

The Application Process

There is no magical number of schools to apply to. In general, we recommend that you apply to six schools -- two that are a reach for you, two that are safe schools, and two that are within your range. Of course, your circumstances may dictate that you apply to more (or, rarely, fewer) schools. Applying to law school is expensive. Apply to enough schools to give yourself good options, but not so many that you're wasting your time and money. According to LSAC statistics, Carolina grads submitted 6.85 applications, on average, for Fall 2009.

There are many factors to consider in deciding where to apply. Among other factors, you should consider:

- **Strength of the faculty** -- Nothing influences the strength of a law school more than the strength of its faculty. A law school's bulletin typically lists the members of the faculty, their educational backgrounds, and their current works.
- **Nature of the student body** -- Are the other students of your caliber? Will they challenge you? Will they be supportive? Are they very competitive? Friendships made in law school can have life-long effects -- these people will be your peers and may be useful to you in your future career.
- **Location** -- Is there a region of the country you want to live in? Do you care if the law school is part of, or separate from, the main campus of a university? Do you care if you are in a city or a more rural area?
- **Size** -- Do you prefer a small school where you get to know all the students and faculty but may have fewer course offerings or do you prefer a large school with more courses?
- **Reputation** -- Some schools have strong national reputations, while others are more regional.
- **Size of the library** -- How extensive are the library's holdings? How big is the library's physical space? Are there enough computers? Does a professional run the library?
- **Placement** -- Does the placement office have a strong record? How do students not at the top do in terms of placement? Is the placement director a lawyer?
- **Costs** -- Law school is very expensive. Generally public schools are less expensive (if you are an in-state student) than private schools. Many schools have good scholarship opportunities. Financial aid (from the law school, the government, and commercial banks) is also available. Some schools have loan repayment assistance programs. If cost is an issue for you, get financial aid

information early in the process of selecting schools to apply to.

- **Career goals** -- Do you want to be an academic, practice in a big-name firm, work for a national public interest group? If so, you should go to a top law school. If you have more modest goals, you can choose from a wide variety of schools.
- **Joint degrees** -- Do you want to get another degree at the same time as your law school degree? If so, find out early which schools offer a joint degree program in the area you are interested in. If the school you wish to attend offers both degrees you are interested in, but not in an official joint degree program, contact the school early to determine what possibilities there are for combining the programs.
- **Opportunities for clinical work** -- Some law schools have a stronger clinical program than others. If you know you want to do clinical work while in law school, determine which schools have clinics you might be interested in.
- **Opportunities to attend school at night** -- Do you want to go to law school while working full-time, part-time, or staying with family members during the day? If so, find out which schools offer night programs.
- **Opportunities to start law school other than in the fall** -- Do you want to start law school in the spring or summer instead of the fall? A few schools offer this option.
- **Opportunities for externships** -- Some schools have an established externship program, while others do not. If you are interested in doing an externship, find out which schools have such programs.
- **Diversity of the student body and the faculty** -- If attending a school with a diverse faculty and student body is important to you, check the school's numbers on this.
- **Importance of public interest law** -- Some schools offer several public interest courses, have strong public interest placement records, and offer loan repayment assistance programs to graduates who do public interest. If you think you might want to work in public interest, determine which schools are more supportive of this option.
- **Specialization** -- We do not recommend that you attend a law school because it has a wonderful program in a particular field of law, such as international law or environmental law. Many people go to law school intending to become one type of lawyer and end up specializing in something else. We instead recommend that you attend the best school possible and take courses in your area of interest. Going to a stronger school will give you a better chance to get the job you want.
- **Rankings** -- As you probably know, there are many rankings of law schools. Each ranking system has its own methodology and criteria, which is why different schools place differently in different rankings. In order to understand a ranking system, you should learn what methodology and criteria have been used. Rankings may be a useful place to start learning about a law school, but you should not decide to apply to a law school based solely on its ranking in any particular list. You should always research schools that you think you may be interested in.

There are many sources of information about law schools. You should start with The Official Guide to Law Schools, published annually by the LSAC in cooperation with the American Bar Association and the Association of American Law Schools. This guide has a useful introductory section on legal education in the U.S. and contains four-page descriptions of all ABA-approved law schools. Included in each school's description is a GPA/LSAT grid that is most helpful in assessing your chances of being admitted. The Guide is now also available online at <http://www.lsac.org> [1]. Click on "Official Guide" under "Choosing a Law School."

Law schools provide information online through their websites. Some even provide application forms for downloading or printing. The Internet is a great resource for learning about law schools. Most law schools have websites. Other useful web sites include: <http://www.ilrg.com> [2] and <http://www.findlaw.com> [3].

In November, University Career Services organizes a **Law School Exploration Day**. (The date and time will be advertised in the Daily Tar Heel.) Representatives from more than 80 law schools around the country will be here to speak with you about their law schools and distribute law school applications and bulletins.

LSAC sponsors several Law School Forums throughout the country. The two closest to UNC are in Atlanta and Washington, D.C. The LSAT/LSDAS Information Book includes a list of these forums.

Early in the application process, you must decide if you want to apply to a school early decision. The deadline for applying early decision is usually mid-October, although it varies from law school to law school. The advantage to applying **early decision** is that if you are admitted, you no longer have this issue hanging over your head. On the other hand, you must submit your application earlier than you would otherwise need to and you must use your LSAT score from the summer LSAT as any other score would be too late for consideration for early admission.

Even if you are not applying early decision, we recommend that you get your applications in as early as possible. Most law schools use a rolling admissions process and the sooner your application is in, the better chance you have to be admitted. Generally, you should apply at least two months ahead of the deadline. If you took the December LSAT and want it to be considered, you must note that on your application.

Source URL: <https://careers.unc.edu/students/pre-professional-pre-graduate-advising/pre-law/prelaw-handbook/application-process>

Links

[1] <http://www.lsac.org>

[2] <http://www.ilrg.com>

[3] <http://www.findlaw.com>