

pathways in law

career guide



contributions

Produced by the Career Exploration Center with contributions from:

Sammie Lambourne

Nicholas French

Sharon Lee

Introduction.....	4
Questions to Ask Yourself.....	5
Graduate Experience.....	6
J.D. Application Specifics.....	7
What is the LSAT?.....	
What else is needed to apply for a J.D.?.....	
What Can You Do With a J.D. Degree?.....	8
Various career opportunities.....	
LLM Degree and Legal Certifications.....	9
What is a LLM Degree?.....	
How do you prepare for a LLM Degree?.....	
What can do with an LLM Degree?.....	
What is a legal certificate?.....	
What can you do with a legal certificate?.....	
Interviews.....	10
Cornell Pre-Law Resources.....	11-12
Career websites, programs, courses	
Realities of a Legal Career.....	13
Areas of law, job market, burnout.....	
2020-2021 Action Report.....	14
Resources and Citations.....	15

introduction

What is this for? If you are interested in law but do not know where to begin, this a resource that will show you the various pathways available to you during and after your undergraduate degree. The Cornell Career Services center has also provided a “Career Toolkit” that you can enroll in on Canvas. Check out the website to see the resources available and use this as a supplement.
<https://scl.cornell.edu/get-involved/career-services/resources/canvas>

During your time at Cornell As an undergraduate student, start looking for pre-law organizations that you can be a part of, conduct research about careers, and ask those already working in law about how they got there. Attend law school events and meet with your college’s pre-law advisor to learn more about what Human Ecology and Cornell events will include law-oriented activities. Make sure to obtain a strong undergraduate GPA, form close relationships with your professors, and start studying for the LSAT if you plan to take it during college. Register to receive emails about law-related programs and activities by completing a Student Profile on Handshake at career.cornell.edu. Under your “career interests” select law for the question: “What type of graduate programs interest you?”

questions to ask yourself

As you go through this resource keep note of what you want to get out of your legal career. What's your *why*? Knowing this will help you tailor your school and degree specifics.

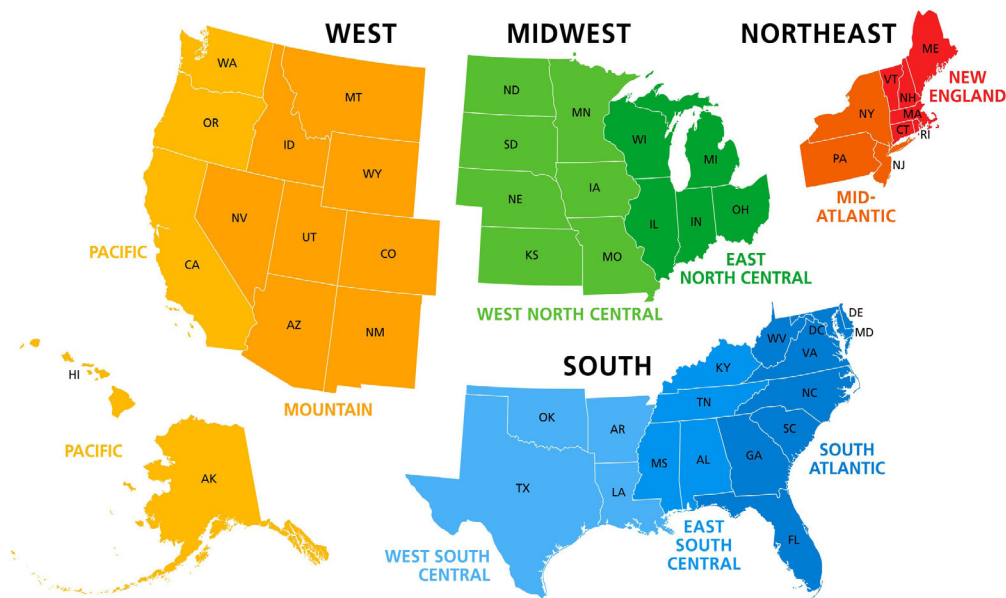
There are many facets to a legal career. If you don't understand something, write it down to ask someone who does. Have you met with your pre-law advisor? Have you connected with Cornell alumni?

Have you looked into on-campus or virtual events that have panel speakers who are invested in law?

Thinking about law school at all? Keep in mind the physical and mental environment. Is this a place where you can see yourself in the future?

Check out the ABA-approved law schools by region by going to this website: <https://www.nycbar.org/images/stories/Moot/aba%20approved%20law%20schools%20by%20region.pdf>

UNITED STATES CENSUS REGIONS AND DIVISIONS



graduate experience

Explore the options

There are many different pathways to enter into the field of law. Below will dive deeper into what each pathway requires and what it will offer during a graduate education. To prepare for graduate school you will need to compile an impressive record. Solid performance across a variety of subjects will demonstrate your intellectual curiosity and ability that would be advantageous in the study of law. Maintaining a high GPA and showing leadership growth through extracurricular activities is important.

Juris Doctor

This degree allows a person to practice law and takes three full years to complete. There are some J.D. degrees that can be completed in combination with other master's degree programs but it may take longer than three years. A J.D. is a general law degree that includes mandatory courses in many areas of law. Obtaining a J.D. often comes at a higher tuition cost than a LLM Degree or certification program. After completing the degree, the graduate student must then pass a state's given bar exam to practice law.

How do you prepare for a J.D. Degree?

Law schools will require your GPA, letters of recommendation, personal statement, and Law School Admission Test scores. When looking into the schools you apply to consider a multitude of factors including faculty, facilities, career services, reputation, and cost.

Look into the Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools at https://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/aba_approved_law_schools

Dean's Certifications

On top of your academic resume, some law schools will require you to confirm that you have not been involved in serious academic or disciplinary transgressions as undergraduates. Certifications are generally handled by a designated university official, such as an academic advising dean or registrar, in consultation with those offices responsible for judicial administration on campus. For Human Ecology, communicate with the registrar's office (hereg@cornell.edu) and pre-law advisor Deanne Maxwell (dhm8@cornell.edu).

J.D. application specifics

What is the LSAT?

The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) is required for admission to all American Bar Association-approved law schools. As of 2022-2023 there are 14 administrations of the exam throughout the year. You can check to see the most updated exam dates at lsac.org. Fee waivers for the LSAT and other essential applicant services are available for applicants with a demonstrated inability to pay for them. Use the fee waiver application at the lsac.org website.

How does it work?

The LSAT consists of four 35-minute sections of multiple choice questions. Three of the four contribute to your score. These include reading comprehension, analytical reasoning, and logical reasoning sections. The unscored section, usually referred to as the variable section, is used to pretest new questions or evaluate new test forms. The placement of this section varies and you won't know which section is unscored until you receive your score report. The LSAT also includes a 35-minute, unscored writing sample. The writing prompt presents a decision problem, and you are asked to choose between two positions or courses of action, and defend your choice. The sample allows you to demonstrate your argumentative skills and there is no correct answer. Law schools are looking at the clarity, reasoning, organization, and structure of the sample. Copies will be sent to all schools you apply to. Your score will then be computed on a scale of 120 to 180, based on the numbers of questions you answer correctly; there is no deduction or penalty for incorrect answers, so guessing could be advantageous if you didn't have enough time to consider a question fully.

How do I prepare for the LSAT?

To prepare for the exam there are previously administered tests at lsac.org, commercial books, and there are also a variety of tutoring businesses that promote LSAT-prep materials and study habits.

What else is needed to apply for a J.D.?

After meeting with your pre-law advisor, create a [LSAC.org](https://lsac.org) account that will help you track the status of every step you take as you apply to your selected schools. The Law School Admissions Test is typically taken by students during the months of June-October of the year prior to their application year. If a student is applying for regular fall admission, we recommend that you submit your applications between late September and early November. However, similarly to the undergraduate application process, there are varying admissions deadlines between schools as well as admissions types (ED, EA, RD). It is important to check the school-specific requirements and deadlines and note what application cycle may be beneficial for you.

what can you do with a J.D. degree?

Got the degree, now what?

After obtaining a J.D., a few of the career paths available are included below. There are other careers available as well - these are just a sample of possibilities. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the estimated growth rate for lawyers in 2020-2030 is 8%, which is the average for all occupations during those years. It will be useful to check up on the popularity of your desired career through the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/legal/lawyers.htm>

Lawyer

A lawyer can advise and represent clients in courts, before government agencies, and in private legal matters. Lawyers also communicate with their clients, colleagues, judges, and others involved in cases. Lawyers conduct research and analyze legal problems, as well as interpret laws, rulings, and regulations for individuals and businesses. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median salary in 2020 was \$126,930.

Law Librarian

Law Librarians perform tasks such as researching, analyzing, and evaluating the quality, accuracy, and validity of sources; teaching and training; writing; managing; and procuring and classifying library materials. Law librarians can have a variety of specializations including foreign and international affairs law, government documents, patent, taxation, and more. The US average salary for law librarians is \$72,902 a year.

Academia

A J.D can put you on track to becoming a tenured professor. You can also enter clinical teaching, law school or undergraduate administration, or work in the general counsel's office as an attorney for the various offices within a university (ex. Title IX, Civil Rights, Disability Law, etc.). The US Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the median salary is \$80,560 per year.

Consulting

As a consultant, you can provide expert legal advice to clients of your choice, ranging from businesses, organizations, or individual clients. Consultants ensure that their clients make legal decisions and develop business practices that follow the law. The average salary for legal consultants starts at \$69,000 a year.

Journalism

A J.D can assist journalists when covering issues pertaining to legal matters. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the 2020 median salary was \$66,000.

Judges

Judges preside over hearings and listen to the arguments of opposing parties in court. Judges apply the law in court cases. They also conduct pretrial hearings, resolve administrative disputes, facilitate negotiations between opposing parties, and issue legal decisions. The US Bureau for Labor Statistics reported that the 2020 median salary was \$124,200 per year.

LLM degree and legal certificates

What is a LLM Degree?

If you want to study law but not necessarily become a lawyer, this is an average one year interdisciplinary approach. This master's degree also helps people who already have a J.D. or equivalent degree expand their knowledge or study a specialized area of law. LLM programs last 1-2 years. For international students who have a J.D. equivalent, it offers exposure to U.S. law systems. These programs are typically lower in cost compared to the J.D. degree.

How do you prepare for a LLM Degree?

Similar to the application process for a J.D. your application will require your official transcript, letters of recommendation, and a personal statement. Some masters programs will require the Graduate Record Examination (GRE).

What can you do with an LLM Degree?

You can oversee legal cases, become a private banker to understand corporate and international law, become a chief executive officer of a company, and enter politics. Examples of LLM Degrees include: LLM for Tax, Master of Science in Laws (MSL), Master of Legal Studies (MLS), and Juris Master (JM).

What is a legal certificate?

A legal certificate is useful if you want to broaden your knowledge of the law. These certifications are often industry-specific credentials. Certification programs vary but can be completed in as little as three months in broad or specific areas of study.

What can you do with a legal certificate?

There are many different types of legal certificates. Many who become certified work as paralegals assisting attorneys on various tasks and assignments. Others become legal administrative assistants who are assigned to departments or lawyers within a firm and are in charge of organizing and connecting the office. If one chooses a court reporting certification, you are trained on transcribing the verbal correspondence in a courtroom or government agency.

What type of jobs can you get? Paralegals and administrative assistants: Paralegals and legal assistants perform a variety of tasks to support lawyers. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the median salary in 2020 was \$52,920 per year.

interviews

Interviews Law schools may also require an interview with the admissions board, questions during these interviews will be tailored around how you are a good fit for the school. Many law schools will have sample questions on their websites, make sure to look into those when preparing for your interview.

Be prepared to answer questions within these categories: Personal, Resume/Transcript, Knowledge of the Law School, Commitment to Public Service, and Legal Reasoning/Thinking.

Some sample questions:

- *Why do you want to become a lawyer?*
- *What kind of law interests you most?*
- *How would you contribute to your class?*
- *What was an experience at Cornell that prepared you for Law school?*

You might also be asked about your thoughts on a current event or different components mentioned in your application, such as a junior year internship or international conflict.

According to Harvard Law School, the interviewer may pose hypotheticals or questions about substantive areas of law. By asking these types of questions, interviewers are trying to evaluate how well you reason and analyze and how clearly you think and speak. Your ability to articulate your response is often more important than coming up with the right answer or being an expert on the relevant case law.

Utilize Interview Resources at Cornell

Whether you set up a practice interview session with the Career Explorations Center or with someone in Barnes Hall, use your resources! Practicing before the official interview can help shake out any nerves and will give you the opportunity to think of multiple answers to varying questions.

Career Websites *CUeLINKS*
Handshake
Career Development Toolkit via Canvas

Undergraduate Organizations *Mock Trial*
Black Ivy Pre-Law Society
The Undergraduate Law & Society Review
Latinx Association of Pre-Laws
Undergraduate Law Association
Black Ivy Pre-Law Society
Latinx Association of Pre-Laws
Pre-Law Fraternities
Phi Alpha Delta
Kappa Alpha Pi

Programs *Cornell OADI Pre Professional Programs (P3)*
Cornell University Prelaw Program in New York City
Cornell in Washington
Capital Semester in Albany
Cornell Pre-Law Summer Program in Paris
Law and Society Minor
Inequality Studies Minor
Laidlaw Scholars Program (International Studies)
Bologna Consortial Studies Program (BCSP)
Berlin Consortium for German Studies (BCGS)
Consortium for Advanced Studies for Barcelona
Consortium for Advanced Studies in Seville (CASA)
EDUCO Consortium in Paris
Kyoto Consortium for Japanese Studies (KCJS)
CASA Cuba
Cornell Law School Diversity Outreach Program
Cornell-in-East-Asia-Program
Cornell Summer Program in Madrid
Human Ecology Exchange: Bocconi University
CALS Global Fellows Program: Puentes Argentina
Universidad San Francisco de Quito (USFQ)- Cumbaya
King's College London

Human Ecology Pre-Law *HD 2650 Psychology and Law*
Courses as of 2022 *HD 3190 Memory and the Law*
HD 3330 Children and the Law
PAM 3764 Intellectual Property Law

cornell pre-law resources continued

Non-Human Ecology Pre-Law Courses as of 2022

LAW 3281 Constitutional Politics
LAW 3920 The U.S. Constitution: Crisis, Change and Legitimacy
LAW 4021 Competition Law and Policy
LAW 4051 Death Penalty in America
LAW 4081 International Human Rights Law and Advocacy
LAW 4131 The Nature, Functions, and Limits of Law
ILRLR 2010 Labor and Employment Law
ILRLR 2060 Writing Seminar in Law
ILRLR 4023 Disability, Employment, and Workforce Development Policy
ILRLR 4033 Disability Law
GOVT 3087 International Human Rights Law and Advocacy
GOVT 3131 The Nature, Functions, and Limits of Law
CRP 4440 Resource Management and Environment Law
LING 2223 Language and the Law
ECON 3800 Economics and the Law
ENGL 3762 Law and Literature
HADM 3870 Business and Hospitality Law
HADM 3880 Law for Hotel Owners and Operators
HADM 4800 Law for Entrepreneurs
HADM 4870 Real Estate Law
HADM 4890: The Law of the Internet and E-Commerce
INFO 4113: Technology and Law Colloquium
INFO 4940: Special Topics - U.S. Copyright Law

Cornell Law School Organizations

At Cornell's Law School, there are a variety of organizations that meet and discuss issues about law. It is helpful to explore these through their websites to see if graduate organizations surrounding law would be a good fit for you.

Cornell Law Students Association
First Generation Student Association
Cornell Law Review
Muslim Law Student Association
International Law Journal, Cornell
Journal of Law and Public Policy
Mock Trial
Asian Pacific American Law Student Association
Black Law Students Association
Christian Legal Society
Latino American Law Student Association
Native American Law Student Association
International Law Students Association
Association of Law & Economics

Cornell Law School has an outreach program designed to assist high potential undergraduate students from racial and ethnic groups that are underrepresented in the legal profession and students from disadvantaged backgrounds with preparation for admission to law school. Students must be in their freshman, sophomore, or junior year of college in order to apply for the program. Information about the program is typically available around December/January for the following spring semester.

Varying areas of law

There are varying areas of law that include but are not limited to: Admiralty Law, Business Law, Constitutional Law, Criminal Law, Civil Rights Law, Environmental Law, Health Care Law, Intellectual Property Law, International Law, Labor/Employment Law, Patent Law, Securities Law. As you are applying to law schools or looking to work for a law firm or organization, find which sector of law is most interesting to you.

Watch the job market

An important step in making your decision is to learn about the significant changes in the market for new lawyers in recent years. Employment statistics for the class of 2018, based on data from 33,719 respondents (98.5% for all graduates), reveal that there was an increase in the rate of employment for positions in which bar passage was required, when compared to figures from 2017, from 68.7% to 70.1%. However, this change should be considered in light of the fact that the total number of law graduates decreased by 701.

The American Bar Association reports that “[the] employment market for law graduates has stabilized since 2012-2013 and is showing incremental improvement. For the class of 2018, the aggregated school data shows that 78.6% of the 2018 graduates of the 200 law schools enrolling students and approved by the ABA to offer J.D. degrees were employed in full-time long-term Bar Passage Required or J.D. Advantage jobs roughly 10 months after graduation.

So why law?

Although there are many career opportunities that come from entering into the world of law, there are also a lot of opportunities to grow personally as a student. Legal careers require a multitude of skills to tackle varying problems and interests. Those accustomed to the law are great critical thinkers and strategizers and grow to be confident public speakers. People who specialize in the law are advocates and counselors, leaders and educators.

Be wary of burn out

Keep in mind that lawyers are known to suffer from burnout. According to the National Law Review, burnout is a form of exhaustion that is experienced emotionally, mentally, and physically. It can be caused by multiple stressors including work, family, finances, world events, and more. For an attorney, this could look like heavy caseloads, increased client demands, criticism over work quality, and spending time away from family. Make sure to know your limits and set healthy boundaries for yourself.

2020-2021 action report

2020-2021 Action Report Summary

Data is provided by LSAC for Cornellians (seniors and Alumni) who applied to law school to begin their degree in 2021.

	All Graduates	Seniors	Grads (1-3 yrs.)	Grads (>3 yrs.)	Other
Total Number of Applicants	410	79	203	118	10
Average Highest LSAT Score	165.2/372	166.3/72	166.2/191	162.7/107	162.5/2
Average GPA	3.57	3.73	3.60	3.38	3.80
Average Number Of Applications per Applicant	9.80	11.34	10.31	8.64	1
Number Accepted to 1 or More Law Schools	313	66	158	81	8
Average Number of Admissions per Applicant	2.51	3.18	2.61	2.05	.80
Number Registered at a Law School	259	57	132	63	7

Keep in mind this data is reflective of the average of the total combined stats, as there could be applicants within this pool who applied with significantly higher or lower stats and still got into law school. Use this as a reference for when you are applying to law schools. Do you fall within the range of previous students that applied when they were a senior? What about recent graduates?

resources and citations

Websites

[Discoverlaw.org](https://discoverlaw.org)

Official Guide to ABA Approved Law Schools: https://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/aba_approved_law_schools

FAQ from Cornell Law School: <https://www.lawschool.cornell.edu/admissions/jd-admissions/jd-faq/>

The Association of American Law Schools FAQ: <https://www.aals.org/prospective-law-students/faqs/>

Application insights video series by Harvard Law: <https://hls.harvard.edu/dept/jdadmissions/application-insights/>

LSAT Prep

Besides for profit organizations like the Princeton Review and Kaplan, the **Law School Admissions Council** offers some free practice exams and questions when you register. <https://www.lsac.org/lsat/prep/lawhub>

QR Code with all links within
this resource

