



Brandeis University Law School Guide

2012-13



Hiatt Career Center

at Brandeis University

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Law School Guide, 2012-2013
Brandeis University
Hiatt Career Center
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Section I: Why Law School?

A law degree is of enormous use in many professional contexts. The skills you will develop and hone in law school are versatile and applicable to many professions. In addition to working in a wide range of traditional legal fields, Brandeis alumni who have obtained law degrees have gone on to work in virtually every profession because legal training translates well into many sectors.

The practice of law can be a rewarding profession. At its best, legal practice challenges the intellect, demanding the exercise of reason and judgment. The ethics of the profession require attorneys to promote justice, equality and morality – issues of vital importance to the Brandeis community.

It is extremely important as you make your journey through Brandeis that you consider if law school is now, and continues to be, the right decision for you. In this handbook, there are suggestions of ways for you to gather information about a legal education and the uses to which you can put a law degree.

One of the many wonderful things about a legal education is that any major can prepare you for success in law school. It is important to develop the skill set applicable to most types of law as outlined by the American Bar Association, including the following:

- Analytic / Problem Solving
- Critical Reading
- Writing Skills
- Oral Communication / Listening Abilities
- General Research Skills
- Task Organization / Management Skills
- Public Service and Promotion of Justice

You can develop these skills in many types of courses. Keep skill development in mind as you make your course selection. One of the many advantages of a Brandeis liberal arts education is that all of these skills can be gained through your academic and experiential learning opportunities.

What is “Pre-Law” at Brandeis University?

Brandeis University offers students interested in law a wide range of programs, services and opportunities to explore the legal profession. These opportunities include course offerings, internships, workshops, law related student activities, and professional pre-law advising. Brandeis students have many venues to reflect upon their interests in the law, explore what legal studies and practice might mean for them, and connect with alumni and professionals in the field.

The university is named in honor of the late U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, famous for his commitment to individual rights. The culture of the university values Justice Brandeis’ dedication to social justice and ethics. From coursework to student activities, the Brandeis community fosters concern for the welfare of others.

Please consider the Hiatt Career Center as your clearinghouse for pre-law services at Brandeis. We have many resources to help you with the law school process and serve as a central starting point to connect you to the other resources within the Brandeis community. Located in the Hiatt Career Center, Brandeis’ Pre-Law and Graduate School Advisor is a licensed attorney dedicated to assisting students in the law school decision making and application processes. Our career counseling staff is well-versed on all aspects of the graduate school admissions process and can help you as well. Internships, part-time and summer work opportunities, and workshops and panels are just a few of the Hiatt Career Center offerings.

In addition to having over forty majors and programs of study that will help you develop skills for law school, Brandeis offers:

- The Office of Academic Services that will help you select effective course schedules, decide on majors and minors, and inform you of the many academic opportunities available to you such as academic fellowships and study abroad. Professional staff can assist you in crafting a curriculum that will help you build the skills needed to successfully study law.

In addition to daily walk-in hours for quick questions, Academic Services provides students with the following services that can help you figure out what courses of study might be best for you, including:

- Class Advisors and Roosevelt Fellows
- Disability Services and Support
- Study Abroad
- Student Support Services Programs
- Academic Fellowships
- Brandeis University Group Study (BUGS)

- **Legal Studies Minor:** Coursework in this minor is interdisciplinary, designed to offer students the opportunity to study law in a liberal arts context. It is not required for students interested in law school, and its courses are open to all students. Law school admissions officers do not have a preference for any particular minor, including Legal Studies. To complement the wide range of law related course offerings, Legal Studies has internships offered every semester. Students work at public interest legal placements two days per week and attend class (approximately every other Wednesday night 6:30-8:00 pm) as part of the internship program. Contact Associate Professor Melissa Stimell early in the prior semester if you wish to participate in the internship. She can be reached at stimell@brandeis.edu. As an alternative, students may complete a law-related thesis in their major.
- **Pre-Law Society:** Working independently and in collaboration with the Hiatt Career Center, the student-run Pre-Law Society offers workshops and events.
- **Student Organizations:** Other student organizations of interest to many pre-law students include the Mock Trial Team, the Debate and Speech Society, The *Brandeis Law Journal*, the Model UN Club, and the American Civil Liberties Union. These multiple opportunities and resources assist students in determining if law school is right for them.
- Organizations such as the Ethics Center and the Innocence Project in the Schuster Institute that offer internships, seminars and activities.

There are many other university-wide resources you should utilize as you explore your career path at Brandeis. You probably will not need them at every turn, but they are available and of enormous value:

- **The Writing Center:** A team of seasoned writers is available to assist you in the fundamentals and finer points of communicating effectively through writing.
- **ISSO:** If you are an international student considering law school, we advise you to check in with the staff at ISSO to verify that your student status transitions properly.

Section II: Is This the Right Decision for You?

The decision to attend law school is an enormous commitment and deserves a great deal of reflection. We encourage you in the strongest terms to utilize all of your Brandeis University resources, including faculty, Academic Services, and the Hiatt Career Center to help you decide if law is right for you. You need to thoughtfully process all advice you receive through the filter of your own values, interests and goals.

Goals: As you go through your time at Brandeis, work with faculty and staff, family and friends, to clarify your short and long term goals. Why do you want to go to law school? What do you hope to do with your degree? What are your other priorities, present and future, and how do they fit in with a legal education and career? Both the Hiatt Career Center and Academic Services staff are especially well suited to help you with this.

Time Commitment: Legal education and practice demands a substantial time commitment. The education is a three-year process (four years for those who go to evening programs). Preparation for the bar exam following law school generally takes six solid weeks with absolutely no other distractions. The practice of law itself will be greedy of your time, whether you are employed at a firm with billable hours, work in public interest, or pursue business.

Expense: Unlike undergraduate education, most law students pay for their education through loans, so the expense of law school needs careful, realistic consideration. High monthly loan payments often steer lawyers to career and lifestyle decisions they might not otherwise have made (for example, living with roommates or at home, or taking a job largely because of the salary instead of following their true passions).

Timing: The average age for first year law students is 28, although many students enter law school directly after their undergraduate education. There is no advantage or disadvantage in going directly into law school from undergraduate work. It is a completely personal decision. Taking time off before applying to law school may be advantageous because you can devote all your energies senior year to your academics. Additionally, your entire academic record will be available by the time you apply. Hiatt career counselors are available to assist you in exploring your options and making the decision that is right for you. Below are some possible activities for the time between graduating from Brandeis and attending law school:

- Finding Work: Many people want to take a hiatus from academics and start to save money prior to applying to law school. The work does not need to be law related, but if it is, it could help boost your application.
- Fellowships: Most fellowships are one or two years in duration and provide a chance to explore research interests. Brandeis University is fortunate to have a staff member in Academic Services dedicated to assisting you in researching and applying for these opportunities. Of particular interest to pre-law students are fellowships offered by the U.S. Department of Justice. See the Hiatt and Academic Services websites for more information on fellowships.

- Public Service: Popular among Brandeis University graduates, public service programs, generally for one or two year commitments, engage participants in communities beyond their familiar borders. Many Brandeis alumni participate in Teach For America, AmeriCorps, and the Peace Corps.
- Travel & Discovery: You may want to take a year to explore new parts of the country or the world. The time between earning your undergraduate degree and working toward a law degree can be a wonderful opportunity for this. Periods of exploration beyond one year, however, would require explanation on a law school application.
- Paralegal Work: At the Hiatt Career Center we guide students and alumni to “Reflect, Explore, Connect” their possible career goals. One strategy for those interested in a legal career is to work as a paralegal, to assess if a legal career is a good match for their work values and skills; to explore the various areas of legal practice; and to connect with those who work in the field. Paralegals assist attorneys in preparation of cases, research, drafting documents and correspondence, investigating and summarizing facts and maintaining accurate files and data, to name just some of their functions. Experienced legal assistants perform almost all functions of a lawyer except (and these are critical exceptions) providing legal advice, setting legal fees and representing clients in court.

Resources for under-represented groups: There has been a long-standing serious dearth of under-represented groups in the legal profession. The American Bar Association and other groups are making efforts to remedy that situation.

- Students with disabilities can find assistance regarding law school applications, including information on (and forms for) accommodations for the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) at <http://lsac.org/LSAT/accommodated-testing.asp>. A guide to the best types of documentation for the provision of appropriate disability support services in higher education is found at <http://www.ahead.org/resources/bestpracticesdoc.htm>. For information on practicing lawyers with disabilities, see <http://www.abanet.org/disability/resources/lawyers.shtml>.
- Law schools actively recruit qualified minority applicants. If you are a minority student or alumnus/a, there are a number of opportunities to assist you, including the ABA’s *Thinking about Law School* publication and their website that includes a bibliography of hundreds of books, articles and cases on minorities in the law. Their website also includes useful information (<http://www.abanet.org/legaled/committees/diversityreports/diversity-biblio.html>). The Law School Admissions Council, an organization of American and Canadian law schools, (LSAC) has another useful website to assist minority students (<http://www.lsat.org/SpecialInterests/minorities-in-legal-education.asp>). Law schools have minority student associations and you are recommended to contact those associated with your law schools of choice.

- Students who are economically and educationally disadvantaged can find assistance from the Council on Legal Education Opportunity (CLEO). CLEO provides a summer institute to prepare students for the rigors of law school and also offers financial aid assistance. For further information, see the website (<http://cleoscholars.com/>).
- Issues faced by gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered students are addressed in the LSAC publication, *In and Out*, available at the Hiatt Career Center. Additional resources are found on the website for the American Association of Law Schools (<http://www.abanet.org/legaled/committees/diversityreports/diversity-biblio.html>). Many law schools have organizations focused on GLBT issues and concerns.

What Can You Do With a Law Degree?

One of the many benefits of a legal education is the ability to use it in a range of professional contexts. Depending upon your skills and values you can work in a more “traditional” legal practice or blaze your own trail in business, non-profit or other areas. Hiatt staff can assist you in determining your skills, interests and values and how they might be related to a legal career.

Within **traditional practice**, there are significant differences. You can work in the private or public sectors. Within the private sector, depending upon your lifestyle choices, you can work at a large firm, for which positions are highly competitive yet very well compensated, or for small-to-medium sized firms that may pay less, but offer more flexibility in terms of hours. There are also many different areas of practice, from admiralty to zoning. Many think of legal practice as litigation – appearing in court. Most attorneys, however, practice what is known as transactional law – such as buying, selling, negotiating, and drafting contracts. There are options in the legal profession for all types of interests and skills, but most positions require some combination of the skills cited by the American Bar Association in Section I (Why Law School?).

Those who choose to work in **public service** frequently cite personal satisfaction as the biggest benefit in their fields. Serving under-represented groups like survivors of domestic violence or working to protect wetlands provides many attorneys the rewards they desire. Many law schools provide loan forgiveness, or other financial incentives to encourage graduates to pursue these crucial, but underpaid, areas of law. Of particular interest to law students interested in public service is **Equal Justice Works (EJW)**, which strives to create a just society by mobilizing the next generation of lawyers committed to equal justice. Over 11,000 public interest organizations and 190 law schools participate in this organization. EJW provides fellowships for students during law school as well as after graduation, sponsors an annual conference and public service job fair and amasses useful information on loan forgiveness programs for lawyers who choose public service as a career path.

As mentioned above, the skills developed in law school are also of great use to those in **business environments**. Reviewing and negotiating contracts, addressing employee relations issues and complying with federal, state or local regulations are all enhanced by a legal education. Law schools train students to anticipate, and thereby avoid, problems in many contexts. With greater frequency, major investment banks and top consulting firms are recruiting at law schools because the analytical training students receive in law school translates very well to those professions.

Blaze your own trail! Many artists, organizers of non-profit organizations and educators have benefited from legal studies. Well known examples include John Grisham and Nelson Mandela. Because of the substantial time and financial investment in law school, other options such as Masters in Public Policy or Public Administration should be seriously explored to meet your career goals. For more information, see *What Can You Do With A Law Degree?* by Deborah Aaron in the Resources section, below.

What Do Lawyers Earn?

Lawyers' salaries vary greatly. According to the National Association for Legal Career Professionals (NALP), the starting salary distribution for the class of 2010 (the last year of available data) was even more dramatic than in previous years. Longstanding patterns of legal employment have changed markedly and perhaps permanently.

“Salaries of \$160,000 accounted for about 18% of reported salaries for the Class of 2010, compared with about one-quarter of reported salaries in the previous two years. Salaries in the \$40,000 to \$65,000 range accounted for almost half of reported salaries, compared with about 40% for the previous two classes.”

NALP website: <http://www.nalp.org/startingsalarydistributionclassof2010>

Prior to 2000, starting salaries reflected more of a bell-shaped curve. In recent past years, the high end salaries spiked considerably while the lower end salaries remained constant. In this current economy, it is the lower end salaries that are growing, while higher end salaries shrink. It is widely known that the market for attorneys has dwindled and competition for available jobs has grown. Applicants need to consider this.

Online resources available for further research on lawyers' salaries include:

- The American Bar Association (<http://aba.net>)
- National Association for Law Placement (<http://www.nalp.org>)
- Internet Legal Research Group (<http://www.ilrg.com>)

Reasons to go to law school:

- You have researched the profession and there is a strong match between your skills, interests and values and what the law has to offer.
- The intellectual challenge and rigors of practice excite you.
- You want to help people.

Reasons to not go to law school:

- Someone who loves you is pressuring you.
- You do not know what else to do.
- People whom you respect went, so it seems like a good idea.
- You believe lawyers make a lot of money.

Great Resources:

- *What Can You Do With A Law Degree?* Deborah Aaron, available in the Hiatt Career Center. This book assists in reflecting on one's interests, abilities and values and then exploring how those can be applied in a wide variety of law related positions.
- *The Official Guide to Legal Specialties: An Insider's Guide to Every Major Practice Area*, The National Association for Law Placement, available in the Hiatt Career Center. This publication provides a "snap-shot" of most areas of legal practice and suggests what a "day in the life" might be like in each.
- *Careers in Law*, Gary Munneke, McGraw Hill, available in the Hiatt Career Center.
- The American Bar Association's website is rich in information on legal education and practice (<http://aba.net>). Consider bookmarking it! There is a specific section on legal education, and many other sections of the site pertain to distinct areas of practice.
- Equal Justice Works (<http://equaljusticeworks.org>).
- National Association for Law Placement provides national information on employment and salary (<http://www.nalp.org>), including the PSLaw Net for public service (<http://www.pslawnet.org>).
- Council on Legal Education Opportunities (CLEO – <http://cleoscholars.com>) assists economically and educationally disadvantaged applicants in preparing for law school.

Section III: How the Hiatt Career Center Can Help

Hiatt offers comprehensive services to assist you to **reflect** upon your professional future; **explore** the wide range of opportunities available to you on a continuum – from student to seasoned professional; and **connect** to people, places and opportunities to guide you through the process. Your time at Brandeis will be transformative and the law may be one of many professions you consider. We can help you through that process.

Specifically with respect to the law, the Hiatt Career Center has the following resources for you:

Pre-Law Advising

Hiatt staff member, Nancy Waggner, is dedicated to helping you decide about, and guide you through the process of, applying to law school. Located in the Hiatt Career Center on the first floor of Usdan, she is a licensed attorney with many years of pre-law advising. Nancy can help you decide whether law school is right for you, which law schools will be a good match, discuss LSAT preparation and review your personal statement. Contact Hiatt at extension 63618 for an appointment, or email Nancy directly (nwaggner@brandeis.edu). Early in your decision making process, all members of the Hiatt counseling staff are highly qualified to work with you.

Materials Available to You

In an effort to support your decision about law school, the Hiatt Career Center houses online and hard copy materials to inform you about possible careers in the law, the process of applying to law school and LSAT preparation. Of particular note are years of practice exams from previous LSAT administrations. We encourage you to look at the Hiatt collection, available for loan at the Hiatt Career Center, before you buy materials to help you find those that suit your own learning style.

Other Helpful Resources Available through Hiatt

- Online workshops, including “Nuts & Bolts of a Law School Application.”
- Hiatt staff can assist you in a number of activities to help you explore whether and what type of legal career might suit your skills, interests and values. A great place to start is **self assessment**. We use TypeFocus (see our website), a personality strengths and preferences inventory, that helps you learn more about yourself as a developing professional and identify potential career options based on the results. Other useful tools and strategies can be utilized based upon what is most appropriate for the individual.
- At any stage in your Brandeis career, you can work with Hiatt to find alumni, family friends or others who work in your fields of interest to conduct an informational interview. This is a terrific opportunity to gain understanding of “a day in the life” of lawyers, law students and others working in, or toward, the legal field.

- **Internships** help students gain experience in a field, assess the “fit” of a line of work for them, and meet professionals at various levels of their careers. Brandeis University offers an especially wide range of internship opportunities, including the **World of Work (WOW) Internship Program** (see the Hiatt website) which provides funding for internships that would otherwise be unpaid. Internships provide a more in depth experience than Shadowing.
- Hiatt is able to connect current and former students to **Brandeis Alumni Mentors** (see our website under “How To” and “Networking”) for advice and guidance on the law school experience and the practice of law. You can send an email directly to a volunteer mentor who has expressed interest in assisting fellow Brandeisians in learning more about a particular field utilizing LinkedIn. We are very fortunate at Brandeis University to have so many dedicated alumni ready, willing and able to help. In the coming academic year BConnect, the university’s alumni database, will be available to seniors.
- Students are encouraged to conduct **Informational Interviews** (see our website) with professionals in their fields of interest. This is a strategy to gather information about a certain type of work with questions such as:
 - What is a “day in the life” like?
 - What credentials does one need to work in that field?
 - In what ways is the work rewarding?
 - What is the career trajectory in that particular field?

Informational interviews can be conducted in person or over the telephone and generally last half an hour or less, yet provide insight and suggestions not readily available online or in books.

- Hiatt’s staff of highly experienced career counselors can assist those students who choose to spend time after Brandeis to pursue interests other than law school. One-on-one counseling sessions can guide you through the process of deciding how best to use your time and provide you with a strategy to realize your goals.

Section IV: Elements of an Application (applications are available mid-September)

What Do Law Schools Look For?

Law school admissions offices are inundated annually with applications from highly qualified students who want to be lawyers. Because the number of applicants is so consistently high, law school admissions committees generally do not offer personal interviews. Candidates make their case for admissions based upon their numbers (GPA and LSAT scores—see below for information on the LSAT) and writing (predominantly personal statements and letters of recommendation). Applications are carefully reviewed by at least two members of the admissions committee at every school.

We evaluate each application on an individual basis taking all factors into consideration. We have no computational methods for making admission decisions, no mechanical shortcuts, no substitutes for careful assessment and good judgment applied to individual cases. We look at all factors, quantitative and qualitative, when evaluating applications. Through individual consideration, the admissions committee seeks not only to identify and recognize characteristics that are important to academic success in law school, but also qualities that promote vitality, diversity, and excellence in the student body. All elements of the application are important to determining these factors.

-- Harvard Law School Admissions Officer

Law schools want to admit students who will succeed in school and in the profession. That determination is based upon objective criteria – your LSAT scores and transcript, and subjective criteria – your personal statement, letters of recommendation, your experiences and the addendum, if you have one. Your GPA and LSAT numbers are certainly important, but you do not need to have a 4.0 and score in the top 10% on the LSAT to get into a competitive law school. Members of admissions committees take great care and time in reviewing all aspects of each application. However, they must look for a solid academic record accumulated over your four years at Brandeis and an indication of ability measured by LSAT scores.

Diversity of thought, geography, and personal background is also important in law school admissions decisions. In addition, admissions committee members look for applicants who have maturity, judgment and a well-considered interest in being a contributing member to their school community and to the legal profession.

The Law School Admissions Test (LSAT)

Listen to the Hiatt Career Center online workshop on LSAT Preparation.

Registration: To begin the process of taking the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT), you need to register with the Law School Admissions Council (LSAC – <http://LSAC.org>). The LSAC is an organization comprised of all of the American Bar Association accredited law schools in the U.S. and a number of Canadian schools. It coordinates and facilitates the process of applying to law school.

You will also have to register with the Credential Assembly Service (CAS – <http://CAS.org>). Almost all accredited law schools require this service. It collects and distributes the various elements of your application, including LSAT score, transcript, letters of recommendation and personal statement. It is apart and separate from the LSAC registration.

When you register to take the LSAT, please be aware that test sites can fill quickly, especially in or around major cities. **We advise you to register several months in advance of a test date so that you can take the exam at a convenient location.** Since 2011, Brandeis University is an exam administration site. The LSAC does not, however, give any preference for Brandeis applicants, so it is very important to register early if you want to sit for the exam on campus.

Costs: Applying to law school is costly. The basic charges for the 2012-2013 application period include:

\$155	CAS registration fee
\$160	LSAT registration fee
\$ 21	Law School Reports
\$ 50-85	typical application fee for each school

There is also a cost involved in preparing for the LSAT and, if you are able, visiting the schools to which you will apply.

LSAC does offer fee waivers if you qualify. Application forms are available online at the LSAC website. The waivers cover two LSATs per testing year, the CAS registration, including four CAS Law School Reports, and a copy of an LSAT preparation guide. **If you were a Pell Grant recipient, many law schools will waive fees for you. It is well worth making the inquiry.**

Test Parameters: The LSAT is designed to provide law school admissions committees with a common measure of applicants' aptitude for legal study. The test consists of five multiple choice sections of 35 minutes each:

- One reading comprehension section
- One analytical reasoning section
- Two logical reasoning sections
- One experimental test question section
- A 35-minute writing sample at the end of the test, which is not scored. Copies are sent to the schools to which you apply to generally assess your writing abilities.

The test score is located on a scale of 120 to 180, based on the number of questions you answer correctly. There is no penalty for incorrect answers, so it is advantageous to guess if you do not have time to answer a question or are not completely sure of the answer.

When to take the exam: Truly, the time to take the exam is when you feel completely prepared. Depending upon your circumstances, you may prefer to take the LSAT the summer before you submit your applications. This would allow you to focus entirely on your classroom work during the fall. Sitting for the exam during the summer also provides you with your score in plenty of time to research the schools to which you may apply based upon that score. On the other hand, you may prefer to spend the summer preparing for the LSAT and take it in the fall if you plan on participating in study abroad or have other spring/summer plans that prevent you from studying completely. Most people schedule three months of study time prior to taking the exam. While it can be done successfully, we do not recommend taking the LSAT later than the fall sitting for the following fall's admission. **Your LSAT scores are valid for five years.**

The exam is generally administered on Saturdays. If you observe Saturday Sabbaths, you may take the LSAT on the Mondays following the Saturday exams. You will need a letter on official stationary from your rabbi or minister.

How to prepare for the exam:

Review the Alumni Survey on LSAT Preparation in B.hired, under "Resources."

People have different learning styles. Students frequently ask whether they should take a course to prepare for the LSAT or study on their own. There is no simple answer to this question but as a general rule you should consider how you learn best. If you used a test preparation course for the SAT and found it useful, you may feel most confident by taking a course for the LSAT. Other Brandeis students and alumni have found self-instruction fits their needs appropriately.

We do not endorse a particular method or company to help you prepare for the LSAT. Representatives from **test preparation courses** visit Brandeis regularly and are announced through the Pre-Law Society. We suggest you take the diagnostic test they offer to assess your initial score. This experience may help you to decide the best method to prepare for the exam. If you do choose to take a course, request references from previous customers.

The LSAC has recently published The *Official LSAT Handbook* that is available on their website for \$10.00. The 111-page book provides an introduction to the LSAT and a guide to each of the three types of questions: analytical reasoning, logical reasoning and reading comprehension.

There are many commercial courses offered in the area, including:

- Kaplan (<http://Kaplan.com>)
- Princeton Review (<http://princetonreview.com>)
- Test Masters (<http://testmasters.com>)
- TestWell (<http://testwell.com>)
- PowerScore (<http://powerscore.com>)
- GetPrepped (www.GetPrepped.com)
- Knewton (www.knewton.com/LSATprep)
- OutsideLSAT (private tutors – www.OutsideLSAT.com)
- Advise-in solutions (www.advisein.com)

Courses can be costly and require a scheduled time commitment. If you choose this strategy, we suggest you research each company's offerings and speak with others who have taken the course. You will be making an investment, so feel free to ask a company representative questions.

Many Brandeis students and alumni find **self-instruction** suits their needs and there are many commercial products available to assist you. We welcome you to visit the Hiatt Career Center to review these materials in our library prior to spending any money on books, to find a good match for your way of learning.

Another option some use is a **private tutor**, either in conjunction with other strategies or as the sole method of preparation. Again, you should be guided by how you best learn.

No matter what method of study you select, we encourage you in the strongest terms to take as many three-hour practice exams as you are able. Recent test takers suggest taking at least ten practice exams, with five sections. By reviewing all responses to each question, you will begin to see patterns in the types of questions. You may also find that certain sections are more challenging than others. Without neglecting those in which you succeed with some ease, focus on those that are more challenging. LSAT scores are currently reported within three weeks of the examination.

You may request special test-taking accommodations, but your need for them must be documented. Making the request does not guarantee the accommodations will be provided. The Accommodation Request Packet is available on the LSAC website.

Retaking the LSAT

Generally speaking, we do not recommend retaking the exam if you are dissatisfied with your score. Unless you were unprepared, or had something happen near or on the exam date that had a strong impact on your performance and has since been resolved, research indicates that most people's scores do not improve dramatically upon retaking the exam. There is a risk of receiving a lower score. As explained in the LSAT registration materials, you can cancel your score at the exam site on the LSAT score sheet. The CAS must receive subsequent written requests for cancellation within six days of the exam. Schools do look at all LSAT scores, and generally take the highest score to be indicative of your chances for law school success (NYU, for example is one of the few schools that continue to average the LSAT scores).

GPA

Admissions committee members look at the GPA "number" but within the context of the institution from which it comes and the rigor of the academic program(s) of each applicant. Because of Brandeis University's strong reputation for academic rigor, your GPA is looked upon with high regard. The importance of this must be emphasized. The GPA number is not read in isolation.

You do not need a 4.0 to apply to law school. If, however, your GPA is below a 3.2, please make an appointment with the Pre-Law Advisor to discuss your personal circumstances and how they might be addressed in your application. Admissions committees understand that there are situations in which an applicant may be very well qualified to succeed in law school despite a lower than “average” GPA. Additionally, your GPA will be reviewed in the context of the courses you select and their level of difficulty. If your GPA is a serious issue, you may want to consider a post baccalaureate program to demonstrate improvement in your academic abilities, but this is a serious step with significant financial implications. You should speak with the Pre-Law Advisor before making this decision.

If you have withdrawn from a course or selected to take a course “pass/fail” this is not going to impair your application. Numerous withdraws or “pass/fail” grades will, however, alert an admissions committee to a potential academic problem.

Because Brandeis University students often have multiple majors and/or minors, we need to assure you: Law school admissions committee members will not in any way frown upon you if you have “only” one major. One major is fine. Please only opt for multiple majors and/or minors if doing so is truly what you want to do. The number of majors you have has no bearing on whether you are accepted into law school.

Personal Statement

Listen to the Hiatt Career Center online workshop on “Writing a Powerful Personal Statement.”

Law schools receive hundreds, sometimes thousands, of applications from people with identical GPAs and LSAT scores. Your personal statement is a terrific opportunity to make yourself stand out from all the other bright, hard-working law school applicants. For many candidates, a well-written, well-conceived personal statement can mean the difference between getting into the school of their choice and being wait-listed or denied admission. Your statement should be interesting and well written. It should meticulously answer whatever question is asked on the application. Be sure to read each school’s requirements. Most schools ask for two pages double-spaced, some want only one page, and other schools (generally on the West coast) allow for more length. The key is to follow the instructions given to you by each particular law school. You would be surprised by the number of law school applicants who do not follow the application instructions and hurt their chances of being accepted.

The personal statement is an opportunity not to be squandered – it can have a huge effect on the decision of an admissions committee because it allows you to introduce yourself as a real individual, beyond your numeric qualifications.

Before you begin writing:

- Have a very clear understanding of why you want to go to law school, and why the schools to which you are applying are a good fit with your background and interests.

- Think about what makes you unique. There may be an experience or person in your life that molded you. Do you have a hobby or artistic ability about which you are passionate?
- Be aware of your long range goals and how a law degree will help you achieve those goals and how you might use your degree in the future.
- Be ready to articulate the most compelling reasons for an admissions committee to accept your application.

For any written portion of an application, it is a good idea to draw readers in immediately and make them want to know about your story. Admissions committee members read hundreds and hundreds of applications. You will help yourself (and them) immensely if you make the reading of yours interesting or enjoyable. Ask the Hiatt Pre-Law Advisor to review your statement and work with you to explore topics, help with the flow of your writing, and make sure you are making the points that are important to you clearly and powerfully. Also ask appropriate faculty and the Writing Center staff for assistance. We are all here to help you.

A few notes of caution:

- Avoid clichés and common information. Almost all applicants are intelligent, hard working, and have a strong desire to pursue an advanced degree. There is no need to state that kind of information in the limited amount of space you have. Unless the application specifically asks why you want to go to law school, you do not have to write on that topic.
- High school accomplishments are almost always irrelevant at this point in your professional development.
- If you choose to write about a controversial topic, consider your audience. If you feel passionate about a topic, it is certainly your right to express your feelings about it. Just be aware that your audience may not share your strong opinions.
- The personal statement is not the proper forum to address problems or weaknesses in your application. The addendum is the best vehicle for that. Keep the personal statement positive, even if the subject is overcoming adversity.
- Disclose only those personal aspects of yourself (personal, medical, religious, etc.) with which you are comfortable.

Think carefully of the story you want to tell the committee and it should come naturally. Please make an appointment with the Hiatt Pre-Law Advisor at any time in the process, particularly if you are challenged in selecting a topic. This is a critical element of your application.

If the schools to which you are applying offer an opportunity for additional or supplemental essays, we strongly suggest you seize that opportunity. Specific questions are often posed as topics of these essays. Again, the Pre-Law Advisor can assist you.

Recommendations

Starting in the 2010 law school application cycle, the Credential Assembly Service began using an evaluation form in addition to, or in lieu of, the traditional letter of recommendation. Because this is a relatively new system, each law school decides the credentials it will accept and there may be some initial confusion. Some schools want only the traditional letter of recommendation, others may want only the new evaluation form, and others still may accept both. It is the responsibility of applicants to determine what they need for each school.

The new evaluation, which is online rather than hard copy, rates both cognitive and non-cognitive attributes and skills that have been identified as important to success in law school, using a scale that represents degrees of a particular characteristic (e.g. excellent, very good, etc.). When applicants request the evaluation form, an email will be sent to evaluators requesting them to complete the form online.

Admissions committees want to have assurances that you will succeed academically in the rigors of law school. For this, they turn to those who have been closely involved in your learning. Generally they want to hear from two faculty members who can speak to your research and writing abilities, ability to grasp abstract concepts, intellectual curiosity and ability to work through course material that challenged you. They also want to be informed of your leadership, motivation, judgment and work ethic. It is to your advantage to ask someone who knows you well rather than someone with a well-known reputation who is less familiar with your work. Admissions committee members read thousands of recommendations and can easily tell when a recommender knows you well or not. This is additional incentive to get to know your faculty well prior to your requesting recommendations.

The importance of getting to know your faculty, and letting them get to know you, cannot be over emphasized. Students who actively engage in class -- by coming well prepared, asking thoughtful questions in class, and meeting with faculty during office hours or after class -- are well positioned to make a valid request for recommendations. Other strategies include becoming an Undergraduate Department Representative, participating in campus-wide committees with faculty members or tutoring in courses you enjoy. Conversely, students who remain anonymous to their professors will find it difficult, if not impossible, to obtain strong letters of recommendation.

Please read each application carefully. There are a few schools that want only one recommendation and others that will permit more than two. Be sure to follow the explicit directions of the law school when completing your application.

If you have been out of school for about five years, you may do well by asking current or recent employers, customers or colleagues. However, if you have maintained a relationship with faculty members do not hesitate to ask them for a recommendation.

When requesting recommendations, it is best to make an appointment with your writers well in advance of when the recommendations are due. There are certain Brandeis faculty members who are called upon by many with these requests and you must respect their schedules, particularly around graduation or exam time.

While you may feel a bit awkward making this request, writing recommendations is part of what faculty members do. You may want to approach them with a question like “Do you feel comfortable enough with my work, and have the time, to write me a strong recommendation to law school?” If the faculty member agrees, help him or her help you by providing the following:

- Copies of any papers you may have written for that class
- Your updated resume
- Your current transcript
- A statement of why you want to go to law school
- A draft of your personal statement, if available
- For hard copy letters of recommendation, provide the forms from the CAS or your law schools, stamped envelopes and a list of your schools and the dates when recommendations are due
(You may want to inform faculty of the dates when you actually submit your applications so that they know where you are in the process. Faculty submit their letters to the CAS. Receipt of the letter is noted in your LSAC account.)
- For online evaluation forms, provide your recommenders with the proper link

You may want to suggest areas of your accomplishments for writers to cover that are not addressed in other areas of your application. These recommendations are platforms for new information about you that the admission committee members have not yet seen.

You have the right to see your recommendations, but we encourage you to waive that right. Our contacts in admissions offices indicate concern that writers are not as candid as they might otherwise be if the applicant is going to review the recommendation.

If you are planning to apply to law school at some point after graduation, we suggest you utilize either the CAS system, which is good for five years, or the Hiatt Career Center’s credential service, Interfolio, through which you can house letters from faculty until such time as you would like us to send them to the CAS. You can access this service through the “Interfolio” link on the Hiatt website. Faculty can upload letters into your account at no charge to them and access the letters in the future to make any necessary updates or changes. When you are ready to apply, you simply request Interfolio to forward your letters.

For more information, see the Hiatt website under “How To” > “Request References and Recommendations.” The Interfolio link is housed there.

Transcripts

Request a copy of your official transcript from the Office of the Registrar in Room 121 Kutz. Please keep in mind that during the beginning and end of each semester they are particularly busy, so time your request accordingly. The turn-around time is 48 hours. There is currently no fee for this service. Transcripts can also be requested via Sage, assuming you have a UNet account. If you attended another institution of higher education, you will need an official transcript from that institution as well. Applicants no longer need transcript information from study abroad experience, unless it was for over one year.

It is important that you check your transcript carefully before graduation. While the possibility of finding an “Incomplete” or some other “red flag” on your transcript is remote, you want to check it in a timely manner so that corrections can be made prior to graduation. Please be aware that if the CAS finds a discrepancy between your application and your transcript (e.g. an “Incomplete”) they will freeze all of your law school applications until the matter is resolved, which could take months.

Resume

Most law schools require an updated version of your resume. A Hiatt staff member can help make sure your resume is as strong as possible. We have a terrific resource to support the resume writing process: Optimal Resume on the Hiatt website. This tool will assist you with format and wording. Students who have used it have found it intuitive and useful.

Addendum

The addendum is a portion of a law school application that allows you to explain either a drop in your grades or something that may have had an impact on your LSAT score. If you do not need the addendum, please do not use it. It is meant to explain situations such as illness during a semester or a death in the family prior to taking the LSAT. It is not an apology or a complaint – just an explanation. The Hiatt Pre-Law Advisor can help you with the wording of an addendum. The general rule is: be brief.

Dean’s Certification Letter

Some schools require this document to confirm that you have not been involved in academic or disciplinary transgressions while at Brandeis. A form is available on the Academic Services website and should be submitted to the Office of Academic Services on the second floor of Usdan. Staff there will then forward the form to the Dean of Student Life’s office for signature.

If you have had disciplinary issues while at Brandeis University, it is extremely important that you are honest and forthcoming about them. Failure to disclose misconduct can result in expulsion from law school, disqualification from sitting for the bar exam, or even subsequent disbarment. Less than complete candor is not worth the price. Please make an appointment with the Pre-Law Advisor to discuss your personal situation.

Section V: Suggestions by Class Year

Law school admissions committees do not require particular majors or activities as prerequisites for application. There are rich opportunities available to Brandeis students that will certainly make you an attractive candidate. We strongly advise that you select those academic and extra-curricular activities that are truly of interest to you. There are activities that can help you strengthen your application, such as assuming a leadership role. Exploring the legal field through internships and shadowing will help you articulate on your applications why law school is a good fit for you. Below are some ideas about preparing for a law career, by year, although many, like improving your writing skills and being careful with your money and credit, apply to all years. **Do not feel that you must do all of this but the suggestions below provide a framework to help you prepare to be a strong candidate, and as importantly, explore whether law school is right for you.**

First Years

- Select classes you enjoy.
- Work diligently to obtain grades that reflect your abilities, as they are a crucial element of a law school application.
- Research school and community service activities you think you would enjoy and join those that meet your interests. Community involvement is an attribute of a strong candidate and is valued highly by the legal field.
- Consider applying for a leadership position, such as Orientation Leader or leading a class or campus project, because leadership is one quality that makes a law school candidate strong.
- Be mindful of your behavior. You must disclose any and all disciplinary actions on your law school application.
- Start developing relationships with faculty. This is crucial. In order to obtain solid letters of recommendation, you must have solid, sustained relationships with faculty.
- Participate in the Hiatt Career Center's "Reflect, Explore, Connect" model by using TypeFocus, the online personality preference tool that is fun and informative.
- Begin to work on your professional resume using Hiatt's Optimal Resume resource on our web site.
- Create an account on the LSAC website and receive updates on the general law school application process.

Sophomores

- Continue to perform well academically.
- Participate in Hiatt's Shadowing program in a law related field to assess if you can see yourself in various law-related work environments.
- Research leadership opportunities, because leadership is one quality that makes a law school candidate strong.
- Join and become active in clubs and volunteer activities. While not an exhaustive list, consider the Pre-Law Society, Mock Trial Team, the *Brandeis Law Journal* and The Innocence Project as possible groups.
- Pick a major that suits you. **You do not need multiple majors to apply to law schools and there are no "preferred" majors at all.** In general, lecture courses provide a good foundation, while seminars and smaller classes allow you to present, discuss, critique, and defend specific ideas and concepts. Smaller classes give you the opportunity to interact with faculty. Get to know them, and let them get to know you. In addition to being an active participant in class, you may want to attend office hours and conduct research with faculty. Academic Services, Legal Studies faculty, and your faculty advisors are great resources to help you with this decision-making process.
- Consider a minor in Legal Studies. The courses offered will help you get a feel for law as a general subject, but they are not at the same level as law school. Participating in Legal Studies will also afford you an opportunity to either write a thesis on a topic of interest to you, or work at a law related internship. The thesis and the law internship provide an excellent avenue for you to explore your interest in the law further. Law school admissions officers have no preference of one above the other. Do what interests you.
- Hone your writing skills. Look for classes that offer opportunities for you to improve your writing skills and use staff at the Brandeis University Writing Center to help you during the course of your studies. They are in a position to help you well before it comes time to write a Personal Statement.
- Explore classes that are law related to see if you enjoy them.
- Be careful with your money! You may well need to take loans out to finance law school, and a strong credit record will help you enormously.
- Continue to make smart choices about your behavior to avoid disciplinary actions.
- Continue to develop good working relationships with faculty – it's a good idea in general, and is essential when it comes time to request letters of recommendation.

- Investigate the possibilities of a law related internship whether you participate in Legal Studies or not.
- Be aware of the **Columbia Law School Accelerated Interdisciplinary Legal Education (AILE) Program** – it is not for everyone, and it is extremely competitive. The AILE Program permits its unique participants from a select number of undergraduate institutions to complete their undergraduate and legal education in one year’s less time than is typically the case. It is designed **only** for those with a demonstrated record of interest in interdisciplinary study in the graduate and/or professional schools of Columbia University in conjunction with the law school. Applicants typically take the LSAT during their junior years and score in the 170 range and must have **completed five academic semesters**. Please contact the Pre-Law Advisor if you are interested in this program.

Juniors

- Attend the LSAC/CAS Law School Forum in Boston in October. Over 100 law schools send representatives to answer questions for potential applicants. See the LSAC website for details. Additional Forums are offered in New York and other cities.
- If you are interested in schools on the East Coast, prepare for and attend the Brandeis University Mini-Law School Forum. This smaller event provides a unique opportunity to interact on campus with law school admissions officers.
- Keep your grades up; grades remain extremely important for law school.
- Consider taking a leadership role in organizations and clubs.
- Explore the possibility of a law related internship during school or summer.
- Make an appointment with the Pre-Law & Graduate School Advisor to clarify your interests in law school.
- Attend pre-law workshops.
- Listen to Hiatt online webinars, including: “Nuts & Bolts of a Law School Application” and “LSAT Preparation.”
- Continue developing and maintaining good relationships with faculty.
- Review Brandeis alumni surveys on Hiatt’s B.hired, under “Resources,” that share opinions on law schools and LSAT preparation. Many alumni have volunteered to speak with applicants.

- Decide when you want to take the LSAT and select a test preparation strategy – commercial courses and self study guides work well, depending upon your learning style. Some people have hired private tutors, but this is the most expensive option.
- Register with both the LSAC (<http://www.lsac.org>) and the CAS (<http://www.CAS.org>) well in advance of your test date.
- Take as many practice LSATs as you can, under exam conditions. Recent test takers strongly recommend taking at least ten practice exams.
- Review old applications of schools that interest you. Obtain more information about the personal statement that will be required, consider potential topics, and begin drafting the statement if you have a topic.
- Request letters of recommendation from faculty in the late spring (CAS has forms).
- Begin researching the schools to which you might apply.
- If possible, visit the schools in which you are interested.
- Study for the LSAT for at least three months, which will give you time to prepare in a thorough way. You may choose to take it in June. Take at least 10 practice exams.
- If you are going to study abroad you may want to make an appointment with the Pre-Law Advisor prior to leaving to stay informed of what you can work on while abroad, and what you will need to complete upon your return to the United States.

Seniors

- If you did not take the LSAT in the summer, you have hopefully been studying for it for at least three months, which will give you time to prepare in a thorough way. Take at least 10 practice exams.
- Put the finishing touches on your personal statement.
- Make final determination of the schools to which you will apply.
- To the extent possible, visit schools and contact Brandeis alumni who have attended them by reviewing the surveys on B.hired, under “Resources.”
- Carefully read each application and be sure to answer all questions.
- Request your transcript from the Registrar’s Office in Kutz.

- Review your personal statement with the Pre-Law Advisor, faculty member and/or Writing Center staff.
- Try to submit your applications in the early fall, between Halloween and Thanksgiving. If you are not able to, please do not concern yourself. Later is fine.
- Keep your grades up! Law schools will see fall and spring semester grades.
- Put the final touches on your applications and have them proof read.
- Send thank you notes to those who wrote letters of recommendation and keep them informed of your progress!

Section VI: Law School Application Timeline

There is no official timeline for applying to law school, but there are some key dates and work benchmarks that should be reached if you are going to have a successful application. You are strongly encouraged to make an appointment with the Pre-Law Advisor to discuss your personal situation, interests and goals.

As a general rule, it is not effective to narrow down the list of schools to which you want to apply until you have received your LSAT score. Without knowing that score you are missing a key piece of the equation that will indicate where you have the best chances of being accepted. Accordingly, if you take the June LSAT you will receive your score in early summer and have that much more time to prepare your law school applications than if you take the LSAT in the fall.

That said, the key is to do as best you can on the LSAT and if you will not be ready for the June LSAT, it is absolutely fine to take the exam in the fall. If you do take the LSAT in the fall you just need to recognize that you will get your score later and will have less time to apply to the law schools for which you have a better chance of being admitted.

For the June LSAT

Early spring of your Junior year

- Decide on LSAT preparation; listen to the online workshop on LSAT Preparation; preparation books are in Hiatt and there are some well-known LSAT preparation companies.
- Listen to Hiatt's online workshop, "Nuts & Bolts of Law School Applications."
- Register early for the exam because seats fill up quickly in prime locations. Brandeis is now a test location but is limited to 80 seats. There are fee waivers available on the CAS website if you are eligible.
- **STUDY – TAKE PRACTICE EXAMS.** There are many available on reserve in Hiatt. You may borrow exams for up to one week.

For the Fall LSAT

May/June

- Decide on LSAT preparation; preparation books are in Hiatt and there are some well-known LSAT preparation companies.
- Decide on LSAT test date – it is offered four times a year and requires early registration and approximately three months of preparation time.

- Visit Hiatt’s website for “Nuts & Bolts of Law School Applications.”
- Register with the CAS. There are fee waivers if you are eligible.
- **STUDY – TAKE PRACTICE EXAMS.** There are many available on reserve in Hiatt. You may borrow exams for up to one week.

FOR ALL APPLICANTS

August

- Think about (don’t worry about; just think about):
 - Personal statement topics and listen to the online workshop, “Writing a Powerful Personal Statement”
 - Which faculty members you can approach for letters of recommendation
 - Law school research - visit if possible. See the resources online or in the Hiatt Career Center, including the *ABA Guide*, the *NAPLA Book of Lists* (noted above) and the “Resources” tab in B.hired.

September

- Look for a wide range of application-related workshops sponsored by Hiatt.
- Make an appointment with the Pre-Law Advisor if you need advice of any kind.
- Update your resume.
- Get your official transcript from the Registrar’s Office.
- Obtain a Dean’s letter (if required) from the Office of Academic Services website.
- Draft an addendum if you need to – it is an opportunity to explain any part of your application.
- Draft your personal statement.
- Request your recommendations. Provide writers with your resume, papers you have written, your personal statement, and anything else that will help them help you.
- **Take the LSAT if you have not already.**
- Finalize your school list and keep track of deadlines.

October

- Put the finishing touches on your personal statement and application.
- Start filling out financial aid forms.
- Send out applications by **Halloween Oct. 31st** (This is extremely early, but there are more seats and scholarship money available early.)
- Send thank you letters to recommenders and keep them posted!

November

- Please make an effort to submit your applications **no later than Thanksgiving.**
- Enjoy Thanksgiving, do a great job on your finals.

January

- Complete your financial aid forms when your tax information is available.

Section VII: Looking at Schools

Brandeis University students interested in law school have a wonderful opportunity each fall to attend the LSAC Law School Forum held in Boston and New York (for other locations, see the LSAC website). More than half the nation's law schools send admissions representatives to the large Forum to answer your questions and provide information. You are encouraged to attend this event.

Perhaps more useful to those looking at East Coast schools is the Brandeis Mini-Law School Forum. The Forum is held a few weeks later in a more intimate setting on campus and allows for more in-depth conversation with admissions officers. Announcements of this terrific event are made on Hiatt's B.hired and through student and alumni emails. Business attire and research of schools is required.

Another very useful resource is the Boston College Law School Locator, found on the Law School page on the Hiatt website, which charts schools by LSAT score and GPA range, and can serve as a guide for applicants. A smaller "Brandeis Law School Locator" is available in B.hired, under the "Resources" tab. The data for this guide is limited, but may be of interest.

A Word About Rankings

A great deal of credence is given to rankings of law schools. If you do take these into consideration, please be mindful of the criteria upon which schools are ranked, many of which are arbitrary. "Top" schools are highly regarded with or without the rankings. They stand on their own merits. Graduates of these schools have the benefit of the schools' national recognition and alumni network base. At the same time, many fine schools may be ranked third or fourth tier, but still provide an excellent legal education. Be mindful that the American Bar Association is the source of accreditation, and deemed these schools worthy of that distinction.

Different Considerations

- Geography – While by no means required, you may want to consider the jurisdiction in which you plan to sit for the bar exam and practice after law school when choosing where to apply. Many schools "teach to the bar" to prepare their graduates for their state's exam. While this may be helpful, it is not a necessity. You may take the bar exam of any state with sufficient preparation.

Many applicants choose schools' locations because of family obligations. In addition, you will build a network of faculty, part-time employers, internship and clinical supervisors, and (perhaps most importantly) your fellow classmates. However, for many students geography is not a priority among their criteria for choosing a law program.

- Specialties – All law schools provide the same curriculum in the first year, as required by the American Bar Association. In the following two years, however, you have freedom to pursue personal and professional interests through course selection and participation in clinical programs, law review and moot court competitions. Some schools are known for

their areas of specialty, such as environmental, international or intellectual property law. If you would like to pursue a specialization, consider those schools that can meet your interests.

- **Cost** – State schools generally have lower tuition rates for in-state students. Many schools will offer scholarship funds based upon LSAT scores. Certain geographic locations will present students with a higher cost of living rate than other areas.
- **Size** – Large schools have a wide range of opportunities in elective courses, clinical programs, activities and legal journals. Smaller schools have fewer of these, but in general have more faculty interaction and students may form a cohesive unit. There are advantages found in both types of schools.
- **Visit schools** to the extent you are able. Law schools have different “personalities” and some may be more suitable for you than others. Take a tour and attend a class. Visit the cafeteria, scan the library (but you cannot hold a conversation there) and speak with students about their perspectives and experiences. Ask questions about factors important to you, such as accessibility of faculty, competitiveness of students, career services, helpfulness of library staff, etc. Review the alumni surveys in B.hired, under “Resources.”

Day or Evening Programs

A limited number of law schools offer part-time programs for those who work full-time, have other life commitments or cannot afford to go to law school full-time. These programs are very demanding for those working full-time while attending law school classes in the evening and sometimes on weekends. Part-time programs work well for people who choose not to interrupt their careers and incomes while in school, but these students may be unable to participate in many of the activities that make law school rewarding and exciting.

Joint Degree Programs

For those interested in specific areas of the law such as business or health, a joint degree program may be appropriate. There is a rich and wide array of these programs, combining a law degree with programs for social work, business, public policy, health administration or urban planning, just to name a few. One can combine a law and PhD program as well. Candidates for these apply to both programs, usually within the same institution, and must be accepted by both admissions committees. Programs vary with some requiring entrance exams for both programs (e.g. the LSAT and the GRE) while others will waive the non-LSAT exam. A convenient guide to these programs is the *NAPLA Book of Law School Lists*, available at the Hiatt Career Center and on our website.

Great Resources

- *ABA – LSAC Official Guide to ABA Approved Law Schools* is issued annually profiling all schools with their statistics, including employment and bar passage rates, as well as a two-page narrative description of each school.
- *NAPLA/SAPLA Book of Law School Lists* is just that – lists. Without describing the law schools (go to the ABA source for that), this resource informs you of schools’ academic and clinical program offerings, joint degree information and financial aid opportunities.
- *BC Law School Locator* is updated each year to provide the 25th to the 75th percentile LSAT scores and GPAs for each law school and can be used for comparative purposes as you research which law schools are right for you. While very useful, this resource cannot take into account additional important admissions factors such as your personal statement, letters of recommendation and addendum.

Expectations

No matter where you decide to apply, you are competing with other strong applicants. You may fall within a school’s range of LSAT scores and GPA numbers, but that does not guarantee admission. Most law schools have to decline admission for highly qualified applicants. This is naturally disappointing to those applicants. For that reason, you will be well served to apply to some schools for which you may be considered over qualified (i.e. “safety” schools). Excellent faculty and opportunities can be found at those schools as well as the prestigious, nationally known schools. We suggest you consider schools based on their suitability to meet your needs, and goals – geographic, economic and otherwise – rather than on their rankings.

Section VIII: Financing Law School

It is best to work with your law school financial aid office before making a decision about financing law school. When applying for any assistance, earlier is better.

Law school is an important investment in your future. Consider the financial aid process as seriously as you do the law school application process. Law school education does not have the extent of financial aid resources available in undergraduate education. Most students rely on loan programs to pay for law school.

During your undergraduate years, spend your money wisely and pay your bills on time to ensure a good credit record. Questionable credit will affect your ability to borrow money for law school and other investments or large purchases.

To keep debt to a minimum, consider state-supported schools or schools that offer merit-based aid. If you are considering a career in government or public interest law, investigate loan repayment assistance programs (LRAPs) that help law school graduates repay their school debt. The purposes of LRAPs include making careers in public interest law feasible for more lawyers, enhancing the provision of legal services to low-income individuals and traditionally under-represented groups and demonstrating law schools' strong commitment to public interest law. These programs are administered by individual law schools and should be researched on their websites.

If you decide to find post-graduation employment as a public service attorney, the College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007 can help you in two ways:

- Lower monthly student loan payments on federally guaranteed student loans (Income Based Repayment). This went into effect July 1, 2009 but currently its funding level is uncertain. Law school financial aid offices can give you up-to-date information.
- Cancel remaining debt for public servants after 10 years of public service employment (Loan Forgiveness for Public Service). To take advantage of this program, a borrower makes 120 qualifying loan payments on a Federal Direct loan while working full-time for 10 years in public service employment. After that time the loan is forgiven.

Sources of Funds

Grants and Scholarships

Grants and scholarships are awarded by law schools based upon criteria set by the school, which can include academic merit, financial need, ethnicity, specific talents, residency or other qualifications. Check with each law school early in the application process for more information. Information on schools' offerings can be found in the *NAPLA/SAPLA Book of Lists*. Please note that some schools require scholarship recipients to maintain a certain GPA in order to keep their funding. It is crucial to ascertain what percentage of funding recipients are able to meet the requirements.

Personal Savings/Family Support

To the extent possible, set aside your own funds to help pay for law school. Speak candidly with family members about whether and to what extent they can help with law school expenses, which may also include housing and transportation. Many people do not have personal or family resources on which they can depend, however, and must borrow public or private money to support their law school education.

Federal Loans

The landscape of federally funded loans for graduate students is changing rapidly. The recent debt ceiling bill in Congress made changes to some aspects of student loans, but they WILL NOT affect the amount of funding available. They WILL start costing more, as of the 2012-2013 academic year. Of most importance is that interest will accrue while students are in school, and during the six-month grace period.

Many students rely primarily on federal loan programs to finance law school. Total federal aid is currently available to cover, but not exceed, your student expense budget, which includes tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, transportation, and other expenses. Because you are applying for graduate study, you are considered independent of your parents for these loans.

Generally, the following federal loans are available to law students:

(Subsidized) Federal Stafford and Direct (Ford) Loan. Up to \$8,500 a year is available to students who meet the need criteria. The federal government pays interest while you are enrolled in school at least half-time.

(Unsubsidized) Federal Stafford and Direct (Ford) Loan. In combination with the subsidized loan, a student may borrow up to a combined total of \$20,500 in subsidized and unsubsidized loans.

Graduate PLUS Loans for Law Students. Law students with an absence of bad credit may be eligible for these loans. Many law students are choosing Graduate PLUS instead of private loans to cover their remaining financial need beyond the \$20,500 available through Stafford.

Federal Perkins Loans. These low interest loans are available at some law schools. Each student's award is determined by the school, based on information obtained from the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid).

Private Loans

If federal loans and personal funds are insufficient to cover the costs of law school, students resort to private loans secured from banks and other lending institutions. Work with your law school financial aid office before making a decision about financing law school.

Earnings

The American Bar Association precludes first-year day division law students from working during the school year. The American Bar Association sets a 20-hour limit on second and third year law student employment.

Complete your FAFSA as soon as possible after January 1. Completion is required for all federal student loan programs. Some law schools also use the FAFSA to collect information for their own institutional aid. Do NOT wait to complete the FAFSA until after you are admitted to a law school. You can list up to six law schools where you want reports sent, and update the list with additional schools.

Great Resources

- Accessgroup.org is the non-profit graduate student loan organization's website.
- *LSAC Aid for Law School: A Preliminary Guide*, available on the LSAC website.
- *NAPLA/SAPLA Book of Lists*, available in Hiatt and on our website.

Section IX: Different Admissions Decisions

Law Schools' Decisions

In many ways this process is similar to undergraduate admissions decisions. You may hear of your acceptance into law school any time between late fall and July, the latter if you are waitlisted. The law schools to which you applied will contact you directly regarding their decisions. As you are accepted into law schools, most will host an "Open House" for admitted students. Through these events you can meet faculty and administrators, as well as current students and alumni. To the extent possible, you are encouraged to attend these events.

Early Acceptance/Early Admission

This option varies from school to school. Generally, if you are accepted early, schools will ask for some level of financial commitment from you. Read each school's policy carefully. Some require you to withdraw applications to other schools once you are accepted to their program. While this kind of early admission relieves you of the stress of waiting, it can be limiting, particularly in finding out about any financial aid packages you may have been offered from other schools.

Deferrals

It has become more common for schools to allow a **limited** number of accepted students to defer their law school career for a brief amount of time, generally one year. Law schools' policies on this differ greatly. Generally, if there is a financial reason, a family matter or acceptance into a fellowship, service or other graduate degree program, many law schools will try to accommodate a candidate's request to defer. You should contact the school directly, however, and not assume the deferral will be granted. Law schools rely heavily on having all of their classes filled.

What If You Are Waitlisted?

Being placed on a wait list can be an extremely stressful situation. On the one hand, it does mean that the admissions committee found your credentials compelling. On the other, you continue to be uncertain about your position at the school, and chances of being accepted from the wait list vary from school to school and from year to year. You may want to discuss the situation with the Pre-Law Advisor, because you may not find out whether you are admitted until well into the summer. This will impact your decision-making process with other schools. There are some strategies you can employ to improve your chances of being admitted to a school that reserves a decision on your application:

- Provide supplemental materials such as subsequent grades, any honors you received or perhaps another letter of recommendation.
- Write to the Director of Admissions expressing your strong interest in the school and why you are a good fit for the program.

- When it seems appropriate, contact the Admissions Office and ask how you can assist them in making their decision. Be brief and professional in your interactions. You may want to inquire if it is possible to obtain an interview.

What If You Are Accepted into Multiple Schools?

Depending upon the timing of your acceptance, law schools generally provide a significant amount of time before they require accepted students to make a firm commitment to attend. Issues may arise, however, if you are accepted into one of your “safety” schools prior to hearing about the decisions of schools higher on your wish list. Generally speaking, when you make a commitment to a school, it is final. If you need assistance in the decision-making process, please contact the Pre-Law Advisor.

You may receive multiple acceptances in the same time period. This is indeed a happy dilemma but there is a strong word of caution. Do not accept a position at more than one law school. Since 2008, the CAS has been issuing “Overlap Reports” to all law schools listing the names of candidates who have accepted positions at more than one law school. A possible ramification of having one’s name placed on this list is the risk of all acceptance letters being rescinded. Again, you are encouraged to confer with the Hiatt Pre-Law Advisor if you face this situation.

Section X: How Does Law School Differ From Undergraduate Education?

Almost all law schools have an orientation program to assist students in adjusting to the rigors and style of legal education. Orientation sessions also provide an opportunity to meet faculty, staff, and classmates.

First-year law school curriculum is established by the American Bar Association. There is little or no choice of classes in that year which include:

- Torts – the study of civil (non-criminal) wrongs
- Contracts – agreements between two or more parties
- Property – the study of real and personal property
- Civil Procedure – how non-criminal cases are initiated and proceed through resolution
- Constitutional Law
- Criminal Law
- A small section for legal research and writing

Legal writing is different from what you are probably used to, and will take some time to learn. This process is a challenge for many first-year students, but is well worth the effort. You will learn to write in a more concise and clear manner, no matter what your level of writing skills are when you enter. You will learn new language (much of it Latin) in law school, as well as new precision to the language you already use.

Your Brandeis University education will provide you with a solid foundation of academic skills to assist you in law school. Many courses are taught through the Socratic method of question and answer designed to engage all students and teach them to analyze arguments, facts and legal principles quickly. There are few definitive answers to be found in first-year law classes.

Many students choose to develop or join study groups. This is a personal decision. Because we all have different learning styles, and it will be difficult to ascertain the styles of potential study group members before agreeing to join them, you may want to join one or more groups on a provisional basis.

A word about competition: Law students tend to be a competitive group by their nature. Competition can be a motivating force, or it can take an unpleasant turn. Be mindful and steadfast in your personal approach to competition.

Section XI: Where Have Brandeis Alumni Gone and How Can I Contact Them?

The Hiatt Career Center maintains a database of volunteer alumni who are happy to communicate with students and other alumni on a host of issues related to law school such as advice on preparing for the LSAT, how they assess their schools and how they came to their career decisions. Please visit the Hiatt website for instructions on contacting these mentors.

Brandeis University Senior Statistics Class of 2009

In the 2010-2011 Academic Year 43 Brandeis University seniors applied to law schools.

Measurement	Brandeis	National Average
Acceptance Rates for Seniors	99%	80%
Average LSAT score	160	154.7
Average GPA	3.54	3.37

Clearly Brandeis University applicants experience a higher than average percentage of success in applying to law schools. As indicated below, last year all of the top 15 law schools admitted Brandeis applicants. A substantial number of applicants were admitted to more than one top law school.

Law School	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
Yale University	Admit: 2 Attend: 2	Admit: 2 Attend: 2	Admit: 0 Attend: 0	Admit: 0 Attend: 0	Admit: 1 Attend: 1	Admit: 0 Attend: 0
Harvard University	Admit: 3 Attend: 1	Admit: 2 Attend: 0	Admit: 3 Attend: 3	Admit: 1 Attend: 1	Admit: 5 Attend: 3	Admit: 2 Attend: 2
Stanford University	Admit: 1 Attend: 0	Admit: 1 Attend: 0	Admit: 0 Attend: 0	Admit: 1 Attend: 1	Admit: 1 Attend: 0	Admit: 0 Attend: 0
Columbia University	Admit: 5 Attend: 1	Admit: 4 Attend: 1	Admit: 5 Attend: 3	Admit: 6 Attend: 4	Admit: 4 Attend: 1	Admit: 3 Attend: 1
New York University	Admit: 8 Attend: 6	Admit: 8 Attend: 2	Admit: 9 Attend: 4	Admit: 7 Attend: 1	Admit: 5 Attend: 1	Admit: 5 Attend: 1
University of Chicago	Admit: 4 Attend: 1	Admit: 2 Attend: 0	Admit: 3 Attend: 0	Admit: 6 Attend: 0	Admit: 1 Attend: 0	Admit: 1 Attend: 0
University of Pennsylvania	Admit: 4 Attend: 2	Admit: 1 Attend: 1	Admit: 5 Attend: 3	Admit: 5 Attend: 1	Admit: 6 Attend: 2	Admit: 0 Attend: 0
University of Michigan – Ann Arbor	Admit: 7 Attend: 2	Admit: 5 Attend: 0	Admit: 4 Attend: 0	Admit: 5 Attend: 2	Admit: 5 Attend: 1	Admit: 5 Attend: 0
University of Virginia	Admit: 0 Attend: 0	Admit: 1 Attend: 1	Admit: 1 Attend: 0	Admit: 3 Attend: 0	Admit: 5 Attend: 1	Admit: 2 Attend: 1
Northwestern University	Admit: 1 Attend: 1	Admit: 6 Attend: 1	Admit: 3 Attend: 0	Admit: 6 Attend: 2	Admit: 8 Attend: 2	Admit: 2 Attend: 0
Cornell University	Admit: 5 Attend: 0	Admit: 4 Attend: 1	Admit: 3 Attend: 0	Admit: 5 Attend: 2	Admit: 7 Attend: 0	Admit: 3 Attend: 2
Duke University	Admit: 6 Attend: 0	Admit: 1 Attend: 0	Admit: 5 Attend: 2	Admit: 7 Attend: 2	Admit: 9 Attend: 0	Admit: 2 Attend: 1
Georgetown University	Admit: 7 Attend: 2	Admit: 14 Attend: 5	Admit: 10 Attend: 2	Admit: 9 Attend: 1	Admit: 12 Attend: 2	Admit: 10 Attend: 8
University of California Berkeley	Admit: 4 Attend: 1	Admit: 4 Attend: 2	Admit: 3 Attend: 1	Admit: 6 Attend: 1	Admit: 4 Attend: 0	Admit: 1 Attend: 1
University of California Los Angeles	Admit: 0 Attend: 0	Admit: 4 Attend: 0	Admit: 9 Attend: 1	Admit: 7 Attend: 0	Admit: 7 Attend: 5	Admit: 3 Attend: 1

CONCLUSION

The decision to apply to law school can be life altering. We hope that you have found this manual to be of assistance in guiding you through the decision making and application processes. You are encouraged in the strongest terms to utilize all of your Brandeis University resources, especially the Hiatt Career Center. Should you have any suggestions regarding this manual, Hiatt staff would be most welcome.

OUR THANKS

We are grateful to the National Association of Pre-Law Advisors, the National Association for Legal Career Professionals and Equal Justice Works for assistance with some content of this manual, in particular on Financing Law School.

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Resources and Bibliography

Law and Legal Study

Law School Admissions Council (LSAC): <http://lsac.org>.

Council on Legal Education Opportunity (CLEO) assists economically and educationally disadvantaged applicants in preparing for law school: <http://abanet.org/cleo>.

American Bar Association: <http://aba.net> The ABA is the national professional organization for the legal profession.

Law Students Section

Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession

The Vault: Law School

http://www.vault.com/graddegree/school/schoolsurveylists.jsp?ch_id=351&pt=2&gclid=CL.

ABA Official Guide to Legal Specialties, available in Hiatt.

What Can You Do with a Law Degree? Deborah Aaron, Niche Press, 1994, available in Hiatt.

Careers in International Law, Janis and Swartz, International Law and Practice, American Bar Association, 2001.

1,000 Days to the Bar, Dennis Tonsing, William S. Hein & Co., 2003. A guide for first-year law students in time management and useful strategies for thriving during school.

Thinking About Law School: A Minority Guide, Law School Admissions Council, 1996.

The Ultimate Guide to Law School Admission, Carol Wright, Marriwell Publishing, 2003.

Internet Legal Research Group, a website with a categorized index of over 4,000 law related websites. <http://www.ilrg.com>.

Financial Aid

<http://lsac.org> -- Law school financial aid information.

<http://fafsa.ed.gov> -- Standardized financial information about federal loans.

<http://studentaid.ed.gov> -- More information regarding federal student aid.

<http://annualCreditReport.com> -- Free annual credit report.

<http://accessgroup.org/Student-Loans/learn-about-loans/wise-borrower-tutorial.htm> -- Personal finance and other financial aid information.

<http://Equaljusticeworks.org/finance> -- Information on public interest law programs and law school loan repayment assistance programs (LRAP).

Disability Support

<http://www.disabilityresources.org/index.html> -- Comprehensive site listing and providing links to information about all disabilities, reasonable accommodation, and educational resources.

<http://www.jan.wvu.edu/links/adalinks.htm> -- Comprehensive site with many resources about the ADA, maintained by the Job Accommodation Network (JAN).

<http://www.abanet.org/disability/about/home.shtml> -- Information by and for lawyers and other advocates.

<http://www.ahead.org/resources/best-practices-resources/documents> -- A guide to the best types of documentation for the provision of appropriate disability support services in higher education.

<http://lsac.org/LSAT/accommodated-testing.asp> -- A site with information about how to apply for accommodations on the LSAT and all necessary forms.



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