

## CONSIDERING LAW SCHOOL?

We know exploring career options and making plans for your next steps after your degree can be difficult, so we have compiled a brief overview of the pertinent information to help. This tip sheet will guide you to information about the programs, how to apply, and where to get support.

### What do I need to do if I am considering law school?

It is important to be clear about your intentions.

- Why do you want to pursue law school? Do you have a sense of your strengths and interests related to this field? Reflecting on yourself is an important first step. Do not get pressured by friends and family, as applying to law school is an important decision which requires time and dedication.
- The Student Success Centre has career counsellors to support you as you explore your options and make decisions.

Exploring the law profession can help you get a real sense of the field and the education path.

- Using reliable career information databases and talking to people in the field can help you understand how you might bring your strengths to the field and what is required to enter and succeed in the field.
- To help you learn about the profession, the [Go Beyond Google and Career Conversations section of our website](#) has resources to support you with this.

The next steps involve gathering detailed information about the programs and when ready, apply!

### Where do I find information about law schools?

- Ontario has a [central application system \(OLSAS\)](#) where you can find out more about the Ontario law programs, the application requirements and submit your applications to Ontario law schools. This is the primary source of information for law schools in Ontario.
- For law programs outside of Ontario, you will apply directly to individual schools. Please refer to the [Federation of Law Societies of Canada](#) for a listing of accredited law schools across Canada.
- Another useful resource to consult is the [Council of Canadian Law Deans](#) for a list of law schools in Canada and links to each of their websites for further information.

## What do I need to know about law schools in general?

- Law schools are regulated, meaning that all programs must be accredited by the [Federation of Law Societies of Canada](#), and there are a range of program options:
  - J.D (Juris Doctor) degree is completed as a postgraduate degree. Most programs in Ontario are J.D.
  - L.L.B (Bachelor of Laws) is a professional/law degree seen more commonly outside of Canada. In Canada, a J.D degree is normally required to practice law.
  - Joint Program - this type of program combines a law degree with another postgraduate degree such as a Masters or PhD. You will need to apply and be admitted to each program separately.
  - Dual Program – This program allows students to obtain two law degrees which will enable them to practice law in both the United States and Canada. [Learn more about Dual programs here.](#)
- If you study outside of the province, be sure to check the requirements to be eligible to practice in Ontario/other provinces.
- Ensure that you review the national coordinating bodies applicable in Canada. Information can be found on [The Federation of Law Societies of Canada](#).
- Be aware that Ontario requires applicants to complete the [Barrister Licensing Examination and the Solicitor Licensing Examination](#). After you complete this, you are required to complete Experiential Training that is usually done through a [Law Practice Program \(LLP\) or Articling Program](#). The Law Society of Ontario also has a [Good Character Requirement](#).
- Some law schools have Access streams to encourage applications from traditionally under-represented and equity-deserving applicants. You can learn more about these types of application streams on [OUAC](#) or directly on the school's website.

## What do I need to do to apply?

Review the [OUAC OLSAS website](#) for instructions on how to apply to Ontario Law Schools.

Make a list of schools that you are interested in and make note of deadlines and requirements.

- Use the [Further Ed Program Organizer \(Excel\)](#) to outline your program options.
- Oxford Seminars provides an insightful [law program comparison](#) within Canada.

You will require an undergraduate degree.

- The requirement is usually for degrees that are 3 more years in any field and from a recognized university.

You will need to write the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT).

- Some schools accept the highest grade of the LSAT. More information on the test can be found later in this tip sheet.

Check each school's GPA requirements.

- Generally, schools require a cumulative GPA minimum of an "A-", but some schools consider your application more holistically. Refer to each school's requirements and confirm how they calculate the GPA. OLSAS uses a 4.0 scale and you can use this [Grade Conversion Table](#) to convert your marks.

You will need to arrange for reference letters.

- The number and type of referees varies amongst schools. The general requirement is at least one academic reference.
- Review the [How to Ask for Grad School References \(PDF\)](#) tip sheet to learn more about asking for references.

Typically, schools will expect you to have developed skills and competencies that will prepare you for the legal profession.

- Consider volunteering or gaining experience through clubs, community groups, organizations or working with professors. Supports to help you can be found through [Student Success Centre's Experiential team](#).

Part of the application will require a written submission. The format can vary and it is part of the application where you can write about your background and motivations for pursuing law school. This typically takes more time than you might think.

- [Personal Statement/Letter of Intent resources](#)

Be mindful of deadlines. Make sure to write them down and give yourself enough time to prepare your application thoroughly.

### **Where can I get information about the Law School Admissions Test and how can I prepare?**

- [The Law School Admissions Council \(LSAC\)](#) administers the LSAT exam; this is where you would register and find many useful resources [including a comprehensive FAQ section](#).
- You may choose to self-study using resources found online or enroll in a prep course. The decision is up to you, based on how you learn best (structured or self-directed).
- Common prep courses include: The Princeton Review, Oxford Seminars and Kaplan. There is a [free prep course](#) to help you prepare for the LSAT.

### **What are some tips for when I am ready to apply to Ontario law schools?**

- To login to your OLSAS account, you will need the same login information that you used for your OUAC account. You may have to set up a new account if your OUAC account is more than 5 years old.
- Each school has varying requirements; it can be helpful to utilize a strategy or platform to keep all the components of your application organized. Some examples of helpful platforms are Microsoft Planner, Trello, etc.
- The deadline to apply for Ontario programs is usually November 1st, therefore if you are a current student, your final year grades will not be on your submitted transcript. Some schools may allow an 'end of term' transcript to be added to your application, but this will include only Fall term grades.
- If you have any supporting documentation to add to your application, such as Access documentation etc. you need to add it under the Secure Applicant Messaging section.
- Ask your referees if they will provide you with a strong and positive reference before you enter their information on OLSAS. Ask them what their preference is, online or paper according to OLSAS guidelines. Make sure to contact your referees at least 4 weeks in advance of the deadline to give them adequate time to write a letter. Ensure that your referees are aware of the application deadlines.

- If you have any questions about the application, use the “Help” button at the top of each application page to access more information about requirements for that section of the application.

### **What are my options for studying abroad?**

- Most common options include those within the commonwealth countries.
- [The National Committee of Accreditation](#) (NCA) has helpful resources and information when considering studying internationally.
- Education Consulting firms can be a helpful resource to learn more about going abroad for law programs. These include, but are not limited to: [Across the Pond](#), [Canada Law From Abroad](#), [Degrees Abroad](#), and [OzTrek](#) or [KOM](#) consultants.
- If you complete your law degree outside of Canada, you will have to apply to the [National Committee on Accreditation \(NCA\)](#) for an assessment of the equivalency of the degree to a Canadian law degree. For more information on this process, is listed on the [NCA Applicants page](#) on the OLSAS website.
- You may be required to write an exam to transfer your qualifications, find a Canadian articling position and take extra courses when your international degree is assessed.
- Note: As a McMaster student, you have access to [GoInGlobal](#) and [My World Abroad](#) which are resources that can provide information about cost of living, employment opportunities, and other essential needs for your time abroad.

### **What are other career options in this field?**

- There are many law-related career paths you can take that do not involve attending law school.
- Some options include post-grad or certificate programs such as Law Clerk, Paralegal, Family Mediation, Conflict Resolution, Arbitration and Dispute Resolution.
- Here are some useful resources to begin exploring other options: [ADR Ontario](#), [Ontario College Paralegal Programs](#), [ADR Mediation Courses](#) etc.
- There are also several [college programs](#) relating to Law, Justice, and Security.

- To further explore your options to see what a good fit for you might be, the [Career Planning Essentials](#) course offered by McMaster University is a great place to start! You can register for the course on the webpage listed above.
- Talking to people who have completed their law degree is a great option to explore various pathways with a law degree. You can find these individuals through the [McMaster Alumni Advisor Network](#). You can also access information about informational interviews through the [Student Success Centre](#).

### **Can I seek help from McMaster during this process?**

- Absolutely. We are here for you. For assistance with all-things further education, feel free to connect with the [Student Success Centre](#) in whichever way is most comfortable for you. We offer workshops, one-on-one appointments, research and application support, interview preparation and many more services.

### **Additional resources**

- [Guide to Grad School \(PDF\)](#)
- [Volunteer: Places of Interest \(PDF\)](#)
- [Why Volunteer? \(PDF\)](#)
- [More Student Success resources](#)
- Attend the [Grad and Professional School Fair](#) offered at McMaster usually in the beginning of the fall term to learn more about law and law-related further education.