent, trademark, copyright). Instruction is often in a case study format to help students develop the skills necessary to summarize material that relates to multifaceted issues, advise clients on legal requirements, write and speak clearly, and persuade and negotiate effectively.

After law school, most lawyers work at small private offices, while others work in larger firms or public settings:

- 73% of lawyers are part of private practices
- 8% work for government agencies
- 10% work for private industries and associations
- 1% work in legal education
- 1% work in legal aid/public defenders.

## Types of Law

### Environmental Law

Environmental law consists of legislation and regulation at the intersection of people and the environment. Areas of interest include air pollution, wilderness preservation, and waste disposal. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the primary federal agency that controls pollution through research, monitoring, and setting and enforcing standards, although each state has its own environmental protection agency. Some states pass standards similar to federal law, while others are stricter. Environmental law focuses on protection of the environment and the businesses that impact it.

### Intellectual Property Law

Intellectual property law encourages the development of art, science, and information by giving property rights to creative and inventive individuals. These rights protect inventors from infringement or unauthorized use and misuse of their creations. Congress can grant patents and copyrights through the constitution and regulate trademarks and acts of unfair competition through the Commerce Clause.

### Patent Law

Patent law grants official property rights to inventors of a product, device, or process. Patent holders are granted the exclusive rights by the U.S. Government's Patent and Trademark Office to use, manufacture, and market their invention for a 20-year term.

## Preparation for Law School

Law schools only require the completion of a bachelor's degree, and students in any major may apply. However, candidates should possess strong critical thinking and written communication skills. Entrance to law schools is competitive, and students must show solid evidence of academic achievement at the undergraduate level. Coursework that involves legal topics (Law, Courts and Politics, Civil Rights and Liberties, Environmental Law, Constitutional Law, Cyber Law and Policy) and extensive writing are recommended, as well as internships related to law. Consider WPI's **Minor in Law and Technology** to test your level of interest.

## How to Choose a Program

When choosing a law program, you should consider many factors:

- Size, student demographics, community, location (geographic preference), strengths or interests of faculty, degree of clinical experience vs. classroom learning, type of student organizations, library, public vs private
- Strong minority recruitment, retention, availability of mentoring programs
- Prestige of school
- Program of interest – some schools have particular strengths in certain areas (e.g., Intellectual Property, Health Law), and some schools also have joint degree programs that enable students to complete an MBA or Masters in Public Health, etc., while completing the J.D.
- Financial support
- Part-time vs. full-time programs

- Personal and academic factors
- Campus atmosphere

As you consider your options, do your research and take advantage of resources at WPI and the school you are considering:

- Meet with WPI's Pre-Law advisor: Professor Kent Rissmiller, [kjr@wpi.edu](mailto:kjr@wpi.edu).
- Visit schools, attend open houses, talk with professor/alumni/current students.
- Meet with the CDC to discuss your career interests.

## Timeline

Junior Year (or 2 years before law school)

- Meet with WPI's Pre-Law advisor: Professor Kent Rissmiller, [kjr@wpi.edu](mailto:kjr@wpi.edu).
- Research schools, request materials, and make a list of schools to apply to and important dates to remember.
- Register for the October LSAT if you did not take it in June, or want to retake the LSAT:
  - April: Register for the LSAT.
  - June: Take the LSAT.
  - August: Open up your LSDAS Account.
  - Summer: Begin writing your personal statement and prepare your resume for the application.

## Senior Year (or 1 year before law school)

- Order the LSACD electronic application or request school specific applications.

- Have your transcripts sent during the summer to LSDAS from your university(s). All of your junior year grades should be complete, and grades from A term can be beneficial to send.
- Finalize your personal statement and have it critiqued by the Writing Center, Pre-Law advisor Professor Kent Rissmiller, the CDC, and/or other readers.
- Ask two professors for letters of recommendation to be sent to LSDAS with your filled out Letter of Recommendation form.
- Ask for a third letter of recommendation from a professor, supervisor, internship advisor, boss, or coach.
- **October:** Take the LSAT if you have not done so yet; arrange to have your materials sent to the law schools.
- **November:** Complete and mail in law school applications BY NOVEMBER 15th for the best chance of acceptance. Begin researching financial aid options.
- **December:** Check with schools to make sure that they have received your application and that it is complete. Submit the completed FAFSA form.
- **January:** Have your updated transcript sent directly to the law school.
- **February-April:** Evaluate offers, visit campuses, and speak with Pre-Law advisor: Professor Kent Rissmiller. You can submit your deposit after April 1 (it is not required until then).

## Application Process

### Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS)

The LSDAS is a web-based service for collecting and submitting undergraduate transcripts, letters of recommendation, and law school applications. Almost all American Bar Association (ABA) approved law schools require applicants to register for this service, which entails \$117 fee (waivers are available).

LSDAS communicates with the Law School Admission Council (LSAC), consisting of members from over 200 law schools in the U.S. and Canada. LSDAS services include LSAT, LSDAS, LSAC, Letter of Recommendation Service, LSDAS Electronic Applications, Candidate Referral Service (CRS), and guidelines and procedures. Candidate Referral Service (CRS) provides information on law school candidates to law schools. Law schools can search for potential applicants based on criteria such as GPA, age, citizenship, race or ethnicity, program interests, geography, and LSAT score. Students who participate in CRS may be contacted by law schools that are interested in the candidate. This service is free.

### Transcripts

Transcripts must be sent directly from each undergraduate and graduate institution, directly to LSAC if you are applying through this service. Required transcripts include those from law/medical/professional schools, schools for summer or evening courses, schools you attended even if you did not receive a degree, schools where you took college-level courses in high school (even if it was for high school credit), transferred school credit, credits from a school that is closed, and schools where you have just enrolled in a class. Transcripts from foreign undergraduate and graduate schools are processed through JD Credential Assembly Service.

## Letters of Recommendation

There are two types of recommendation letters:

- **General Letters:** you can submit up to four general letters. Identify your recommenders, print and give them pre-filled Letter of Recommendation forms, and ask them to sign the letters and send them directly to LSAC.
- **Targeted Letters:** these are targeted at specific law schools and based on specific program interests. They may include recommendations from professors or other contacts who are alumni of a school.

## LSAT

The LSAT is a half day, required standardized test for admission into law school designed to measure skills transferable to success in a law program. It is scored on a scale of 120-180 and consists of five 35-minute sections of multiple choice questions covering Reading and Comprehension, Analytical Reasoning, and Logical Reasoning. It also includes a 35-minute writing sample that is not part of the final score but is sent to law schools.

The LSAT costs \$127.00 (fee waivers are available), and is offered 4 times each year at various testing centers nationwide.

## Personal Statement

Most law schools do not include an interview as part of the admission process. Therefore the personal statement is often your only chance to speak to the admissions committee. The best personal statements read more like a story and less like a resume. You should use the personal statement as an opportunity to sell yourself, not to apologize for any low grades or weak areas of your application:

- Start with a strong first sentence.
- Make it flow and be specific, accurate, and truthful.
- Have the statement support the rest of your application by turning negatives into positives.
- Think about your statement as if it were a 5 minute interview – tell them who you are and why a law school education is important to your career goals.
- Write a few drafts and get it critiqued by Pre-Law advisor Professor Kent Rissmiller, the CDC, the Writing Center, and others.
- Submit the statement typed, double-spaced with one inch margins, and in black ink. Put your name and LSAC number on each page. A reasonable length is 2 pages.
- Avoid overusing the thesaurus, and make sure to complete your statement using your own words.
- Don't use clichés or quotes at length, use third person, title your statement, send multimedia presentations or pictures, boast about the law school or theory, use cynicism, reveal yourself as a victim, be too specific about what you want to do with your law degree, focus too much on another person, or re-list activities and experiences from your application.

## Dean's Certification or Dean's Letter

The Dean's Certification or Dean's Letter is a letter from WPI confirming your disciplinary record. This will be provided by the Dean of Students, Philip Clay.

## Resources

Law School Admission Council: [lsac.org](http://lsac.org)

American Bar Association: [abanet.org](http://abanet.org)

Financial Aid: [finaid.org](http://finaid.org)

FAFSA: [fafsa.ed.gov](http://fafsa.ed.gov)

FindLaw: [findlaw.com](http://findlaw.com)

Internet Legal Resource Guide: [ilrg.com/pre-law.html](http://ilrg.com/pre-law.html)

Martindale – Hubbell: [martindale.com](http://martindale.com)

LSAT Logic Workbook: [west.net/~stewart/lwfaq.htm](http://west.net/~stewart/lwfaq.htm)

US News Rankings: [usnews.com/usnews/edu/grad/rankings/rankindex\\_brief.php](http://usnews.com/usnews/edu/grad/rankings/rankindex_brief.php)

Brian Leiter's Law School Rankings: [leiterrankings.com](http://leiterrankings.com)

LSAT Center: [lsat-center.com](http://lsat-center.com)

National Association of Law Placement: [nalp.org](http://nalp.org)

Thomson Peterson: [petersons.com/law/search.asp](http://petersons.com/law/search.asp)

The Washington Center: [twc.edu](http://twc.edu)

[campusaccess.com/education/law-careers.html](http://campusaccess.com/education/law-careers.html)

[public.findlaw.com/library/pa-environmental-law.html](http://public.findlaw.com/library/pa-environmental-law.html)

[public.findlaw.com/library/pa-intellectual-property.html](http://public.findlaw.com/library/pa-intellectual-property.html)

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