Prelaw Handbook

There is no pre-law major at UNC. Any major is fine as long as it is academically rigorous. As a pre-law student, you should have certain goals for your undergraduate education -- you should acquire good oral and written communication skills as well as good listening skills, you should learn to think analytically and critically, and you should learn to read and synthesize large amounts of materials.

Good writing skills are essential in law school and in the practice of law. Law school is not the place to learn these skills. Students will benefit from taking a writing course such as English 305 (Advanced Legal Communication) and any additional writing courses of interest that fit in with your degree requirements. You are also encouraged to take your research and other course papers to the Writing Center [1], located in the SASB Building, for assistance and guidance.

While there is no pre-law major, certain courses may be useful in preparing you for law school. Though law schools are increasingly looking for evidence of good writing skills (such as strong performance in writing courses on a transcript), no specific courses are required for Law School. You do have the option to take a law-related courses while at UNC. These courses can be found in various departments such as, but not limited to, American Studies, Communication, English, History, Journalism, Philosophy, Political Science, and Public Policy. You may search for law-related courses using the UNC Course Catalog [2] and typing “Law” into the keyword search box.

Just as law schools do not have a preference as to your major, they generally do not place significance on double majors or if you have a minor. Again, what law schools care about is that you take academically rigorous courses and do high-quality work.

Law schools do not look favorably upon a lot of pass/fail grades and W's on your transcript. If possible, you should try to limit these.

Studying abroad for a semester or a year will not greatly affect your chances of admission to law school. However, law schools are interested in students who have diverse educational backgrounds. Additionally, bilingual attorneys often have a competitive edge. If you plan to study abroad, do so at a reputable program that is academically rigorous.

Working for a lawyer or similar legal experience may be useful in assessing your
interest in being a lawyer, but in general will not significantly affect your chances of admission to law school. If, however, you do something exceptional in such a job or internship, that experience may help you be admitted. It would be helpful to also obtain a letter of recommendation from your supervisor when applying to law school.

While law schools do not require students to participate in extracurricular activities as undergraduates, law schools do look favorably on leadership skills and community service in their applicants. You should not participate in an activity just for your resume, but instead become involved in an activity because you have a true interest in it. Aim for quality over quantity. Making real contributions to just one or two organizations is much more meaningful than superficial affiliation with many groups.

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Links
[1] https://writingcenter.unc.edu/