Law School Application Procedures

Successful admission to law school requires careful planning! A complete application consists of five main items: your undergraduate record, your LSAT score, your personal statement your resume, and your recommendation letters. Present yourself in the best light, and begin preparations as soon as possible. Create your unique application timeline and follow your plan.

OPSA will:

✓ Review your personal statement and resume.
✓ Provide individual advice throughout the process.
✓ Assist with law school selection.
✓ Be with you every step of the way.
✓ Give advice that is tailored to you.

OPSA cannot:

☉ Send transcripts to LSAC or law schools.
☉ Send your personal statement to law schools.
☉ Contact your recommenders.
☉ Fill out a Dean’s Form or Certification.
☉ Guarantee your admission to law school.

Typical Timetable for Law School Applications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>What to Do</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April/May 2015</td>
<td>Attend an OPSA Law School Application Workshop. Prepare and register for the June LSAT. Begin asking assessors to write a rec letter and/or complete an evaluation for you.</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 2015</td>
<td>Take the LSAT, June 8, 2015. Update your resume. Pay your Credential Assembly Service fee. Add possible law schools to your LSAC online workspace.</td>
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<tr>
<td>July/August 2015</td>
<td>Receive LSAT scores. Use the Official Guide to Law Schools online to assess your competitiveness at various schools. Begin writing your personal statement. Send paper Thank You cards to those who have already submitted their letters/evals to LSAC. Have official transcripts from every school you have ever attended sent directly to LSAC along with LSAC Transcript Request Form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August/September 2015</td>
<td>Begin applications. Keep copies of all application materials and correspondence. Check LSAC file online to ensure all transcripts and letters were received.</td>
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<tr>
<td>October/November 2015</td>
<td>Take the October 3, 2015, LSAT if necessary. Attend the Law School Caravan on November 3, 2015, at The Bethancourt Ballroom in the MSC. Complete remaining applications. Check LSAC file to monitor status of reports and applications. Send Dean’s Form to law schools if needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2016</td>
<td>Complete your FAFSA for student grants and loans. Research scholarships.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring Semester 2016</td>
<td>Receive offers of admission. Keep your recommenders and OPSA up-to-date on where you have been admitted. Tour law schools that have offered admission. Meet other Aggies who will attend the same law school. Attend the OPSA Accepted Students Celebration in late spring.</td>
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</table>
Preliminaries
Register with the Law School Admissions Council
Almost everything associated with law school applications is done on or through the LSAC website. After creating your LSAC login ID, you will be given an LSAC number which links all of your information. We recommend that you say ‘yes’ on releasing your information to the Prelaw Advisor because it is sent only to the OPSA, and not to other members of campus. We keep your information strictly confidential and only used it in aggregate to develop advice and guidance for other Aggies.

Use a reliable email address that has a ‘normal’ user name. For current students, we recommend you use your TAMU account. If your main TAMU login is silly or complicated, you can change your NetID by calling Help Desk Central at 979-845-8300. Law School Advising services are available at no charge to both current and Former Students.

Budget for Application Expenses
Applying to law school costs money. You have the expense of preparing for the LSAT, registering for the LSAT and Credential Application Services (CAS), law school application fees, transcripts, and future visits to law schools. Typically, your fees for LSAT/CAS will be between $400-$600, depending on the number of schools where you apply. LSAT preparation will cost you between $150-2500 depending on your method of preparation. Individual law school fees run $50-75. For instance, if you take the LSAT, prepare with a typical commercial prep course, and apply to six law schools, you could easily spend $2700. Take time to plan ahead and determine where you will obtain funding (employment, loan, scholarship, gofundme or family) before you need to pay.

Students who qualify for financial aid grants may be able to secure a fee waiver for LSAC expenses. The waiver application is online at LSAC. Check the availability of law school application fee waivers with individual law schools, realizing that each school processes fee waivers differently and utilizes different criteria, including financial need and/or high grades and LSAT scores. Some LSAT prep companies have scholarships and fee reductions for students with financial need, so ask early.

The LSAT
The LSAT tests your reading comprehension, analytical reasoning, and logical reasoning skills. You should plan to take the LSAT by June in the year preceding law school entry if possible. This leaves the October test date available in case you cancelled June or need to retest. Do not take the test cold and do not take the real test for practice. If you are unable to take the June exam due to study abroad, work, or lack of preparation, the October exam is FINE. Schools treat multiple scores differently, but most use the higher score. HOWEVER, never take the test until you are ready because schools will receive all scores and some schools still average scores.

Your first step in preparing for the LSAT is to measure your ‘base’ score by taking a practice exam. Both Kaplan and Princeton Review offer practice exams on their websites. Additionally, the PreLaw Society sponsors a practice each semester. Prepare thoroughly for the exam. There are many LSAT preparation methods: private prep courses, either live ($1500+) or on the web ($750+), or self-prep ($100-150). Choose the method that is right for you and your learning style. A poor score on the LSAT can keep you from attending law school. Also, some scholarships are worth over $120,000 and the LSAT plays a major role in most scholarship selection. If you are not satisfied with your practice scores, talk to the PreLaw Advisor and discuss your options before you take the real LSAT. Taking the LSAT is serious business and you should be serious about preparing and paying for it.

Register for the LSAT as soon as possible to reserve a spot at your first-choice test site. Your information remains confidential, but allows OPSA to provide better advising and identify potential applicants. If you are requesting test accommodations for physical or cognitive reasons, submit your request as quickly as possible, well before registration deadlines. Due to lawsuits, the approval process is in flux. If you received
accommodated testing for the SAT, ACT, GRE, GMAT or GED, you are now entitled to receive similar accommodations on the LSAT. The LSAT scores of applicants who are accommodated will not be marked in any way for the law schools.

**Law School Admissions Council and the CAS (Credential Assembly Service)**

ABA-approved law schools require that applicants use LSAC as the centralized, standard method of receiving and distributing applicant information, including: undergraduate academic summaries; copies of all academic transcripts; copies of LSAT scores and LSAT writing samples; and letters of recommendation. Carefully read all of the instructions on the LSAC website and on the individual law school websites and complete all sections under the “Profile” tab. Be precise, be meticulous, be neat, and be early.

**How does everything get to the law schools?**

- Registrars send paper transcripts directly to LSAC through the U.S. Mail.
- Registrars send letters directly to LSAC, either in the mail or online; Evaluators complete online forms at LSAC.org.
- You complete individual applications online at LSAC and the software sends:
  - Application
  - Personal Statement
  - Addenda
  - Fees
- When required, you have your academic dean’s office (not the department) complete the dean’s form and mail it directly to that law school.
- Law schools receive your application and CAS file from LSAC.

........Your application is complete!!

**Sending Transcripts.** At LSAC, select ‘Transcripts’ under the Credential Assembly Service. You should have Texas A&M under degree granting institution and the remaining schools in the other institutions. Click on Transcript Request Form for each school and print the form. You must report every college and university ever attended and you must have that school send an official transcript directly to LSAC, along with the barcoded transcript request form. You cannot obtain an official transcript and mail it yourself (it will be shredded). Grades from courses taken during high school concurrent registration or at a community college do not appear on your Texas A&M transcript and the school granting credit must send a transcript. Credit earned through AP, IB or CLEP exams is on your A&M transcript. LSAC will calculate an overall GPA for you. This GPA may differ from your A&M GPR if you have many transfer hours. The Texas A&M transcript office does not take phone orders, but they are located in the General Services Complex on Agronomy Road. If you are not in College Station, you can mail them the barcoded LSAC transcript request form and the A&M transcript form. Do not order your transcript online because the transcript office needs the barcoded LSAC Transcript Request Form. Access a paper form to be mailed, delivered, or faxed at:
http://employsummary.abaquestionnaire.org/

After receiving all of your transcripts and forms, LSAC will create your Academic Summary Report, accessible to you on the Transcript page. You should check all of the information to be certain no errors exist in the information or in the calculation of your GPA. If you exercised Freshman Grade Exclusion, those grades will be included in your GPA, so it will be lower than the GPA that A&M uses. Law schools will receive your Academic Summary Report as part of the CAS file with your application.

**Getting “Assessed” (Letters of Recommendation and Electronic Evaluations)**
Assessments serve a crucial role when the admissions committee must decide between you and another, similar applicant. Law schools have two forms of assessment: Letters of recommendation (LORs) and electronic Evaluations (Evals). We recommend that you obtain three letters of recommendation. Check with schools that you wish to apply to and determine if they need Evaluations. If yes, read the Evaluation Questions online to determine who is best able to answer the most questions. Choose assessors who know you and can speak from a first-hand perspective of you and your abilities. At least one letter should be from a faculty member at Texas A&M from whom you have taken a class. Faculty compare you with other students they have taught, discuss your writing and analytical reasoning abilities, and remark on your behavior and attendance in the classroom. Other good sources are a second professor, an employer, supervisor, advisor or group leader. Letters from friends and acquaintances generally do not help your application. A letter from your employer which discusses your work ethic and skills will generally outweigh a letter from a judge you know socially who says you are a ‘good’ person. (Law schools assume you are a good person!).

Type in the name and contact information for your recommenders into the LOR/Eval section. Indicate whether the assessor is doing an LOR, Eval or both. For LOR, you will indicate the number of letters from the recommender (usually the answer is one) and a description (‘general use’ is typically appropriate). In most cases, there is no benefit to have a ‘school specific’ letter for each law school you may apply to. The writer may address the letter to “Dear Law School Admissions Committee” and the law schools will be happy. For those assessors you designate as Evaluators, they will receive an email from LSAC.org pointing them to the evaluation form online for you. In addition to ranking your characteristics and qualities, the evaluator can provide textual information in each section. Once LOR writers are added in your file, you can have the LOR form emailed to them. You can choose to have LOR writers send their letters electronically rather than via U.S. Mail. Be sure to ask the LOR writers what they prefer. If they elect to file a letter electronically, the email will contain all of the information they need.

**Law School Resumes**

Unless forbidden, send a resume with each law school application. This resume will generally contain more detail than a resume used in a job search. A typical senior will have one-and-one-half to two pages. The resume should enable the reader to know everything about your community service, employment, extracurricular activities, special programs and academic honors. Remember to include specific information and details, such as hours worked per week or level of responsibility. Selection criteria for honors and other programs let the reader understand the significance of a program. The PreLaw Advisor is always ready to review your resume and offer suggestions. When you begin completing applications, you will attach the resume to individual applications online.

**Personal Statements and Addenda**

Your grades and LSAT scores give the committee some idea of your academic abilities. Your resume lets them know what you have done and where you have been. The personal statement lets the committee know something about you. Law schools do not interview applicants, so a personal statement is your only chance to provide additional information to the admissions committee. Your resume in prose format is not a personal statement! Different people will give you different advice on what to include in your statement, so always consider the source of the information. Before you mail your application and statement, have others read it and offer objective comments. OPSA advisors, academic advisors and trusted professors are good choices for critics. Spend time reflecting on your life, the events and people who have impacted you, and the important things in your life. Write a statement that lets the reader know more about you. To have a statement reviewed by OPSA, submit your statement via email as an attached document to prelaw@tamu.edu. Do not wait until the deadline to have your statement reviewed. OPSA Personal Statement workshops are held in June, August, September, and October.

If you had a poor semester or low LSAT scores, you should discuss this in your application. Some will advise you to include that in your personal statement, but we advise you should do this only if that is the essence of the story you wish to tell the committee. For most, overcoming low grades or doing poorly on the LSAT will
not be the thesis of their statements, but is vital information. Include an addendum with your application that factually discusses the reasons for the poor performance and how you overcame that hurdle. If you wish to prove that the LSAT is not a good indicator of your future performance, you may wish to discuss your SAT/ACT scores and show that those scores did not predict your success at Texas A&M. Once again, the prelaw advisor is happy to review these addenda. Personal Statements and Addenda will also be attached to your application.

Dean’s Form
About 20 law schools in the U.S. require academic and disciplinary clearance from undergraduate schools. None of the schools in the southwestern U.S. require this form. When you are completing an application that requires a dean’s form, print it, and take it to your academic dean’s office at the college level, not at the department level. Some forms may also need to be completed by the Student Conflict Resolution Center.

To which law schools should you apply?
You should examine why you want to attend law school and your realistic chances of gaining admission to different schools. Factors to consider when choosing law schools include reputation, location, facilities, teaching methods, combined graduate/law programs, placement and bar passage rates, costs, clinical programs, faculty, part-time or evening divisions, class size, and student to faculty ratio. Most A&M applicants apply to five, six, or seven schools. Those applicants with extremely high or low grades/LSAT scores will typically apply to a larger number of schools. Your list of law schools should include at least one school where your chances of admission are high and at least one school that is a long shot. Your PreLaw Advisor is familiar with schools across the country and will be happy to evaluate your list of possible schools while considering your qualifications.

My Law Schools / Applications
At LSAC.org, choose ‘My Law Schools / Applications’ and click the Search for School button to add schools to your list. When you click on a school name, you will find a spot where you can keep a few notes about the school, a direct link to the electronic application, the law school’s website, and the Official Guide information. No one else can see your list, comments or rankings. It’s yours!

Once you start an application, you will have additional choices for that school, including instructions, costs, forms, and the status of your CAS. Each law school application is different. You should read each application and its instructions thoroughly BEFORE you begin to fill it out. Consult the law school directly or OPSA Pre-Law Advisor if you have any questions. The software ‘learns’ your answers, so that when you begin a subsequent application, you will find some common questions already completed. After completing the application, you must select which LORs/Evals are sent to each school. Keep good records on application deadlines and procedures. Be extremely cautious when reviewing your application before you hit the “transmit” button. Some schools may require that you also print a certification page and mail it to their school in order to complete the application. Those instructions will be available when you go through the submission process. Print a paper copy of each completed application for your records. When you apply to take a bar exam during your first year of law school, you are required to submit a copy of the application to the bar examiners.

Early Decision/Early Admission. Some schools have early decision/early admission programs. Some early programs are not binding and do not require a deposit at the time you are admitted. Other schools may require you submit a non-refundable deposit when you are admitted, or require that you withdraw all other law school applications. At schools where the Early Decision Program is binding or requires a deposit, it is recommended to apply ‘regular admission’ and send the application early. You may not want to limit your school choices or scholarship opportunities.

Other Concerns
Several issues may arise during the application process, ranging from questions about trends in grades to minor legal indiscretions, such as MIPs and Disturbing the Peace. Never assume that you should gloss over any incidents in your past. Remember, the Bar Examiners will receive a copy of your law school application from the law school when you enroll. They are checking for honesty and consistency between what you state and what they discover. Bar Examiners truly do have access to many ‘sealed’ documents. If you have any concerns about whether information should be included on your law school application, consult the PreLaw Advisor immediately. Failure to disclose scholastic probation or a minor criminal violation on your application could result in your being denied admission to the bar in three years! You could also be expelled from law school for academic dishonesty. Generally, all charges and infractions of the law must be reported, sometimes even if they were expunged, if you were found not guilty, or if you received deferred adjudication.

**Is law school right for you?** Many applicants to law school know little about the profession or about trends in law school admissions. While you are completing the application process, take time to learn more about legal education and the legal profession.

- Get involved in law-related organizations such as the Pre-Law Society and LEGALS.
- Visit as many law schools as possible. The fall semester is a good time to visit. Many applicants also visit schools in the spring semester, during “admitted student days.”
- Discuss legal careers with attorneys. Obtain realistic information about law school placement rates and starting salaries. Begin networking in the legal community now so that you can properly focus your energy and time during law school. Find out what a legal career can offer you.
- Subscribe to the Aggie-Lawyer email listserv by emailing a request to prelaw@tamu.edu. Information about local jobs and opportunities is always posted to the listserv when available. Application reminders will also allow you to stay up-to-date throughout the next few months.
- **Read, read, read.** All instructions in the application process are vital. The written word is the lawyer’s tool. Law schools are not interested in applicants who are unwilling to educate themselves about the application process. Read law school web pages, application instructions, computer instructions, and Aggie-Lawyer email.

### Important Contacts for Law School Applicants

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office of Professional School Advising</th>
<th>979-847-8938</th>
<th><a href="http://opsa.tamu.edu/prelaw@tamu.edu">http://opsa.tamu.edu/prelaw@tamu.edu</a></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Law Services: Register for the LSAT, check the status of your CAS file, order old tests, apply</td>
<td>215-968-1001</td>
<td><a href="http://www.lsac.org/info@lsac.org">http://www.lsac.org/info@lsac.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Texas Aggie Bar Association</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.aggiebar.org">http://www.aggiebar.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Texas Bar Association</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.texasbar.com">http://www.texasbar.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>American Bar Association: Explore careers and specializations</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.abanet.org">http://www.abanet.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>ABA Employment Summary Data</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://employmentsummary.abaquestionnaire.org">http://employmentsummary.abaquestionnaire.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>ABA Admission Data</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.abarequireddisclosures.org/">http://www.abarequireddisclosures.org/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Association for Legal Career Professionals:</strong> learn about legal careers, current placement statistics and salaries.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nalp.org">http://www.nalp.org</a></td>
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<td><strong>Texas A&amp;M University Registrar:</strong> transcripts</td>
<td><a href="http://registrar.tamu.edu">http://registrar.tamu.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Law School Transparency,</strong> a non-profit legal education organization which provides consumer information.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.lawschooltransparency.com">http://www.lawschooltransparency.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Kaplan Test Prep</strong></td>
<td>800-Kap-Test</td>
<td><a href="http://www.kaptest.com">http://www.kaptest.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PowerScore</strong></td>
<td>800-545-1750</td>
<td><a href="http://www.powerscore.com">http://www.powerscore.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Princeton Review</strong></td>
<td>800-2-Review</td>
<td><a href="http://www.review.com">http://www.review.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ScorePerfect Test Prep</strong></td>
<td>800-259-6211</td>
<td><a href="http://www.scoreperfect.net">http://www.scoreperfect.net</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Texas Appleseed-Diversity Legal Scholars Program (Kaplan LSAT prep scholarship for minority students)</strong></td>
<td><a href="http://www.texasappleseed.net">http://www.texasappleseed.net</a></td>
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*Professional School Advising is partially funded by the Association of Former Students.*