

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

**GENERAL INFORMATION
for
PRELAW STUDENTS**

**PRE-PROFESSIONAL/POST-BACCALAUREATE STUDIES OFFICE (PPB)
320 STUDENT SERVICE CENTER 1
713-743-8982**

PPB: 3/07
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRE-LAW ADVISING SERVICES	3
Basic Information for Students Considering Pre-Law	3
Law School Admission Information	5
LSAT/LSDAS Registration Information	6
Personal Statement.....	9
Recommendation Letters	9
Deciding if Law School is Right for You	11
Recommended links, resources and contacts.....	13
Timeline for pre-law students	16

PRE-LAW ADVISING SERVICES

In partnership with University Career Services at the University of Houston, the Pre-Professional/Post-baccalaureate Studies Office (PPB) provides services to students considering pre-law training. Students may access services either at PPB, or Career Services, depending on where the student is in the process of pre-law preparation.

Pre-Professional/Post-baccalaureate Studies Office (PPB)

The PPB professional advising staff is available to meet with students who are considering pre-law as a focus of their undergraduate education. PPB advisors can assist with such basic considerations as:

1. choice of major
2. planning extracurricular activities that will complement and develop skills necessary for successful law school applicants
3. discussion of any academic concerns or weaknesses and referral to appropriate educational support services on campus
4. review of course selection and recommended pre-law courses
5. description of the overall process and stages in the process of applying to law school
6. recommendations for further reading and research to help determine if pre-law is the right choice for you
7. Writing the personal statement
8. Letters of Recommendation
9. referral to other offices for assistance as appropriate

PPB is located in 320 Student Service Center in the University Studies Division (USD).

University Career Services

The office of University Career Services (UCS) offers professional career counseling to assist you in your decision to pursue a career in law. UCS is located on the first floor of the Student Service Center 1 building and at www.career.uh.edu. You may schedule an appointment with Marilyn Wade, Pre-Law Career Counselor, by calling (713) 743-5100 or emailing mwade@central.uh.edu.

Pre-Law Career Counseling Services provide:

- Choice of major/career counseling
- Personality, interest, skills, values assessments
- Current employment and internship opportunities
- Legal profession employment outlook
- Legal career and education preparation resources
- Writing the personal statement

Basic Information for Students Considering Pre-Law

One of the best first sources of information for pre-law students is the American Bar Association (ABA) "Statement on Pre-legal Preparation." This essay presents an overview

of the skills and training that are essential to successful law school preparation and ultimately to success as a lawyer. You can access this statement at: <http://www.abanet.org/legaled/prep.html>.

As an undergraduate student considering a career in law you must keep in mind that pre-law is not a “major.” You will choose a major from any of the undergraduate degree options that are offered at the University of Houston. There is no prescribed or preferred major for students who want to become lawyers. Instead, there are certain skills and types of knowledge that will train you best for law school. These include:

- analytical reasoning,
- critical thinking,
- close-reading (critically examining facts and details in text)
- written and oral communication,
- understanding of the structures of society and government,
- research,
- organization and time management skills.

The best undergraduate preparation for law school will involve choosing a major that relates best to your own interests and abilities and that helps develop the kinds of skills necessary for success in the law. Choose whatever major is right for you and in addition, include elective courses that will enhance specific skills and knowledge. It is also important to seek out challenging and rigorous courses and instructors; these are the classroom experiences that will benefit you most in the long run. The advisors in the Pre-Professional Services office will be happy to discuss choice of major with you; they may also refer you to other campus resources available to help you make the right decision.

You may also seek assistance finding your major by using vocational assessments. University Career Services will instruct you in taking and interpreting your results towards a major/career.

Cumulative Grade Point Average

Your academic performance is a crucial element in the law school admission decision. The law schools will include every grade earned as part of your overall undergraduate grade point average. Take advantage of all the academic support services available at the University of Houston to enhance your academic performance. Consult with academic advisors every semester as you plan your course selection; make careful, mature decisions about the number of hours you work and the number of credit hours you attempt each semester. Make every grade count toward your goal of entering law school and becoming a successful lawyer.

Cumulative grade point average (GPA) is the total number of grade points earned by a student, divided by the number of credit hours attempted. The higher the GPA the stronger your application will be in comparison to other applicants. GPA is one variable of the admission equation.

Cumulative GPA of students accepted to law school can range from 3.0 - 4.0 (on a 4 point scale). Schools that receive a large number of applications have high GPA and LSAT requirements. There are a few students who are accepted with a GPA lower than 3.0 but these students will need a high LSAT score and to write a compelling personal statement and resume and have stellar letters of recommendations. Addenda, or optional explanations to sections of your law

school application, can help in the admission process by explaining academic situations such as: low GPA in the first semester of college; low GPA following a personal crisis or as a result of working full time while attending as a full time student, etc. These addenda are put forth as an explanation of circumstance, especially if you are able to prove the low GPA was a rare or “one time” occurrence when compared to other semesters. The addendum is not included in the personal statement; it is a separate document. Refer to the Personal Statement Guide at www.ppb.uh.edu for additional information.

A high GPA is achieved by remaining in good academic standing each semester and utilizing academic support services like Learning Support Services, located at 321 Social Work Building, Math Lab, 222 Garrison and the Writing Center, 217 Agnes Arnold Hall. Other methods of obtaining a competitive GPA can be found in the Semester Survival Guide available at <http://www.uh.edu/academics/usd/usdforms/survival.htm>.

Your law school application will require that you disclose all incidents of scholastic suspension, probation in the character and fitness section. You should offer an explanation regarding the circumstances with the application.

Law School Admission Information

Law school admission is primarily based on a competitive GPA, the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) and the personal statement. Law schools will look at LSAT scores and grades to narrow the pool of applicants. The Boston College Law School Locator provides a ranking of admitted students based on the 25th to 75th percentile law school admission records for LSAT scores and GPA. You can compare your scores with the matrix provided to gauge the likelihood of admission into your prospective school. The Boston Law School Locator is available in the pre-professional office.

Research the law schools you are interested in by contacting the schools directly. The Law School Admission Council (LSAC) provides the Official Guide to American Bar Association approved Law Schools on the LSAC website www.lsac.org.

The LSAC hosts a Law School Forum during the Fall semester. The location alternates between Houston and Dallas/Fort Worth each year.

Plan to apply to at least five law schools. There is no guarantee that you will get into your first choice. Law schools admission is very competitive. There is a limited amount of space (seats) in each law class. Only a small percentage of students will be accepted. Maintaining a competitive GPA will increase your chances but will not guarantee that you will be admitted. The results of your LSAT examination and the timing of your admission application play important roles in admission. Early applications will enable you to make more informed decisions about the schools you chose to attend once you have been accepted.

Early applicants have two advantages over other students: the applicant pool is smaller than it will be at the regular admission deadline, therefore allowing your application to be considered with less competition; and secondly submitting early applications will give you the time to receive responses from all or most of the schools you have applied. The last possible LSAT date

for students who are planning to apply for an Early Decision is the October of the year before they are planning to enroll in law school.

Information about law schools and links to their websites is available in the Official Guide to ABA approved law schools <http://www.lsac.org>. Refer to the law schools website for information about application deadlines.

LSAT/LSDAS Registration Information

The Law School Admission Council works in conjunction with law schools and is the creator of the LSAT and the Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS). The Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS) is a collection service for most ABA approved law schools. A list of exceptions to the LSDAS registration requirement is available on the LSAC website. Students using this service will send all of their college transcripts to the LSDAS.

You may register for the LSAT and LSDAS the same day or register for the LSDAS at a later date. Information about the LSAC, LSAT and LSDAS is available on the LSAC website at www.lsac.org. The current LSDAS and LSAT fee information is provided on the LSAC website. There are registration deadlines for each test. The deadlines are posted in the LSAT registration booklet and on the Law School Admission Council website. Late registration requires an additional fee. Registration for the LSAT is now available before March. LSAT booklets are distributed in March but students can register in advance for the LSAT on the LSAC website.

The LSDAS fee includes three letters of recommendations which are sent to the law school requesting the information. As of March 2005, LSDAS reports, which were initially included in the LSDAS fee, will have a \$12 fee. The fee is generated when you submit *each* electronic law school application. Applicants can order LSDAS reports for apply directly to the law schools.

LSDAS registrants with LSAC online accounts will have free access to law school applications for all ABA approved law schools, including the “flow-as-you-go” common application from the LSACD/LSACD on the Web. The LSAC will begin submitting application during the first week of September. You may save portions of your applications.

There is a fee waiver for the LSAT and LSDAS. The basic criterion for granting a waiver is the absolute inability to pay for the service. Your inability to pay must be supported by the LSAC Fee Waiver Application form, based on federal income tax forms and other documentation as requested by LSAC or the law school. Your LSAC Fee Waiver Application will be analyzed to determine your and your spouse’s (if you are married) your and your parents’ (if you are a dependent student) ability to pay the registration fees. You must be a U.S. citizen (or U.S. national) or a permanent resident alien in the U.S. See the pre-law advisor or visit the LSAC website for additional information.

Law School Admission Test

The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) is a standardized measure of academic capacity that is required by all 201 American Bar Association approved law schools. Law schools use this test to assess reading comprehension, analytical and verbal reasoning skills. The test divided into five

multiple-choice sections that are 35 minutes each. The four scored sections include one reading comprehension section, two logical reasoning sections, and one analytical reasoning section. One of the four sections is experimental and used for LSAT test development, but you will not know which section will not be scored during the test. Take all of the sections seriously. The fifth section will be forwarded to the law schools to demonstrate your writing skills. The writing section is 35 minutes and the writing space is two pages. It is not scored. The writing sample is sent to the law schools and is an example of your writing ability. The directions have been revised from previous tests. A new prompt is different that the sample writing prompt in the official LSAT material prior to June 2005. The new version of the writing sample can be found at <http://www.lsac.org/pdfs/2005-2006/writing-sample-new.pdf> or go to the LSAC website.

Beginning with the June 2007 administration, LSAC will introduce a variant of reading comprehension, called comparative reading, as one of the four sets in the LSAT reading comprehension section. In general, comparative reading questions are similar to traditional reading comprehension questions. However, there is one significant difference: instead of being based on one longer passage, comparative reading questions are based on two shorter passages. The two passages together are of roughly the same length as one reading comprehension passage, so the total amount of reading in the reading comprehension section will remain essentially the same. A few of the questions that follow a comparative reading passage pair might concern only one of the two passages, but most questions will be about both passages and how they relate to each other. More information, including test preparation material for comparative reading, will be available on the LSAC website (www.LSAC.org) in mid-February 2007. This information will also appear in the printed *2007-2008 LSAT & LSDAS Information Book*, to be distributed in February 2007.

Also beginning with the June 2007 LSAT, test takers will no longer be randomly assigned one of two different kinds of writing prompt—decision or argument—for the writing sample. All test takers will be assigned a decision prompt. The writing sample will continue to be unscored.

The LSAT score scale is narrow. The lowest possible score is 120 and the highest is 180. Law schools generally accept students with LSAT scores from 155 and higher. There are students who were accepted slightly below the median but these students generally have a high GPA, strong recommendation letters, excellent personal statements, a complete resume and an addendum that explains their low GPA.

The LSAT measures general knowledge of specific subject areas. The test has a small range of scores. The raw score is based on the number of questions answered correctly. There is no penalty for guessing. No answer should be left blank because it will be scored as incorrect.

Two to six months preparation is recommended because your LSAT score can affect which law schools you will attend. Plan carefully your LSAT preparation; never take the LSAT unprepared or “just to see what it’s like.” Preparation for the exam should include practice tests with test directions and question types, various sample test from previous LSAT exams, and participating in workshops given by Learning Support Services on test preparation. Self-Study materials such as sample test booklets by LSAC are available in the MD Anderson Library on campus, your local bookstore, or on the LSAC website. It is recommended to take sample tests in an actual test

setting. Free sample tests are available on the LSAC website, Kaplan, Princeton Review and by Phi Alpha Delta, the UH Pre-law Society. Test preparation services like Kaplan, Princeton Review and Powerscore also offer assistance. Pricing information for these services is available on their respective websites. Weigh the financial and time commitments required of each preparation method.

LSAC offers the online LSAT *ItemWise*. With *ItemWise*, you can answer questions comprising all three LSAT® item types—logical reasoning, analytical reasoning, and reading comprehension; track the answers; and view explanations as to why the answers are correct or incorrect. Unlimited access to *ItemWise* is available for a one-time fee of \$18 for as long as you have an active LSAC online account. To purchase *ItemWise*, go to the LSAC website.

The American Bar Association (ABA) has recently suggested that law schools consider the higher score when multiple scores are present. While the highest score may be considered, law schools do not look favorably on multiple LSAT scores. It is highly recommended to be prepared to achieve your best score the first time you take the test. Taking the practice exam will alert you to areas that you may improve upon to maximize your score. You may take the LSAT during your junior or senior year. Students should take the exam before the early admission deadline dates of the law schools. The LSAT is offered in June, October, December, and February. The June test date is recommended to avoid academic distraction. December of your graduating semester is the last test date for Fall admission to most schools if you are seeking admission after graduation. Refer to the Law School Timeline on the PPB website at www.ppb.uh.edu for more information about law school LSAT deadlines.

The Law School Admission Test is given at various locations including University Testing Services, 204 Student Services Center. Additional locations are listed in Appendix C of the LSAT/LSDAS Registration and Information book or on the LSAC website. Registration booklets are available in the University Studies Division/Pre-Professional Advising Office, University Career Services or at University Testing Service office.

Obtain a copy of the LSAT admission ticket and bring it with you to the exam. Day of Test information is available in the LSAT Registration Booklet on page 11. LSAT results are available by e-mail, U.S. mail or by phone. E-mail results are available three weeks after the test date. This is the quickest way to receive your results and there is no additional fee. Consult page 13 of the LSAT registration booklet for additional information.

If you require special accommodations follow the instructions provided in the registration material to obtain an Accommodations Request Packet. Foreign candidates should refer to information provided in the registration booklet or the LSAC website and consult an advisor.

When you register for the test, please indicate that you would like to release your information to the pre-law advisor (Item 19, Section B). This information will enable the advisor to compare your score to other UH students and aid you in applying to the appropriate law school. Information provided by previous students *will be* available on the Pre-Professional Studies website at www.ppb.uh.edu.

Personal Statement

The personal statement is one of the most important portions of your application. This is your opportunity to present yourself as a positive addition to the law school. Law schools do not provide the opportunity for personal interviews. *Your personal statement is a written interview with the committee. It is a demonstration of your writing ability. The ability to write well is an important characteristic of an attorney.* Therefore your personal statement is the only opportunity you have to present your personal and academic strengths. You should not brag about your GPA or your accomplishment. You may mention them in addition to other qualities that will allow you to overshadow the other applicants.

Personal statements are an important part of the law school admission review process. The goal of the admission committee is to select the best candidates who bring a variety of experiences, views and philosophies to the classroom that will meet the law school's mission. The personal statement should be used to demonstrate your interest in a particular school, demonstrate "fit" with the law school's goals, and demonstrate your understanding of the profession based on research, volunteer endeavors and internship.

You will apply directly to each law school you have selected. Many law schools also require a resume as a supplement to your personal statement. The resume should be included with other materials you will submit to the school such as the personal statement and the addendum. Your resume can be modified to convey your professional experience, internships, student organization and/or volunteer work. The Pre-Law Career Counselor in the University Career Services office can aid you in constructing your resume. Contact Career Services for more information at 713-743-5092. Examples of law school application resumes are available in the Career Services office.

Suggestions about creating your personal statement are available in the Personal Statement guide available in 320 Student Service Center or on the Pre-Professional office website at www.ppb.uh.edu under pre-law. Examples of personal statements are available in 320 Student Service Center. Career Services also has a guide on creating personal statements.

Recommendation Letters

Recommendation letters are another important factor. Your professors and/or employers will provide support to your personal statement. Prepare your personal statement prior to asking for your recommendation letters. When selecting a person to write your recommendation exclude family and social friends. These people have a biased opinion that will not provide information about your academic capacity. Your pre-law advisor in PPB will not provide recommendation letters.

As an undergraduate student at the University of Houston you will have an opportunity to interact with outstanding faculty in different disciplines. Make an effort to establish relationships with your professors that you can continue to build on from semester to semester. Let your professors know of your academic and career goals; they can be invaluable sources of information, internship opportunities, guidance and mentoring. You will also be asking for letters of evaluation when you begin the law school application process. The best, most persuasive

letters of recommendations are written by people who know you well and have observed your growth and progress toward your goals.

At least two full time faculty members should be used to provide insight to your success as a student. The professors should know your strengths as a person and a student. In order to allow your professors the opportunity to know you in this manner you should actively participate in class, sit near the front of the room and visit them in their office hours.

If you have limited classroom participation or are pursuing law school after being out of school a number of years, ask your employer or student organization leaders with whom you have worked to write a recommendation letter for you. You will need to be recommended by someone who has seen the quality of your work and your potential for growth in an academic environment.

Provide a copy of your personal statement to the people who will write your recommendation letters. This will give the person a clear idea of your motivation for law school and will help them to write an effective recommendation.

A common mistake made by applicants to law school is seeking a recommendation from a professor with whom you have limited experience. The professor will not be able to make a strong case as to why you are qualified for admission to law school. It is possible that a professor may also provide a negative review of your performance or refuse to write the letter on your behalf. You should ask the professor if they feel that they know you well enough to give a positive evaluation of your abilities.

Recommendation tips:

- Schedule a 15-20 appointment with prospective recommenders to determine if the person can provide a “strong recommendation”
- Inform him or her of your motivation to attend law school.
- Prepare a packet for recommenders to include the LSDAS recommendation form or candidate reference file form from Career services.
- Resume or activities list
- Personal Statement (if it is in draft form, write “draft” on cover)
- List of prospective law schools
- Requested deadline date for completion of recommendation
- Thank the recommender for his/her consideration and/or assistance.

The LSAC letter of recommendation service is optional unless a law school to which you are applying states that its use is required. UH Career Services provides a credential service. Information is available at <http://www.career.uh.edu/CredentialSite/index.cfm> and in the Career Services office located at 106 Student Service Center 1. Always check the specific letter of recommendation requirements of each law school to which you are applying by consulting their application materials.

Recommendations received by LSDAS will be added to your Master Law School Report, which includes undergraduate transcripts, GPA, and the LSAT score. The LSDAS recommendation

form is available online on the LSAC website. The recommendation form must be provided to the author of your recommendation and returned by that person to the LSDAS.

The LSAC letter of recommendation service has been updated as of September 2004 to allow law school applicants to use their LSAC online accounts to direct letters of recommendation (LOR) to specific law schools based on the school's request to receive a specific number of letters and based to the applicants desire to target the letters to individual schools.

Previously, LSAC would accept one letter per recommender. Up to three letters were sent to law schools in the order they were received. There is no longer a limit of three active letters. The LSAC will accept multiple LORs from a single recommender. Note that each recommender is permitted to submit one general letter and an unlimited number of targeted letters. You may submit up to four general letters to be sent to every school you will apply. A list of LOR requirements by law school can be found in the LOR information on the LSAC website. If you wish to target the letters to specific schools you must adhere to the directions given by the LSAC. Additional information about the LSAC letter of recommendation service is available on their website.

Deciding if Law School is Right for You

Law school is not for everyone. Success in law requires hard work and dedication. Law students and attorneys spend hours researching cases and looking for current rules of law that apply to their clients. Law school will take your full dedication and it is an expensive endeavor. Law is a profession in which you will never stop learning and growing as a professional. The American Bar Association (ABA), which is the governing board of the legal profession, offers interviews with attorneys in various fields at <http://www.abanet.org/>.

Conduct informational interviews with as many attorneys and law students as possible before applying to law school. To find a list of suggested questions and steps to set up an informational interview, visit the University Career Services website at <http://www.career.uh.edu/> under Handouts and Informational Interviewing and Networking. The ABA also offers sample interview questions at <http://www.abanet.org/careercounsel/prelaw.html> under pre-law questionnaire. Research information on the legal profession in The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Outlook Handbook is available at <http://www.bls.gov/oco/>.

Sit in on law school classes. As you narrow your search for the appropriate school you should visit their open house and their first year law student classroom. UH Law School, which is not associated with pre-law advising, holds lecture series on campus. Information about seminars and speakers can be found on their website at <http://www.law.uh.edu/>.

The American Bar Association and The Boston Law School Locator have excellent websites to find ABA accredited law school information. See the Recommended Links, Resources and Contacts section of this information packet for more information.

Phi Alpha Delta Fraternity (PAD) is a student organization that is focused on the development of pre-law students. The UH Pre-Law chapter is connected to the nationally recognized Phi Alpha Delta Legal Fraternity that is available for law students and alumni to join for networking. Interested students can be inducted in the fall and spring semesters.

Typical activities include:

- Regularly scheduled meetings
- Speakers from the legal profession
- Pre-Law Day during the spring semester
- Mock Trial Competitions
- Volunteer opportunities
- Social activities

The National Association of Future Black Law Students (NAFBLS) is another pre-law organization on campus. Contact uhnafbls@uh.edu for additional information.

Princeton Review provides a quiz called the “Realities of Law School” which should clarify common misconceptions about how graduate school differs from college <http://princetonreview.com>. An interesting, first-hand perspective of law school is provided on the Texas Wesleyan Law School website entitled *Diary of a First Year Law Student* <http://www.law.txwes.edu/> under the prospective student’s category. Southern Methodist University offers The First Day of Law School web tutorial which demonstrates the Socratic Method at <http://www.law.smu.edu/firstday/>.

Pre-Law internship information is available in the University Career Services (UCS) and in the University Studies Division, 320 Student Services, with Becky Connally. UCS provides a Guide to Finding Internships at www.career.uh.edu in the Handouts section.

UCS provides career counseling vocational assessments and workshops, as well as resources for pre-law students. Extracurricular activities are a factor in your pre-law preparation. The law schools will look for evidence of community service, leadership experience, work experience, internships, study abroad, etc. Seek out opportunities for growth in these areas; consult instructors, advisors and others who can help you identify such opportunities during your undergraduate career.

Expenses and other considerations

When should I apply for financial aid?

You should apply for financial aid when you apply for admission. Federal financial aid forms cannot be filed before January 1 of the year in which you intend to enroll. Be prepared to file as soon after that date as possible. Financial aid information is available on the LSAC website and at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>

Upon acceptance law schools will require a seat deposit to hold your space. Seat deposits range from \$75 - \$300. Seat deposits will not be required before April 1st. Early admission will enable you to receive conformation from your desired schools before the seat deposit is due.

Save money for law books, legal supplements, and state bar application fees. Law school students often use supplements to help them study legal cases. There are a wide variety of materials and they can be costly. Upon entry into law school you will be required to submit a preliminary application to the state bar.

Reduce or eliminate credit card debt. Maintain a positive credit rating. You will be required to answer questions about your credit history after you are admitted to law school. Negative credit will haunt you in the future and may affect financial aid for law school and admittance to the State Bar of Texas.

A criminal history may also affect admittance to the State Bar of Texas. The state bar requires applicants to report any incident where you were convicted (or plead guilty or no contest), placed on probation, or granted deferred adjudication. You must also report an offense if it happened when you were a juvenile, even if you were acquitted or the charges were dismissed. See http://www.ble.state.tx.us/one/main_cf2.htm.

Recommended links, resources and contacts

Links

American Bar Association (ABA): <http://www.abanet.org/legaled/prep.html>

Law School Admission Council (for LSDAS, LSACD, etc): <http://www.lsac.org>

Law Admission Manual 2003-2004

ABA Character and Fitness Guidelines

<http://www.abanet.org/legaled/publications/compguide2003/characterfitness.pdf>

ABA's Council on Legal Education Opportunity (CLEO) <http://www.cleoscholars.com/>

National Association of Law Placement: <http://nalp.org>

ABA Career Counsel <http://www.abanet.org/careercounsel/profile/profession.html>

CLASS faculty pre-law advisor in Political Science: <http://www.uh.edu/>

UH Career Services counselor: <http://www.career.uh.edu>

Pre-Law Insider <http://prelawinsider.com/>

Resources

Information for Prospective 1L (First Year Law Students) from the ABA Career website:

- Arron, Deborah. **Running From The Law: Why Good Lawyers Are Getting Out of The Profession.** Ten Speed Press (1991).
- Carey, Christen Civiletto and Adams, Kristen David. **The Practice of Law School: Getting in and Making the Most of Your Legal Education.** ALM Publishing (2003).
- Deaver, Jeff. **The Complete Law School Companion: How to Excel at America's Most Demanding Post-Graduate Curriculum.** John Wiley & Sons; 2nd edition (1992).
- Emanuel, Steve. **Emanuel's First Year Q&A's.** (1993).
- Emanuel, Steve. **Strategies & Tactics for the First Year Law Student.**
- "Falcon, Atticus." **Planet Law School: What You Need to Know (Before You Go)...but Didn't Know to Ask.** The Fine Print Press (1998).
- Feinman, Jay M. **Law 101: Everything You Need to Know about the American Legal System.** Oxford University Press (2000). (Recommended by a UH law school student).
- Fischl, Richard Michael and Paul, Jeremy R. **Getting to Maybe: How to Excel on Law School Exams.** Carolina Academic Press (1999).

- Harr, Jonathan. **A Civil Action**. Vintage Books; Reprint edition (1996).
- Hricik, David. **Law School Basics: A Preview of Law School and Legal Reasoning**. (2000).
- Hegland, Kenny F. **Law In A Nutshell: Introduction to The Study and Practice of Law**. West Law School, 3rd edition (2000).
- Kaufman, Daniel; Burnham, Amy; and Dowhan, Chris. **Essays That Will Get You into Law School**. Barrons Educational Series (1998).
- **The Law School Survival Guide**. Jungle Media Group (1998).
- Lee, Harper. **To Kill a Mockingbird**. Little Brown & Company; Reissue edition (1988).
- Miller, Robert. **Law School Confidential: The Complete Law School Survival Guide by Students, for Students**. Griffin Trade Paperback (2000).
- Munneke, Gary A. **How to Succeed in Law School**. Barrons Educational Series; 3rd edition (2001).
- Noyes, Shana Connell and Henry S. **Acing Your First Year of Law School: The Ten Steps to Success**. William S. Hein & Co. (1999).
- Nygren, Carolyn J. **Starting Off Right in Law School**. Carolina Academic Press (1997).
- Roth, George. **Slaying the Law School Dragon: How to Survive--And Thrive--In First-Year Law School**. John Wiley & Sons; 2nd edition (1991).
- **The Princeton Review's Law School Companion: The Ultimate Guide to Excelling in Law School and Launching Your Career**. Princeton Review (1995).
- Schneider, Deborah and Belsky, Gary. **Should You Really Be A Lawyer?** American Bar Association (2004).
- Shapo, Helene S.; Shapo, Marshall; and Esselink, Bert S.; **Law School Without Fear: Strategies for Success**. West Wadsworth; 2nd edition (2002).
- Stropus, Ruta and Taylor, Charlotte. **Bridging the Gap Between College and Law School: Strategies for Success**. Carolina Academic Press (2001).
- Whitebread, Charles H., II. **Eight Secrets Top Exam Performance in Law School**. Harcourt Brace Legal & Professional Publications (1997).
- Thompson Briggs, Amy. **Degrees of Difference: A How-to Guide to Choosing a Law School**. NALP (1998).

Contacts

Pre-Professional/Post-baccalaureate Studies Office (PPB)
 320 Student Service Center
 Lateki Lewis 713-743-8991 or 713-743-8982 (ask for PPB advisor)
 Email: ldlewis@uh.edu

University Career Services (UCS)

Request a general career counseling appointment or information by calling (713) 743-5100 or emailing usc@uh.edu.

Dr. Carp, Professor and Pre-Law Advisor for Political Science

402 Hoffman Hall (PGH)
Call (713) 743-4008 to schedule an appointment.

Recommended courses to develop pre-law skills

The following is an *example* of suggested coursework for students in political science. This information was derived from the Political Science website. Consult your major advisor to determine if your major has a similar list. Anthropology and Sociology have suggested courses posted on their websites. Economics offers a pre-law course cluster. The highlighted courses below will benefit students in any major.

Courses Recommended For Pre-Law Students (majoring in Political Science)

The following courses should benefit the pre-law student in one or more of these ways: they prepare the student to be better at the formal study of law; they increase the student capacity to perform better at the Law School Aptitude Test; and many are useful to the future lawyer in the practice of law. The following courses should benefit the pre-law student in one or more of these ways: they better prepare the student for the formal study of law; they increase the student's capacity to perform well on the Law School Aptitude Test; and many are useful to the future lawyer in the practice of law.

Strongly Recommended

POLS 3356	Intro to Constitutional Law	HIST 4395	English Law, State, and Society
POLS 3357	Constitutional Law: Civil Liberties	HIST 4302	American Constitutional History
SOC 3313	Criminology	COMM 1331	Fund. of Public Speaking or
PHIL 1321	Logic I	COMM 3337	Argumentation and Debate
ENGL 3340	Advanced Composition	ACCT 2331	Accounting Prin I - Financial
		ACCT 2332	Accounting Prin II – Managerial

And one of the following:

POLS 3354 Law and Society
POLS 3355 Judicial Process
POLS 3358 Judicial Behavior

Recommended

SOC 3311	Sociology of Law	COMM3337	Argumentation and Debate
SOC 3312	Sociology of Deviance	COMM3339	Advanced Public Speaking
PSYC 2380	Intro. to Social Psychology		
POLS 3349	American Political Thought		
POLS 3364	Legislative Processes		
POLS 3370	State Government and Politics		
POLS 3371	Introduction to Urban Politics		
POLS 3377	Politics of Prosperity		
POLS 3378	Political Economy		
PHIL 2310	Critical Thinking		
PHIL 2321	Logic II		
ECON 2304	Microeconomic Principles		
ECON 2305	Macroeconomic Principles		

Timeline for pre-law students

This is a suggested timeline starting at the Freshman year. The basic concept of the timeline is to provide suggested steps to students and alumni to be successful in their efforts to apply and gain acceptance to the law school of their choice. If you find that you need assistance in your preparation for law school, please contact the Pre-Professional/Post-baccalaureate Studies Office (PPB) or University Career Services (UCS) for additional resources.

Law students come from a variety of academic disciplines. If you are interested in a specialized program, such as Corporate Law, research the law school of interest to you and determine the requirements for acceptance.

Law school may not be the right field for everyone. Prepare yourself for a career beyond the practice of law because you may not ultimately choose this direction for your future.

Visit the University Career Services to discuss career exploration, major choice and pre-law practical learning opportunities. UCS offers workshops such as resume writing and finding an internship.

Freshman year

- “Pre-law” is not a major. It is a career path. Law students come from a variety of academic disciplines. Pursue a major that you would enjoy working in as an alternative to law. Take courses that interest you. CORE requirements such as Humanities, Visual/Performing Arts, Social Science and Social Science writing provide the option of exploring courses in different colleges.
- Maintain good academic standing of at least a 2.0 cumulative GPA. A competitive GPA will make you a better applicant to law school. The median GPA of students applying to law school is 3.0 – 4.0 cumulative. *Learning Support Services* provides free tutoring to increase your GPA.
- Become actively involved with *Phi Alpha Delta* UH’s Pre-law Society. Visit <http://www.uh.edu/phialphadelta/> for more information.
- Attend Phi Alpha Delta’s Pre-Law Day during the Spring semester.
- Visit the Career Services office. Discuss services for general career exploration as well as pre-law career information (room 106 Student Service Center 1; 713-743-5100).
- Utilize the Career Services workshops for pre-law students.
- Maintain a positive credit rating. Avoid, reduce or eliminate credit card debt. You will be required to answer questions about your credit history after you are admitted to law school. Negative credit will haunt you in the future and may affect financial aid for law school and admittance to the Texas Bar Association.

Sophomore year

- Select courses that involve critical and abstract thinking. Courses that require you to “think outside of the box”. Consult your academic advisor for information.

- Improve your cumulative GPA in order to remain competitive for law school admission.
- Enroll in courses that emphasize writing clearly and efficiently; obtain knowledge in various disciplines by using CORE courses that explore various majors; take courses that examine morality, ethical and social problems; learn about historical and culturally relevant issues.
- Courses should also be challenging and require you to justify your position on a topic. Do not avoid challenging courses because the law school will know if your GPA is based on easy courses. However you should drop the course if it will negatively affect your GPA. Consult an advisor to discuss dropping courses.
- Examples of courses that will assist you in developing skills that will be useful in law school are Comm 1332 and HDCS 1300. Public speaking, Comm. 1332, will aid you in developing speaking skills and technique. HDCS 1300 Family Ecosystems is a Social Science Writing Intensive course that requires student to research and defend their point of view on current political and social issues.
- Remain actively involved with *Phi Alpha Delta* UH's Pre-law Society. Visit <http://www.uh.edu/phialphadelta/> for more information.
- Attend Phi Alpha Delta's Pre-Law Day during the Spring semester.
- Research the law schools that you are interested in and observe professionals. The U.S. Department of Labor publishes a handbook of careers. This is a link to the section on law <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos053.htm>.
- Visit Career Services. Discuss services for general career exploration as well as pre-law career information (room 106 Student Service Center1; 713-743-5100).
- Utilize the Career Services workshops for pre-law students.
- Inquire about pre-law internships for the summer in Career Services and with Rebecca Connally in University Studies.
- Meet with study abroad advisor in **Office of International Studies & Programs** (5th floor, Ezekiel Cullen building; 713-743-9167) to discuss possible options for international study.
- Attend the free Pre-law forum provided by Law School Admission Council <http://www.lsac.org>. The location alternates between Houston and Dallas/Fort Worth each year. The forum will give you the opportunity to meet admission staff from local and national law schools.
- Recommendation letters are required from *full time* faculty. Get to know your instructors. Actively participate in class, contact them during their office hours. Letters from faculty members give the law schools an indication of your academic potential.
- Begin to prepare for the Law School Admission Test (LSAT). Take different versions of the exam to achieve your highest score. The Law School admission Council offers sample test on their website. The MD Anderson library has LSAT preparatory material. Your local library should also have a copy.

Junior year

- Continue to meet degree requirements while maintaining a competitive GPA.
- Attend the Law School Admission Council Pre-law forum <http://www.lsac.org>. Compile a list of questions to ask the law school representatives. Discover how

- schools differ in order to satisfy your educational needs. There are law schools that provide academic support and have an “open door policy” with professors.
- Save money for law school application fees, LSDAS and LSAT and law school tuition deposits. Upon acceptance law schools will require a seat deposit to hold your space. Seat deposits range from \$75 - \$300. Seat deposits will not be required before April 1st.
 - Remain actively involved with *Phi Alpha Delta (PAD)*. PAD offers LSAT practice tests and networking opportunities with law school admissions representatives and attorneys.
 - Attend Phi Alpha Delta’s Pre-Law Day during the Spring semester.
 - Attend open house sessions at the law schools you are considering. This will provide you with the opportunity to talk to current law students and faculty.
 - After you have approximately 90 hours of credit (including transfer work) you may begin the application process.
 - Register with the Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS) and send **official** transcript(s) to LSDAS.
 - You have the option of taking the LSAT at this point or waiting until the Fall of your Senior Year. If you decide to take the LSAT, June of your junior year is recommended because it will not interfere with your coursework and will provide another opportunity to take the test at a later date, if necessary.
 - Law schools will look critically at multiple attempts of the LSAT. Register for the exam when you are certain that you have adequately prepared. Multiple attempts may be averaged which may decrease your overall score.

Senior year

- Begin filling out **law school admissions applications** in late summer or early fall of your senior year. Each school’s admission calendar will be different; follow the appropriate deadlines for each phase of the application process according to the specific school or schools to which you are applying.
- Begin gathering securing recommendations and constructing your resume.
- See the pre-law advisor for a copy of the Boston College Law School Locator that provides an estimation of your law schools that you are eligible for based on your GPA and LSAT score.
- Attend Phi Alpha Delta’s Pre-Law Day during the Spring semester.
- Register with the **Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS)** approximately six weeks before you will apply to law schools (probably August or September of your senior year).
- Complete the FAFSA in late January/early February to secure funding for law school.

Early decision applicants

- The last possible test date for students who are planning to apply for an Early Decision is October of their senior year, or October of the year before they are planning to enroll in law school.
- Consult the law schools you intend to apply to for deadlines for early decisions. There may be special conditions.

- For example: Texas Tech's Early Decision requires seat deposits immediately and the deposit is non refundable. Texas Tech's early decision program is binding and students who are considering other law school should not apply under this program. Visit their website at <https://www.law.ttu.edu/> for more information on their Early Decision policy.

Regular decision applicants

- The latest test date for students to take the LSAT is the December of the year before they plan to begin law school.
- February is the month of most law schools Regular Admission Deadlines. There are schools that will admit as late as April. There are law schools that have Fall and Spring admissions. Admission deadlines may determine the latest date you can take the LSAT.
- Contact the law schools for additional information and stipulations.
- Await **admissions decisions** (spring semester, depending on the school).
- Upon acceptance law schools will require a seat deposit to hold your space. Seat deposits range from \$75 - \$300. Seat deposits will not be required before April 1st. Early admission will enable you to receive confirmation from your desired schools before the seat deposit is due.
- Save money for law books, legal supplements, and state bar application fees. Law school students often use supplements to help them study legal cases. There are a wide variety of materials and they can be expensive. Upon entry into law school you will be required to submit a preliminary application to the state bar. This application is also expensive.

Rolling admission

- There are also law schools that offer rolling admission (no deadline date) such as Texas Southern University Thurgood Marshall School of Law. View your prospective law schools website or consult the LSAC website for their Official Guide to ABA approved law schools.

GOOD LUCK!