

THE BASICS FOR STUDENTS INTERESTED IN LAW SCHOOL

Texas A&M University is a national leader in preparing students for law school; in 2018, we placed 8th nationally in providing students to law schools across the country. That year, over 500 Aggies applied to law school. The admission rate for recent graduates was 90% while the national admission rate was 71%. Additionally, Aggies applied to 180 law schools and were admitted to 148. There are currently 202 ABA-accredited law schools in the U.S.

The most successful students plan ahead and take every advantage to enhance their profiles. Your first source of information should be the American Bar Association (ABA) Statement on Pre-legal Preparation. This statement lists the skills and values that are essential to being successful in the law, including analytical problem-solving skills, critical reading, writing skills, oral communication and listening skills, general research skills, task and time management skills, and promotion of justice and public service.

Use your undergraduate years to determine if becoming a lawyer is the right career choice for you. Professional School Advising (OPSA) will serve as your ally every step of the way, from helping you decide whether law school is right for you, through the application process. The following services are available through OPSA to all Texas A&M students and Former Students interested in law school:

- * Resource of campus services to strengthen your application and solidify your career goals
- * Workshops to enhance your undergraduate experience and your law school application
- * Full-time advising dedicated to law school applicants
- * The Aggie-Lawyer listserv – tx.ag/psalistservs

CHOOSING A MAJOR

The wonderful but frustrating truth is that law schools have no preference for any particular major or course work, but they strongly consider how well you do in your chosen major. All undergraduate majors have characteristics that could help you in law school: engineering, agriculture and science students develop analytical reasoning; liberal arts students develop knowledge about the structure of society and reading- and writing-intensive skills, while business majors obtain corporate and entrepreneurial insights. Students from all colleges at Texas A&M have become successful lawyers.

When choosing your major, investigate your interests and be open-minded. Students should major in what they enjoy most and what they would consider as preparation for an alternate career. Usually, you do better in courses in which you like the material. You may also decide not to go to law school immediately after graduation or you may change your mind about it completely. Use your electives to dabble in course work required for other majors. This will broaden your educational background as well as allow you to check out other possibilities for careers.

There are no required courses for law school. Many Aggie lawyers and law school admissions deans recommend PHIL 240, Introduction to Logic, because the LSAT is largely a logical reasoning test and the legal profession requires strong logical and analytical thinking skills. If you would like suggestions and advice on electives, majors, or courses to fill other requirements, the Pre-Law Advisor is ready to help tailor your choices.

MAKING THE GRADE

The two quantitative factors in your admission to law school are cumulative grade point average and your LSAT score. However, this doesn't mean you should fill your undergraduate semesters with blow-off classes because that will backfire on you in several ways. First, your LSAT score will reflect your lack of cognitive growth and flabby thinking skills. Second, law school requires overwhelming amounts of reading and analysis, and you will be surrounded by talented, determined and extremely competitive classmates. A non-challenging educational preparation will cripple you from the start. Third, in college, you should seek out the excellent professors, not just the courses. Honors courses, for instance, often offer some of the best professors, smaller class sizes, and lots of opportunity for debate. They also allow you to make great professor contacts for law school evaluation letters. Most importantly, your undergraduate years help mold the type of person you become. At no other time in your life will you be able to sample such a myriad of offerings at your discretion. Indulge yourself!!

When you apply to law school, every grade from every college will be compiled into one grade average. This means that although the grades earned at a community college do not "count" at Texas A&M, they will count when you apply to law school! Additionally, courses taken via correspondence, high school dual credit, or the Internet will count as well. Credit through AP, IB, or CLEP does not generate a grade.

THE LSAT

Your Law School Admission Test (LSAT) score is the second quantitative factor used in determining whether you are accepted to law school and which schools will admit you. This multiple-choice exam contains five 35- minute sections and one 30-minute writing sample. These sections measure reading comprehension, analytical reasoning and logical reasoning. The test is scored on a scale of 120 to 180. **NEVER TAKE THE REAL LSAT FOR PRACTICE!!** Some schools average your scores if you take the LSAT more than once; many do not favor multiple scores at all, especially if the second score is lower. Mock exams are offered on campus each semester and you can take a Mock exam as early as your first year.

Students should plan to take the LSAT no later than September of their senior year, but sooner is becoming increasingly popular. This will allow you to receive and assess your scores before sending off your applications. Because your LSAT score is so important to gaining admission, preparation for the test is essential!! Plan well in advance. Most Aggies spend eight weeks on preparation.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

In addition to grades and test scores, law schools examine your resume to see what types of activities you have participated in and what leadership opportunities you have taken. Numbers alone are not enough to gain admission, particularly for the more elite law schools. All pre-law students should consider joining a law-related student organization. These include: The Pre-Law Society and LEGALS (Moot Court/Mock Trial). These groups provide speakers such as lawyers and admissions officers, field trips to law schools, mock LSATs, speaking competitions and plenty of camaraderie with Aggies with similar aspirations. In addition to student organizations on campus, you should consider community services opportunities, internships, study abroad, and work experience. There are no "required" activities for law school, but the most competitive applicants tend to have demonstrated leadership experience and have often taken study abroad trips, completed internships, or written a senior thesis. The prelaw advisor can help you determine which activities and programs will best suit your needs and goals.

LAW SCHOOL APPLICATIONS

In general, you will begin working on parts of the application at the end of your junior year. Since many schools use a rolling-admissions (first-come, first-served) policy, send your applications off by November of your senior year. All paperwork should be complete by December. This includes transcripts, evaluation letters, and applications. There are generally no interviews at law schools.

Always check for the latest trends and advice with the prelaw advisor.

PLANNING IS CRITICAL

Proper planning will enable you to accomplish all of your collegiate goals in four years. Plan your coursework for all four years, and pencil in your internship, LSAT preparation, abroad experience, and other high impact activities, like Honors or research. Your academic advisor in your major and the PreLaw Advisor are here to help you evaluate your plans and provide ideas and guidance.

TEXAS A&M SCHOOL OF LAW

In 2013, Texas A&M University added Law School to its authorized degree programs. The Law School is located in downtown Fort Worth, convenient to the legal district. In addition to the Aggie Direct program, the law school is in the process of developing unique 3+3 bachelor/JD programs across campus. In the 3+3 Program, students will spend three years in College Station and three years in Fort Worth, earning both degrees in six years rather than seven years. Thus, students who are certain they wish to attend law school can save a year of tuition, fees, and living expenses. To find out if your major will participate, talk to your department or college academic advisor.

The Law School is also planning to offer several joint degrees with graduate programs on the main campus. Typically, a joint degree allows the student to use some law courses for the master's degree, thus saving a year of time and money! As programs are solidified, the news will be posted on the website and on the listservs.

MAKE YOUR PLANS

- Investigate law as a career by reading (see the starting list below), interviewing lawyers and judges, being an active member of a law-related student organization and attending OPSA meetings. Get practical experience by working for a law firm or court. You can volunteer, be a part-time student worker, work full-time in the summer or become a COOP student.
- Create a login ID and sign up on www.DiscoverLaw.org and www.LSAC.org. These are free resources provided by the Law School Admission Council.
- Sign up for the Aggie-lawyer listserv by visiting tx.ag/psalistservs
- Explore other career options with your academic advisor, Student Counseling Services or the Career Center. Make use of your campus resources!
- Correct your academic weaknesses NOW. Improving reading comprehension, study skills and test-taking strategies are just some of the free workshops offered at the Academic Success Center or the Student Counseling Center. Your academic college and department may also offer sessions designed to increase your academic performance.
- Develop your relationships with your professors early for recommendation letter purposes and mentoring later. You do not have to have a problem to see a professor during office hours! Professors are interesting and have a wealth of knowledge. You can't afford to be shy in the career you are considering.
- Give your academic performance top priority--don't let a poor record make your career decision for you. If things get rough, ask for help!

Professional School Advising
209 John J. Koldus Building
1233 TAMU
College Station, TX 77843-1233
Tel. 979.847.8938
opsa@tamu.edu
opsa.tamu.edu