

IV. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Pre-Law Advising at Stony Brook

What are the pre-law services provided by the Academic and Pre-Professional Advising Center?

The Academic and Pre-Professional Advising Center helps students in several ways:

- We meet individually with applicants needing advice.
- We sponsor programs that educate students on the law school application process as well as other special topics relating to career interests in law.
- We complete Dean's Certifications for schools requesting them.
- We produce and distribute a bi-weekly "Please Be Advised" e-mail that includes pre-law advising information.

LSAT

When is the LSAT offered during the year?

The LSAT is offered in June, October, December, and February. Refer to www.LSAC.org or the inside cover of the current LSAT & CAS Registration & Information Book for more information about LSAT dates and registration deadlines. **You may register on-line to take the LSAT. Register for the LSAT ASAP so that you have a better chance at being assigned your first choice test site!**

When is the best time to take the LSAT?

The best time to take the LSAT is when you are prepared! Preparing for the LSAT takes PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE! Taking the LSAT in June is ideal because you will have your scores in time to apply "early action" to programs and if you need to cancel your June score, you still have time to take the October exam and have your applications completed at the schools by mid-November.

However, do not plan to take the June exam as a "practice test". Ideally, you only want to take this test **ONCE!** Many law schools average LSAT scores. Furthermore, law schools will question multiple score cancellations.

Should I take a commercial LSAT preparation course?

This is a matter of personal choice. Some applicants prepare alone or with a group by buying LSAT prep tests through LSAC.org or other LSAT books on the market. They find that this works for them. Others determine that they need the structure of a class to help discipline themselves to prepare for the exam or they need help with a particular section of the exam. Many applicants also find that the insight and strategies for taking the exam they learn from the course are extremely helpful. Whether you decide to take an LSAT prep course or not, the key to doing your best is to PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE under simulated LSAT conditions.

What companies in the New York City area offer a LSAT preparation course?

Binary Solutions – www.binarysolution.com
Kaplan - www.kaptest.com
Princeton Review - www.princetonreview.com
SimuGator LSAT Prep - www.simugator.com
TestMasters - www.testmasters.com

Many of the test companies offer scholarships for applicants with financial need. Inquire with each company.

What should I do if I am sick or lose my concentration during the LSAT?

Applicants may cancel their scores at the test site or via written requests received by LSAC within six (6) calendar days of the test. See the LSAT & CAS Registration and Information Book or the LSAC website at www.LSAC.org.

Does LSAC offer accommodations for persons with disabilities taking the LSAT?

Yes, LSAC will provide accommodations for individuals who have documented disabilities. Please refer to the LSAT and CAS Registration and Information Book or the LSAC website at www.LSAC.org.

Credential Assembly Service (CAS)

What is Credential Assembly Service (CAS) and do all law schools require that I register with CAS?

Almost all ABA approved law schools require that applicants register with the Credential Assembly Service (CAS). CAS provides a centralized and standardized report to each law school where you apply that includes the following:

- Undergraduate academic summary
- Copies of all undergraduate, graduate, and law school/professional transcripts
- LSAT scores and writing sample copies
- Copies of letters of recommendation processed by LSAC

CAS also provides applicants with the following services:

- Ability to track LSAC file status and electronically file law school applications
- Recommendation service active for five years
- Great resources available for purchase and for FREE
- ABA-LSAC Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools - Free On-line Edition

How do I register with CAS?

Applicants may register with CAS anytime. You do not have to register at the time you register for the LSAT, but you will want to register with CAS before you submit your applications to the schools. Your registration is good for five years. You can register on-line at www.LSAC.org, via the telephone at (215) 968-1001, or by mail. For more information, see the LSAT and CAS Registration and Information Book or visit www.LSAC.org.

Will I have an opportunity to view the Master Law School Report sent to the law schools?

Yes. Once LSAC has summarized your transcripts, you will be able to view your CAS Law School Report on-line. **It is important that you check it for accuracy.** If there are errors, you will need to write to LSAC to have it corrected. Refer to the LSAT and CAS Registration and Information Book for more information.

Does LSAC offer fee waiver for the LSAT, CAS, and school reports?

Yes, LSAC does offer fee waivers for both the LSAT and CAS. More information is available in the LSAT & CAS Registration and Information Book or on-line at www.LSAC.org.

Do I inform CAS of the law schools that I am applying to?

No. Instead, you order the number of CAS Law School Reports that corresponds to the number of law schools that you are applying to. When the law schools receive your application, they request your law school report from CAS.

Transcripts

If I studied abroad or attended another college do I need to submit a transcript from these institutions to LSAC?

Yes. You must have a transcript sent to LSAC from each undergraduate and graduate school you have attended. Please refer to the LSAT & CAS Registration and Information Book for further details.

How do I order transcripts from Stony Brook?

Request your Stony Brook transcript at www.stonybrook.edu/registrar; click on “Transcripts.”

What address do I give Stony Brook and other schools to send my transcript to?

LSAC – 662 Penn Street, Box 2000M, Newtown, PA 18940-0993

Use the CAS Transcript Request form found in the forms section in the LSAT & CAS Registration and Information Book or on-line at www.LSAC.org. This form is not required, but the form will serve to expedite the matching of your transcript to your CAS file.

When should I submit my transcript(s) to CAS?

We recommend submitting transcripts over the summer because CAS experiences a backlog in the fall. Applicants currently in school should wait until they receive their spring (or summer) grades. Applicants in school this coming fall should send their updated transcript to LSAC and to the individual schools as soon as all their fall grades are in.

Dean's Certification

What is a Dean's Certification?

A Dean's certification is a summary statement of a student's academic history. It verifies for the law schools whether an applicant has had any academic or disciplinary sanctions and includes a brief statement about your Stony Brook academic performance, extracurricular activities, and campus service. Your resume or a list of your activities helps us to write the statement.

- Pre-Professional Advisors write certifications for seniors and alumni/ae.
- Some schools do not require a Dean's Certification. Check the application materials of the schools you are applying to.
- The Dean's Certification is not considered a recommendation letter. The writer does not need to know or meet with the applicant.
- Applicants who transferred to Stony Brook from another college or university must also have their previous schools submit Dean's Certifications to the law schools as well.
- **The Academic and Pre-Professional Advising Center needs at least one week advance notice to send out a Dean's Certification Form. They are written in the order received from applicants.**

Recommendation Letters

What is the total number of recommendations I should submit?

LSAC will accept up to four letters of recommendation.

Who should I ask to write my recommendation letters?

Applicants should request recommendation letters from faculty members and employers who know them well. Please refer to the *Obtaining Letters of Reference* section in this packet.

Should I ask those writing recommendations to write targeted letters to the law schools and give them the school-specific recommendation forms?

It is not necessary for those writing recommendations to write targeted letters to each law school. A generic law school recommendation letter is fine unless the school specifically requests otherwise. It is also not necessary to give those writing recommendations the school-specific recommendation forms.

Should I give those writing recommendations a copy of my resume?

Yes! Resumes can be an important tool to aid prospective referees in writing recommendations and/or Pre-Professional Advisors with Dean's Certifications. Applicants should include on their resume their current and permanent address, current and permanent phone number, Stony Brook ID number, e-mail address, education (including all colleges attended and study abroad experiences), GPA, honors and awards (describe them), extracurricular activities, skills, language proficiency, and employment history. A

sentence/bullet point describing the nature of the experience should accompany each activity or experience and it should indicate start and end dates. Be specific and truthful.

Should I waive my right to see the recommendation letters?

The general feeling is that the person writing your recommendation will be more candid if it is a closed letter. The choice is yours. You must either waive or not waive your rights to see all the recommendations as well as your Dean's Certification.

Submission of Applications

When should I have all my applications submitted to the law schools?

The earlier, the better! We recommend having all your applications submitted by no later than Thanksgiving as most schools have rolling admissions. Do NOT wait until the last minute and apply close to the school's deadline. Apply EARLY! Some schools' definition of a completed application is not only your application, recommendations, and Dean's Certification but also your CAS Report. It can take two-three weeks after the request is made for a school to receive your CAS report.

What is the difference between early decision and early action?

- **Early Decision** is **BINDING** and you should only apply Early Decision to a school if it is your first choice. If your decision of where to attend law school is dependent on the financial aid package offered by a school it may not be wise to apply early decision. Check with the school. Applications are due earlier so be sure to follow deadlines. Check with individual schools as to whether applicants who are not admitted through the Early Decision process are still considered in the general pool of applicants. Policies differ from school to school.
- **Early Action** is non-binding but it allows applicants to get an admission decision much earlier, usually by mid-December. Check with individual schools as to whether applicants who are not admitted through Early Action are still considered in the general pool of applicants. Policies differ from school to school.

What should I write about in my personal statement?

Write about you! Law schools do not typically interview candidates so this is your chance to tell the admissions officers who you are beyond your GPA, LSAT score, awards, and activities. This is an important part of the application and you should treat it seriously. Please refer to the ***Writing a Personal Statement*** section in this packet.

What is the appropriate format for explaining irregularities, disparities, or question marks on my record?

Use an addendum to explain any irregularities and disparities. **Do not include them in your personal statement.** If, for example, your two LSAT scores are very different due to illness during one examination, express this reason in an attachment "Explanation of LSAT

Scores,” not in your personal statement. If you need to explain that your grades were low during your sophomore year because you were experiencing difficulty choosing a major, entitle the attachment “Sophomore Slump.” You should approach problem areas in your background frankly rather than leaving the admissions committee members with unanswered questions. (Adapted from Johns Hopkins University's Pre-Law Top Ten Tips).

Do you have any final tips for applying to law school?

- Start early.
- Make realistic choices on schools.
- Read bulletins and application materials carefully.
- Follow directions.
- Provide complete and accurate responses.
- Make copies of your completed applications. Keep them because some states will ask applicants applying to the Bar which law schools they sought admission to.
- Submit the fee with your application.

Budget (as of July 2010)

How much does this process cost?

LSAT	\$139.00
CAS Registration	\$124.00
CAS Law School Reports	\$16.00 each
Application Fee for Each School	\$60.00 – \$85.00

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