

PRE-LAW AT UVM

PREPARED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Recommended Junior Year Timetable

JUNIOR YEAR, FALL SEMESTER

I. **Review your academic record before classes start.** Have you neglected to take certain courses which might strengthen your transcript? Have you taken demanding courses in your major? Are there some courses which might aid you to do better in law school? Are you computer literate?

NOTE: Avoid a weak Junior year. A weakening or declining grade point average will be a negative when your credentials are evaluated. Also, be careful with study abroad or other outside programs. They are attractive experiences for breadth and personal growth, but they can make it difficult to put all of the elements of your program together and to enhance your GPA as much as possible.

II. **Decide early in the semester how you plan to approach preparation for the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT).** Before making a decision, you may want to obtain and take one or more old LSAT exams. These are widely available in various publications. Score the exam you take (be sure to time yourself). How well you do may determine how you decide to prepare.

You have at least four options:

A. *Do not prepare systematically.* You may consider this option, but only if you are very confident that your reading speed, reading comprehension, and test-taking skills will allow you to perform well on the exam.

NOTE: The Law School Admission Council (LSAC) which prepares, administers, and grades the exam, claims that the best preparation, according to their studies, is a demanding course load which develops reading and analytic skills over your many years as a student. However, it is not a good idea to consider taking a “real” LSAT as a “practice” test with the intention of taking the exam over again. Not only is this approach expensive (registering for the LSAT costs over \$100), but many schools will average your two scores in assessing your performance. In other words, **it’s not like the SAT, where the colleges may only look at your higher score.** If you take an actual LSAT for practice and bomb it, the law schools are going to know your score.

B. *Develop your own self-study program.* Obtain old exams and familiarize yourself with the exam. The LSAC offers a study book, as do many other publications ... www.lsac.org.

NOTE: At a minimum, you should study old LSATs to become familiar with the exam’s format. You do not want to try to get comfortable with the format while grappling with the questions when you take the exam for the first time. Remember – it is a timed test, which works against slow reading or slow comprehension of written material.

C. *Take a commercial course.* These are offered by for-profit organizations such as Kaplan and Princeton Review. These organizations claim that, according to their research, students following their programs score higher than they would if they had not taken the programs. LSAC and other researchers dispute these claims.

Keep in mind that the LSAT isn't a substantive test of legal knowledge. It is your basic standardized test, set up with certain techniques ... and, yes, certain tricks (the test-writers are trying to seduce test-takers with attractive answers that "look right" but are in fact wrong). The prep courses are about training you to recognize these techniques and tricks. Just about any prep course instructor can take an LSAT, cold, and get a 180 ... because they know the tricks. Their job is to teach the tricks to you.

Investigate this carefully. Make up your mind whether the costs of the program (this year the charge is roughly \$800) are worth the potential reward of a higher score. Then again, it may also be worth thinking about the prep course question like this ... if you are prepared to invest three years and over \$100,000 to attend law school, perhaps you should be prepared to invest a little more money in getting in

NOTE: Some students believe that attending a preparation course with other students aiming for the same objective has helped, though it is almost impossible to determine whether this actually translates into higher scores. In particular, students cite the number of timed exams taken in the programs. Some who have exam panic attacks think that taking trial exams helps to overcome the problems anxiety causes. Of course, students can take trial exams on their own, without the expense of a commercial course.

D. *Utilize LSAT preparation resources in the Career Services Office.* Career Services offers varied resources in order to prepare and register for the LSAT. The Career Services Office is located in the E Building of the Living and Learning Center (656-3450).

CONCLUSION: If one of the options (B, C, or D) seems right for you, begin your preparation well ahead of the projected date of the exam. You can't cram for the LSAT. If you opt for self-study, start as soon as possible. If you take a course, those who give the course will set your schedule.

REMEMBER: Most law schools weigh your grade point average and LSAT scores about evenly. This means that how well you do on the LSAT on one Saturday morning is about as important as three years of courses (at least in the admissions process). **TAKE YOUR LSAT PREPARATIONS VERY SERIOUSLY.**

III. Research law schools and their programs and admission standards. You are now at the point of looking at specific law schools as opposed to more general investigations. The best starting point is to look at the resources in Career Services or the Reference Room in the Library. Begin by examining *The Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools*. This book is prepared by LSAC and published annually. It has specific information about all of the almost 200 accredited (American Bar Association Approved) law schools in the United States and Canada. The profiles of law schools should allow you to match your academic record (and LSAT score, if you have one) to the published standards of various law schools. This will give you an idea of which law schools are possibilities. Always remember that your objective is to determine the schools where you have a reasonable chance for admission. Information on law schools can also be found on-line.

IV. Attend a Law School Forum. These LSAC-sponsored events feature representatives from many law schools, workshops on financing law school, special sessions for minority candidates, and opportunities to talk with other students as well as persons involved with law schools. These events are held in various large cities; the nearest two in our region are Boston and New York. You could attend one of these forums in either your Junior or Senior year since they are usually scheduled for summer and fall dates. Watch bulletin boards for announcements or consult your Prelaw Advisor for more information. A schedule of upcoming law school forums can also be found at www.LSAC.org.

V. Investigate financial arrangements required to attend law school. This is a serious subject, since law school is costly. In general, those attending law school and other professional schools have to finance themselves. Some schools have limited numbers of scholarships.

NOTE: If the cost figures scare you, do not be discouraged. Most students have to borrow funds for professional education. But your future earning may be sufficient to pay back your loans with relative ease.

JUNIOR YEAR, SPRING SEMESTER

I. **Obtain a LSAT/LSDAS Registration and Information Book** from Career Services. It is essential, and (in the words on its cover) the booklet “contains all of the information you will need to register for and take the LSAT, including a sample test and item explanations. It is important that test takers carefully review all of the material in this book.” LSDAS stands for Law School Data Assembly Service, which reports your LSAT score and other information to law schools where you apply.

NOTE: The booklet described above contains detailed information which will be helpful in the application process. You may also wish to investigate LAW MULTI-App which is a firm that sells software which allows you to fill in a common application form for forwarding your credentials to law schools you designate. Once again, this adds to your costs, but the convenience may be worth the price. Each year, more and more law schools accept this form of application. Some admissions people believe that in a few years the single application form will replace the present system of multiple applications.

II. **Make a note of the early application deadline (usually early April) if you intend to take the LSAT at the early June date.** While you may register for the June exam later than early April, the fee is greater.

III. **If you believe you qualify, LSAC has a waiver request form you may file.** LSAC has a policy that no student should be denied a chance to take the LSAT because he or she cannot afford the registration fee. The LSAC/LSDAS booklet has complete information about this program.

IV. **Finish or continue preparations for the LSAT.** If you intend to take the exam in the fall, you will continue your preparations through the summer and into the Fall Semester of your senior year.