

UNCW Pre-Law Information

The Basics: Unlike some other graduate programs, there is no set major that leads to acceptance by law schools. Acceptance is usually based on the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) score, the student's grade point average (GPA) and transcripts, a minimum of two letters of recommendation and a personal statement written by the applicant. The best place to begin the process is to look at the Law School Admissions Council (LSAC) website, www.lsac.org. Here the applicant registers to take the LSAT, and this is also the organization which assembles the packet to be sent to the law school admissions office containing the LSAT score, the GPA and transcripts, the letters of recommendation and personal statement. All of this is put into a standard format and transmitted to each school designated by the applicant. Each applicant registers at lsac.org and a fee is charged for this service. Law schools can be rather mechanical in deciding who is admitted, with the LSAT score and the GPA the two most important factors.

The LSAT: The LSAC site, www.lsac.org, lists the dates on which the LSAT will be given and all registration details are handled there. Generally, the test can be taken at UNCW, but seats do fill up, so early registration is recommended. Preparation for the LSAT is highly recommended and there are a number of available methods to choose from. Corporations, such as Kaplan, offer live courses, on-line courses and books, all for different prices. LSAC also offers less expensive examples of past exams. Many students are very successful after taking many previous LSAT exams to develop an understanding of the various question types and time constraints. Test sections generally emphasize either reading comprehension or logic problems and applicants find that practice in these areas does lead to higher scores. One dean of admissions recommends taking a practice test each morning and another each afternoon six days a week, for two weeks prior to the LSAT as the best way to prepare. Many applicants take the exam twice, with scores often improving the second time, but sometimes not. Some law schools average the scores and others consider the higher score only.

Academics, GPA and Transcripts: There is no set major for a person attending law school. In fact law school first year classes are made up of students with a very wide range of prior experience. Law schools like to see good grades in solid academic disciplines and progression from freshman 100 level courses to senior 400 level courses over four years. LSAC assembles the transcripts in the same format for all. In addition to academics, law schools usually like to see applicants who have well rounded college years, being part of campus groups and showing a willingness to volunteer in the local community.

Letters of Recommendation: Generally two are required by law schools. Deans of Admission say the very best are from faculty members who are familiar with the applicant's work product in class. A letter from a work supervisor can also be of value. Letters from famous attorneys who do not know the applicant personally are generally of no value.

Personal Statement: This is the applicant's chance to tell the law school admissions committee about him or herself. It is also the best place to explain any negative aspects of the admissions packet, such as a semester of low grades because of sickness, etc. Many students discuss how they became interested in studying law and how this was strengthened throughout their college experience. This can be a difficult writing assignment and should not be left to the last minute.