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SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

A. Being “Pre-Law”

A law degree is of enormous use in many professional contexts. The skills you will develop and hone in law school are versatile and applicable to many professions. In addition to working in a wide range of traditional legal fields, Brandeis alumni who have obtained law degrees have gone on to work in virtually every profession because legal training translates well into many sectors.

The practice of law can be a rewarding profession. At its best, legal practice challenges the intellect, demanding the exercise of reason and judgment. The ethics of the profession require attorneys to promote justice, equality and morality – issues of vital importance to the Brandeis community.

It is extremely important as you make your journey through Brandeis that you consider if and when law school is the right decision for you. In this Guide, there are suggestions for ways for you to gather information about a legal education and the career benefits to having a law degree.

One of the many wonderful things about a legal education is that many majors can prepare you for success in law school. No particular major, or number of majors, is required in order to apply, and no major is favored over another. Therefore, you are encouraged to choose a major which interests you; if you are interested in the courses you are taking, you are more likely to do well, which is important to your law school application. Students interested in law school often take courses in a variety of departments such as Philosophy, Politics, American Studies, English and American Literature, International and Global Studies and History, as well as many others. A math and/or science background is also extremely useful in particular practice areas. Brandeis offers a minor in Legal Studies, which includes an internship. Being pre-law, you might find this minor concentration interesting, but it is not required in order to apply to law school.

It is important to develop the skill set applicable to most types of law as outlined by the American Bar Association, including the following:

- Analytic / Problem Solving
- Critical Reading
- Writing Skills
- Oral Communication / Listening Abilities
- General Research Skills
- Task Organization / Management Skills
- Public Service and Promotion of Justice
You can develop these skills in many types of courses, whether within or outside of your major. Keep in mind skill development as you make your course selection. Courses that you will take to fulfill your General University Requirements will also emphasize and cultivate a number of these skills. One of the many advantages of a Brandeis liberal arts education is that all of these skills can be gained through your academic and experiential learning opportunities.

B. Choosing a Pre-Law Path at Brandeis University

Brandeis University offers students interested in law a wide range of programs, services and opportunities to explore the legal profession. These opportunities include course offerings, internships, workshops, law related student activities, and professional pre-law advising. Brandeis students have many venues to reflect upon their interests in the law, explore what legal studies and practice might mean for them, and connect with alumni and professionals in the field.

Our University is named in honor of the late U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, famous for his commitment to individual rights. The culture of the University values Justice Brandeis’ dedication to social justice and ethics. From coursework to student activities, the Brandeis community fosters concern for the welfare of others.

Please consider the Hiatt Career Center as your clearinghouse for pre-law services at Brandeis. We have many resources to help you with the law school process and serve as a central starting point to connect you to the other resources within the Brandeis community. Located in the Hiatt Career Center, Brandeis’ Pre-Law and Graduate School Advisor is a licensed attorney dedicated to assisting students in the law school decision making and application processes. Our career counseling staff is well-versed on all aspects of the law school admissions process and can help you as well. Hiatt also offers other avenues to expose you to law and law school related opportunities, such as internships, jobs for the summer and academic year, workshops, panels and our annual Law School Reception.

- **Legal Studies Minor:** Coursework in this minor is interdisciplinary, designed to offer students the opportunity to study law in a liberal arts context. It is not required for students interested in law school, and its courses are open to all students. To complement the wide range of law related course offerings, Legal Studies has internships offered every semester. Students work at public interest legal placements two days per week and attend class (approximately every other Wednesday night 6:30-8:00 pm) as part of the internship program. Contact Associate Professor Melissa Stimell early in the prior semester if you wish to participate in the internship. She can be reached at stimell@brandeis.edu. As an alternative, students may complete a law-related thesis in their major.

- **Pre-Law Society:** Working independently and in collaboration with the Hiatt Career Center, the student-run Pre-Law Society offers workshops and events related to LSAT
preparation, learning about the practice of law and the different opportunities for a law degree.

- **Student Organizations:** Other student organizations of interest to many pre-law students include the Mock Trial Team, the Debate and Speech Society, *The Brandeis Law Journal*, *The Brandeis International Law Journal*, the Model UN Club, and the American Civil Liberties Union. These multiple opportunities and resources assist students in determining if a career in law is right for them.

- **Brandeis Advocacy Organizations:** Organizations such as the Ethics Center and the Innocence Project in the Schuster Institute offer internships, seminars and activities related to law.

- **Brandeis in The Hague:** This unique program offered by Brandeis is an amazing opportunity to spend a spring semester or a summer abroad in the Netherlands studying and experiencing International Law, including an intensive experience with the International Criminal Court.

There are many other university-wide resources you should utilize as you explore your career path at Brandeis. You probably will not need them at every turn, but they are available and of enormous value.

In addition to having over forty majors and programs of study that will help you develop skills for law school, Brandeis offers:

- **The Office of Academic Services** will help you select effective course schedules and to decide on majors and minors. Professional staff can assist you in crafting a curriculum that will help you build the skills needed to successfully study law.

  This office is located in Usdan on the second floor, Usdan 130. In addition to daily walk-in hours for quick questions, Academic Services provides students with the following services that can help you figure out what courses of study might be best for you, including:

  - Individual appointments
  - Study Abroad
  - Academic Fellowships
  - Class Advisors and Roosevelt Fellows
  - Disability Services and Support
  - Student Support Services Programs
  - Brandeis University Group Study (BUGS)

  Check out their [website](https://www.brandeis.edu) for more information. To make an appointment, you can call (781) 736-3470.

- **The Writing Center** has a team of seasoned writers who are available to assist you in the fundamentals and finer points of communicating effectively through writing. The Writing Center is located in the Goldfarb Main Library, Room 107. Check out their [website](https://www.brandeis.edu) for current times for appointments and drop-ins.
SECTION II: IS OBTAINING A LAW DEGREE THE RIGHT DECISION FOR YOU?

The decision to attend law school is an enormous commitment and deserves a great deal of reflection. We encourage you in the strongest terms to utilize all of your Brandeis University resources, including faculty, Academic Services, and the Hiatt Career Center to help you decide if a law degree is right for you. As this is a subjective decision, you need to thoughtfully process all advice you receive through the filter of your own values, interests and goals.

A. Making the Decision: There are many factors that go into deciding whether law school and the legal profession is a good fit for you. But to start with the basics, consider the following:

1) Reasons to go to law school:
   - You have researched the profession and there is a strong match between your skills, interests and values and what the law has to offer.
   - The intellectual challenge and rigors of a legal career excite you.
   - You want to help people.
   - You like solving problems.
   - A profession or career you intend to pursue would benefit from or requires a law degree.

2) Reasons to not go to law school:
   - Someone is pressuring you.
   - You do not know what else to do.
   - People whom you respect went, so it seems like a good idea.
   - You believe lawyers make a lot of money.

B. Goals: As you go through your time at Brandeis, work with faculty and staff, family and friends, to clarify your short and long term goals. Why do you want to go to law school? What do you hope to do with your degree? What are your other priorities, present and future, and how do they fit in with a legal education and career? Both the Hiatt Career Center and Academic Services staff are especially well suited to help you with these considerations.
C. Time Commitment: Legal education and practice demand a substantial time commitment. The education is typically a three-year process (four years or more for those who go to evening programs). There are a growing number of programs that offer a degree in two or two and a half years. Such schools typically eliminate or substantially reduce the time for typical school vacations in order to accelerate the time that you are in school, rather than reduce the amount of material or credits required for graduation.

Preparation for the bar exam following law school generally takes six solid weeks. Lawyers in traditional practice often dedicate long hours, far beyond the traditional 9-5 day, whether you are employed at a firm with billable hours, work in public interest, or pursue business.

D. Expense: Merit based financial aid, including scholarships, are offered to competitive candidates, however, most law school students pay for their education through loans, so the expense of law school needs careful, realistic consideration. High monthly loan payments could affect lifestyle choices (for example, living with roommates or at home, or taking a job largely because of the salary instead of following true passions).

E. Timing: Many students enter law school directly after their undergraduate education, although currently, approximately seventy percent (70%) of law school students have taken two or more years off before enrolling in law school. Two thirds of Brandeisians who have applied to law school since 2011 have waited at least one year, and in many cases multiple years, after graduation to enroll. Whether to wait or continue immediately after completing undergraduate studies is a completely personal decision, and the advantages of waiting compared to applying as a senior depends entirely on individual circumstances. Hiatt career counselors are available to assist you in exploring your options and making the decision that is right for you.

1) A Word to International Students: If you are an international student considering law school, we advise you to check in with the staff at ISSO to verify that your student status transitions properly.

2) Applying Senior Year: Motivated students who choose to continue their education upon graduation from Brandeis can be very competitive candidates. Continuing to law school immediately after Brandeis is a good decision for those who have a solid GPA after three years, who have thoroughly contemplated their future goals, which include a law degree, and have researched schools that are a good fit for their personal and academic needs.

3) Taking Time Off: People choose to take time off before law school for a variety of reasons. Some want to take a hiatus from academics, while others seek to start to save money prior to applying to law school, explore a career, or gain experience and perspective as a young professional. In fact, some law schools strongly encourage students to work for a few years before applying. Taking time off before applying to law school may be advantageous because you can devote all your energies senior year to your academics and your entire academic record will be available by the time you apply.
Additionally, law schools appreciate candidates who are especially prepared and focused on a career in law, which is often demonstrated through maturity, some life experience, and/or exposure through employment or commitments that are related to the law.

Below are some possible activities for the time between graduating from Brandeis and attending law school:

- **Paralegal Work:** If you want to assess if a legal career is a good match for your work values and skills, to explore the various areas of legal practice and/or to connect with those who work in the field, taking time to work as a paralegal between college and law school is a popular choice. Paralegals assist attorneys in preparing cases, maintaining accurate files and data, investigating and summarizing facts, research, and drafting documents and correspondence, to name just some of their functions. Experienced legal assistants perform many functions of a lawyer including drafting, research, case preparation and speaking to (but not advising) clients.

- **Non-Legal Employment:** If you are taking time off before law school to work, it is not necessary to have a job related to the practice of law. The experience of simply being in the working world is very appealing to many law school admission committees. Some schools may want to either see consistency in your activities, or may appreciate an explanation of pursuing a non-related career path during your time off. Some applicants might choose a position that is related to a field outside of the law to help them decide if law school is the right path, or if another career is a better fit. Others might contemplate using a law degree to assist them in another industry; working in the other industry for a few years to decide whether the law degree will be beneficial is also a wise choice.

- **Fellowships:** Most fellowships are one or two years in duration and provide a chance to explore research interests. Brandeis University is fortunate to have a staff member in Academic Services dedicated to assisting you in researching and applying for these opportunities. Of particular interest to some pre-law students are fellowships offered by the U.S. Department of Justice. See the Hiatt and Academic Services websites for more information on fellowships.

- **Public Service:** Popular among Brandeis University graduates, public service programs, generally for one or two years commitments, engage participants in communities beyond their familiar boarders. Many Brandeis alumni participate in Teach For America, AmeriCorps, and the Peace Corps.

- **Travel & Discovery:** You may want to take a year to explore new parts of the country or the world. The time between earning your undergraduate degree and working toward a law degree can be a wonderful opportunity for this. Periods of exploration beyond one year, however, may require explanation on a law school application. One way to show the benefit of your experience is maintaining an intelligent, well written blog.
F. Resources for Under-Represented Groups: There has been a long-standing dearth of under-represented groups in the legal profession. The American Bar Association and other groups are making efforts to remedy that situation.

- Students with disabilities can find assistance regarding law school applications, including information on (and forms for) accommodations for the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) at http://www.lsac.org/docs/default-source/jd-docs/accommodatebrochure.pdf. For information on practicing lawyers with disabilities, see http://www.abanet.org/disability/resources/lawyers.html.

- Law schools actively recruit qualified minority applicants. If you are a minority student or alumna/us, there are a number of opportunities to assist you, including the ABA’s Thinking about Law School publication and their website that includes a bibliography of hundreds of books, articles and cases on minorities in the law: http://www.americanbar.org/groups/diversity/resources.html.

- The Law School Admissions Council (LSAC), an organization of American and Canadian law schools, has another useful website to assist minority students (http://www.lsac.org/jd/diversity-in-law-school/racial-ethnic-minority-applicants). Law schools have minority student associations and you are recommended to contact those associated with your law schools of choice.

- Students who are economically and educationally disadvantaged can find assistance from the Council on Legal Education Opportunity (CLEO). CLEO provides a summer institute to prepare students for the rigors of law school and also offers financial aid assistance. For further information, see the website (http://cleoscholars.com/).

- Issues faced by gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered students in the application process as well as in law school are addressed in the LSAC website, http://www.lsac.org/jd/diversity-in-law-school/lgbt-overview, as well as in their publication, In and Out. Another organization to be aware of is The National LGBT Bar Association, which hosts an annual Lavender Law® Career Fair at different locations around the United States. This career fair includes recruiters from law firms, government agencies and non-profit organizations. The website for this career fair is http://www.lgbtbar.org/annual/career-fair/#StudentInfo. Many law schools have organizations focused on LGBT issues and concerns; please review the websites for your school of choice.

G. What Can You Do With a Law Degree?

One of the many benefits of a legal education is the ability to use it in a range of professional contexts. Depending upon your skills and values you can work in a more “traditional” legal practice or blaze your own trail in business, non-profit or other areas. Hiatt staff can assist you in determining your skills, interests and values and how they might be related to a legal career.
Within **traditional practice**, there are significant differences. You can work in the private or public sector. Within the private sector, depending upon your lifestyle choices, you can work for a large firm, for which positions are highly competitive, require long hours and are very well compensated, or for small-to-medium sized firm that may pay less, but offer more opportunity for a work/life balance and in some circumstances, more responsibility earlier in your career. Although the recent difficulties in the economy have resulted in fewer jobs in private practice for the newly minted graduate, largely the result of fewer “big law firm” positions being available, many law schools are reducing class size and faculty to adjust to this new era. While the job market in larger law firms has decreased, positions in small firms (under 50 lawyers) is on the rise.

There are also many different areas of practice, including civil rights, criminal law, real estate, family law, admiralty law, elder law, wills and estates, bankruptcy, education, sports law, corporate law, debtors rights, personal injury, medical malpractice, zoning – to name only a few. Not every area of law requires a court appearance, and the practice of most lawyers includes many functions that are typically associated with transactional law – such as buying, selling, negotiating, and drafting contracts. There are options in the legal profession for all types of interests and skills, but most positions require some combination of the skills cited by the American Bar Association including critical thinking, problem solving, general research skills, task organization and management skills.

Those who choose to work in **public service** frequently cite personal satisfaction as the biggest benefit in their field work in government, such as a prosecutor in a state or federal office, or a staff attorney in a government agency. Serving under-represented groups – such as survivors of domestic violence or working to protect wetlands or any variety of legal clinics established to assist those without financial means to hire an attorney - provides many attorneys the rewards they desire. Many law schools provide loan forgiveness, or other financial incentives, to encourage graduates to pursue these crucial, but underpaid, areas of law. Of particular interest to law students interested in public service is Equal Justice Works (EJW), which strives to create a just society by mobilizing the next generation of lawyers committed to equal justice. Over 11,000 public interest organizations and 190 law schools participate in this organization. EJW provides fellowships for students during law school as well as after graduation, sponsors an annual conference and public service job fair and amasses useful information on loan forgiveness programs for lawyers who choose public service as a career path.

As mentioned above, the skills developed in law school are also of great use to those in **business environments**. Reviewing and negotiating contracts, addressing employee relations issues and complying with federal, state or local regulations are all enhanced by a legal education. Law schools train students to anticipate, and thereby avoid, problems in many contexts. With greater frequency, major investment banks and top consulting firms are recruiting at law schools because the analytical training students receive in law school translates very well to those professions.

**Blaze your own trail!** Many artists, organizers of non-profit organizations, politicians and educators have benefited from legal studies. Well known examples include John Grisham and Nelson Mandela. If you are seeking a position in particular outside of the traditional role of an attorney, there might be a degree that is better suited for your career choice, such as a Masters in
Law, Masters in Public Policy or Public Administration. Because of the substantial time and financial investment in law school, other options such should be seriously explored to meet your career goals if you are not seeking to practice law. For more information, see *What Can You Do With A Law Degree?* by Deborah Aaron in the “Great Resources” section, below.

**H. What Do Lawyers Earn?**

Lawyers’ salaries vary greatly. According to the National Association for Legal Career Professionals (NALP), the overall median starting salary rose from $60,000.00 in 2011 to $61,245.00 in 2012, whereas the law Firm Median staring salary rose from $85,000.00 in 2011 to $90,000.00 in 2012. The class of 2012 experienced an increased salary, which was the first increase in salary since 2008. Further:

The median salary for government jobs has remained unchanged since 2009 at $52,000.00. The median salary at public interest organizations, which includes legal services providers and public defenders, was $44,600.00 in 2012, down a bit from 2011 but still up from just under $43,000 for the two prior years. The median salary for judicial clerkships was $52,600, little change from $52,000 in 2010 and 2011, but up from $50,000 in 2009.


It is widely known that the market for attorneys practicing law in a traditional sense has dwindled and competition for available jobs has grown. Applicants need to consider this.

Online resources available for further research on lawyers’ salaries include:

- The American Bar Association ([http://www.americanbar.org](http://www.americanbar.org))
- National Association for Law Placement ([http://www.nalp.org](http://www.nalp.org))
- Internet Legal Research Group ([http://www.ilrg.com](http://www.ilrg.com))

**I. Great Resources:**

- *What Can You Do With A Law Degree?* Deborah Aaron, available in the Hiatt Career Center. This book assists in reflecting on one’s interests, abilities and values and then exploring how those can be applied in a wide variety of law related positions.

- *The Official Guide to Legal Specialties: An Insider’s Guide to Every Major Practice Area*, The National Association for Law Placement, available in the Hiatt Career Center. This publication provides a “snap-shot” of most areas of legal practice and suggests what a “day in the life” might be like in each.

• The American Bar Association’s website is rich in information on legal education and practice ([http://www.americanbar.org](http://www.americanbar.org)). Consider bookmarking it! There is a specific section on legal education, and many other sections of the site pertain to distinct areas of practice.

• Equal Justice Works ([http://equaljusticeworks.org](http://equaljusticeworks.org)).

• National Association for Law Placement provides national information on employment and salary ([http://www.nalp.org](http://www.nalp.org)), including the PSLaw Net for public service ([http://www.pslawnet.org](http://www.pslawnet.org)).

• Council on Legal Education Opportunities (CLEO – [http://cleoscholars.com](http://cleoscholars.com)) assists economically and educationally disadvantaged applicants in preparing for law school.

**SECTION III: HOW THE HIATT CAREER CENTER CAN HELP**

Hiatt offers comprehensive services to assist you to reflect upon your professional future; explore the wide range of opportunities available to you on a continuum – from student to seasoned professional; and connect to people, places and opportunities to guide you through the process. Your time at Brandeis will be transformative and the law may be one of many professions you consider. We can help you through that process.

Specifically with respect to the law, the Hiatt Career Center has the following resources for you:

**A. Pre-Law Advising**

The Hiatt pre-law advisor is dedicated to helping you decide whether and when to apply to law school and guide you through the application process. The pre-law advisor can help you decide whether law school is right for you, which law schools will be a good match, discuss LSAT preparation and review your personal statement. Contact Hiatt at extension 63618 for an appointment. All members of the Hiatt counseling staff are highly qualified to work with you.

**B. Materials Available to You**

In an effort to support your decision about law school, the Hiatt Career Center houses online and hard copy materials to inform you about possible careers in the law, the process of applying to law school and LSAT preparation. We also have test preparation books from multiple companies. We encourage you to look at the Hiatt collection, available for loan at the Hiatt Career Center, before you buy materials to help you find those that suit your own learning style.
C. Other Helpful Resources Available through Hiatt

- Online workshops, including “Nuts & Bolts of a Law School Application.”
- Workshops and webinars on how to write a superb personal statement.
- Brandeis University Law School Reception (in the Fall).
- Hiatt staff can assist you in a number of activities to help you explore whether and what type of legal career might suit your skills, interests and values. A great place to start is self assessment. We use TypeFocus (see the Hiatt website), a personality strengths and preferences inventory, that helps you learn more about yourself as a developing professional and identify potential career options based on the results. Other useful tools and strategies can be utilized based upon what is most appropriate for the individual.
- At any stage in your Brandeis career, you can work with Hiatt to find alumni, family friends or others who work in your fields of interest to conduct an informational interview. This is a terrific opportunity to gain understanding of what different lawyers do, what it’s like to be a law student, and how people have used their degree.
- Internships help students gain experience in a field, assess the “fit” of a line of work for them, and meet professionals at various levels of their careers. Brandeis University offers an especially wide range of internship opportunities which are updated on a regular basis in B.hired. If you secure an internship that is unpaid, you may consider applying for funding through Hiatt’s competitive World of Work (WOW) Internship Program (see the Hiatt website). Internships provide a more in-depth experience than shadowing.
- Students are encouraged to conduct Informational Interviews (see the Networking page of the Hiatt website) with professionals in their fields of interest. This is a strategy to gather information about a certain type of work with questions such as
  - What is a “day in the life” like for an attorney in your position?
  - What benefits have you realized having pursued your JD/Masters in Law? (especially if this person is not in a traditional attorney position)
  - What credentials does one need to work in this field?
  - In what ways is your work rewarding?
  - What is the career trajectory in this particular field?
  - What do you think is a beneficial path for a young professional seeking to obtain a law degree and pursue a career in this field?

Informational interviews can be conducted in person or over the telephone and generally last half an hour or less, yet provide insight and suggestions not readily available online or in books.
Hiatt’s staff of highly experienced career counselors can assist those students who choose to spend time after Brandeis to pursue interests other than law school. One-on-one counseling sessions can guide you through the process of deciding how best to use your time and provide you with a strategy to realize your goals.

SECTION IV: ELEMENTS OF AN APPLICATION

A. What Do Law Schools Look For?

Law school admissions committees are inundated annually with applications from highly qualified students who want to be lawyers. The majority of law school admissions committees do not offer personal interviews. Very few law schools will candidly disclose how each element of an application is weighted, however generally, candidates make their case for admissions based upon their numbers (GPA and LSAT scores—see below for information on the LSAT) and writing abilities (predominantly personal statements). Applications are carefully reviewed by at least two members of the admissions committee at every school.

We evaluate each application on an individual basis taking all factors into consideration. We have no computational methods for making admission decisions, no mechanical shortcuts, no substitutes for careful assessment and good judgment applied to individual cases. We look at all factors, quantitative and qualitative, when evaluating applications. Through individual consideration, the admissions committee seeks not only to identify and recognize characteristics that are important to academic success in law school, but also qualities that promote vitality, diversity, and excellence in the student body. All elements of the application are important to determining these factors.

-- Harvard Law School Admissions Officer

Law schools want to admit students who will succeed in school and in the profession, and who will offer varied and intelligent perspective to the law school community. That determination is based upon objective criteria – your LSAT scores and transcript – and subjective criteria – your personal statement, letters of recommendation, your experiences/resume and addenda, if you have them. Your GPA and LSAT numbers are certainly important, but you do not need to have a 4.0 and score in the top 10% on the LSAT to get into a competitive law school. Members of admissions committees take great care and time in reviewing all aspects of each application. A solid academic record accumulated over your four years at Brandeis, or a demonstrated commitment to your academic success through improved grades, is highly valued. Your LSAT score is traditionally the best indicator of how you will handle the material in law school, and therefore is given serious consideration.

Diversity of thought, geography, and personal background is also important in law school admissions decisions. In addition, admissions committee members look for applicants who have maturity, judgment and a well-considered interest in being a contributing member to their school community and to the legal profession. This is often demonstrated in your personal statement, your letters of recommendation as well as in your activities and experience.
B. The Law School Admissions Test (LSAT)

1) Registration: To begin the process of taking the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT), you need to register with the Law School Admissions Council (LSAC – http://LSAC.org). The LSAC is an organization comprised of all of the American Bar Association accredited law schools in the U.S. and a number of Canadian schools. It coordinates and facilitates the process of applying to law school.

You will also have to register with the Credential Assembly Service (CAS), which you can do once you establish your LSAC account. Almost all accredited law schools require this service. It collects and distributes the various elements of your application, including LSAT score(s), college transcript(s), letters of recommendation and personal statement. It is apart and separate from the LSAC registration.

When you register to take the LSAT, be aware that test sites can fill quickly, especially in or around major cities. **We advise you to register several months in advance of a test date so that you can take the exam at a location convenient for you.** Brandeis University is an exam administration site. LSAC does not, however, give any preference for Brandeis applicants, so it is very important to register early if you want to sit for the exam on campus.

The exam is generally administered on Saturdays. If you observe Saturday Sabbaths, you may take the LSAT on the Mondays following the Saturday exams. You will need a letter on official stationary from your rabbi or minister confirming your religious affiliation.

2) Costs: Applying to law school can be costly. The basic charges for the 2013-2014 application period include:

- $155 CAS registration fee
- $160 LSAT registration fee
- $21 Law School Reports
- $50-$85 typical application fee for **each** school

There is also a cost involved in preparing for the LSAT and, if you are able, visiting the schools to which you will apply.

LSAC does offer fee waivers if you qualify. Application forms are available online at the LSAC website. The waivers cover two LSATs per testing year, the CAS registration, including four CAS Law School Reports, and a copy of an LSAT preparation guide. **If you were a Pell Grant recipient, many law schools will waive fees for you. It is well worth making the inquiry.**
3) **Test Parameters:** The LSAT is designed to provide law school admissions committees with a common measure of applicants’ aptitude for legal study. The test consists of five multiple choice sections of 35 minutes each:

- One reading comprehension section
- One analytical reasoning section
- Two logical reasoning sections
- One experimental test question section (an additional section of any of the above)
- A 35-minute writing sample at the end of the test, which is not scored. Copies are sent to the schools to which you apply to generally assess your writing abilities.

The test score is located on a scale of 120 to 180, based on the number of questions you answer correctly. There is no penalty for incorrect answers, so it is advantageous to guess if you do not have time to answer a question or are not completely sure of the answer.

The LSAC has published *The Official LSAT Handbook* that is available on their website for $12.00. The 111-page book provides an introduction to the LSAT and a guide to each of the three types of questions: analytical reasoning, logical reasoning and reading comprehension.

4) **When to take the exam:**

As a general rule, it is not effective to definitively narrow down the list of schools to which you want to apply until you have received your LSAT score. Without knowing that score you are missing a key piece of the equation that will indicate where you have the best chances of being accepted. For this reason, many choose to take the exam before the application cycle begins.

The best time to take the exam is when you feel completely prepared. Most people schedule three months of study time prior to taking the exam, figuring 10-12 hours of studying per week. **Your LSAT scores are valid for five years.** Deciding on a test date warrants consideration:

- **February** – Taking the exam in February for the first time makes most sense if you will be submitting your applications for law school in a future application cycle, rather than if you intend to matriculate the following fall, as application deadlines for some schools have passed, and others are very close. If you are in school, you need to think ahead of time what your fall semester exams will be like, as you will likely begin studying in November.

- **June** – Depending upon your circumstances, you may prefer to take the LSAT in June before you submit your applications. Sitting for the exam during the summer provides you with your score in plenty of time to research the schools to which you may apply based upon that score. It also leaves you with time to retake the test in October if something goes wrong on your testing date, if you cancel your score, or do not believe
your score is the best reflection of your abilities (see Retaking the LSAT below on page 17).

- **October** – Many applicants take the exam in October, when they are in the midst of applying for law school. This is a popular option, especially for seniors, as people like to take advantage of evenings and weekends without homework during the summer to study for the LSAT, even if they have a summer job or internship. Juniors who plan to attend law school immediately or soon after graduation also sit for the exam in October with multiple considerations in mind, including anticipation of a heavier course-load senior year, other commitments in the spring or summer that prevent them from adequately preparing for the exam the following fall, or if they are planning to study abroad in the spring, as well as other reasons.

- **December** – Taking the LSAT in December when you are applying to matriculate the following year is not uncommon. Many people sit in December if they were not ready in October, and/or were unsatisfied with a prior score and seek to submit a higher score. Law schools are always looking for qualified candidates – your score on this exam if you are applying for the following year will serve you best for schools where your score and grades meet or is higher than the published median.

5) **How to prepare for the exam:**

People have different learning styles. Students frequently ask whether they should take a course to prepare for the LSAT or study on their own. There is no single answer to this question; you need to determine for yourself how you learn best. In addition to the traditional live structured classroom method, many organizations also offer on-line classes, as well as individual tutors. There are also private tutors offering their services, and study groups (check out the LSAT study group on LinkedIn). We suggest you take the diagnostic test offered by any of the test preparation courses (for example, Kaplan or Powerscore or Princeton) to assess your initial score. This experience may help you to decide the best method to prepare for the exam.

a. **Test Preparation Courses**

If you used a test preparation course for the SAT and found it useful, you may feel most confident by taking a course for the LSAT. These commercial courses offer live classes as well as on-line courses (which usually cost less than live classes). We do not endorse a particular method or company to help you prepare for the LSAT. Representatives from test preparation courses visit Brandeis regularly and are announced through the Hiatt Law Listserv and through the Pre-Law Society. We suggest that you consult with students who have taken the LSAT to compare methods that have worked well, and what type of instruction was found to be helpful, and why.

There are many commercial courses offered in the area, including:

- advise-in solutions ([www.advisein.com](http://www.advisein.com))
- BluePrint [http://blueprintprep.com/](http://blueprintprep.com/)
Courses can be costly and require a scheduled time commitment. If you choose this strategy, we suggest you research each company’s offerings and speak with others who have taken the course. Be sure to read the descriptions and purposes of each course offering – some companies offered abbreviated programs as a supplement to self-study, while others offer intensive concentrated sessions. You will be making an investment, so feel free to ask a company representative questions about their services as well as financial aid options. Be sure to check for discounts and special offers before you enroll.

b. **Self-Instruction**

Many Brandeis students and alumni find self-instruction suits their needs and there are many commercial products available to assist you. We welcome you to visit the Hiatt Career Center to review these materials in our library prior to spending any money on books, to find a good match for your way of learning.

c. **Private Tutor**

Another option some use is a private tutor, either in conjunction with other strategies or as the sole method of preparation. As mentioned above, commercial test preparation courses offer tutors. There are also private individuals who offer their services. In addition to doing a simple Google search for tutors in your area, there is a LSAT study group on LinkedIn including members from all over the country who may have a recommendation. Brandeis Alumni may also have recommendations. In addition, you can consult with the Pre-Law Advisor who may have received promotional emails from individuals publicizing their services.

**No matter what method of study you select, we encourage you in the strongest terms to take multiple three-hour practice exams. Recent test takers suggest taking six to ten complete practice exams.** You can take more, but be careful you do not burn out. If for some reason you want to take the exam again, you will need a couple of tests to use for practice before your second sitting. By reviewing all responses to each question, you will begin to see patterns in the types of questions. You may also find that certain sections are more challenging for you than other sections. Without neglecting those in which you succeed with some ease, focus on those that are more challenging. LSAT scores are currently reported within four weeks of the examination.
You may request special test-taking accommodations, but your need for them must be well documented. Making the request does not guarantee the accommodations will be provided. The Accommodation Request Packet is available on the LSAC website. Please arrange an appointment with the Pre-Law Advisor to discuss the notation on your score.

6) Retaking the LSAT

*Generally* speaking, we do not recommend retaking the exam. Many applicants take the test twice, and while law schools will consider the highest score, the lower score(s) is noted (NYU, for example is one of the few schools that continues to average the LSAT scores). Although we advise against retaking the exam, for reasons set forth below, understand that submitting two scores is not unusual, nor will it be viewed negatively by admission committee members. You may only take the exam up to three times in a twenty-four month period.

Unless you were unprepared, or had something happen near or on the exam date that had a strong impact on your performance and has since been resolved, or English is not your first language and your command of the language has improved significantly, research indicates that most people’s scores do not improve dramatically upon retaking the exam. There is even a risk of receiving a lower score. If you are confident that your score does not accurately represent your best effort, then re-taking the exam may yield a higher score. We do not recommend re-taking the LSAT simply hoping to do better with more practice if you already spent substantial time and effort preparing.

If you are not confident in your test answers on the day of the exam, you can cancel your score at the exam site on the LSAT score sheet, as explained in the LSAT registration materials. If you decide after you leave the exam site that you want to cancel your score, you must send a written request to LSAC six days of the exam. Please see the [LSAC website](http://www.lsac.org/jd/lsat/score-cancellations) for specific instructions.

7) Advice from other Brandeis Students

Brandeis students who have taken the LSAT shared the following advice with their peers:

a. Do not spend a year studying for the exam. Plan when you are going to sit for the exam, and make your study plan accordingly (approximately 3 months ahead of time).

b. On-line courses are good for students who want some structure, who have good self-discipline, but do not need individual attention.

c. If you are going to take a prep course, be sure to review your notes after class.

d. Diversify where you take your practice exams. It is impossible to duplicate true test conditions - what will the temperature be like, will there be a fire alarm, will someone be wearing perfume you do not like, will you have a comfortable chair, a wide desk or a narrow desk, etc. But to get a real feeling for the exam, follow the same time...
structure; take the test in the morning, use the restroom as needed, but only take the same 15 minute break that will be allowed when you sit for the exam, and do not eat or drink, as you will not be allowed snacks outside of the 15 minute break period.

e. In addition to reviewing problems, listening to news radio for flawed logic is also useful. Take a symbolic logics class (offered here at Brandeis). Diversify your reading – fiction, newspaper, magazine articles, non-fiction – this will help your reading skills and analytical skills.

f. Study groups are helpful for some – form them with peers who take the same class, and even those who are studying in a different way. Groups are a good way to confirm your understanding of material by teaching someone else, as well as to learn skills and concepts that someone has grasped before you.

C. GPA/Selecting Courses and A Major/Minor

Admissions committee members look at the GPA “number” within the context of the institution from which it comes and the rigor of the academic program(s) of each applicant. Because of Brandeis University’s strong academic reputation, your GPA is looked upon with high regard. The importance of this must be emphasized: the GPA number is not read in isolation.

In addition to considering your GPA in the context of Brandeis University, admissions committees will also consider your GPA as calculated by LSAC, marked as your “UGPA” (Uniform Grade Point Average). LSAC recalculates each applicant’s grades in order to provide law schools with a uniform basis for comparing applicants. For example, not every school calculates grades based on a 4 point scale, and some schools do not account for an A+. The UGPA includes your grades from Brandeis, as well as from any other undergraduate institutions, including institutions from study abroad or even undergraduate courses that you took in high school. LSAC reports:

There may be some variation between the GPAs calculated by LSAC and those calculated by colleges or students; however, the variation is rarely substantial. Because the law schools that use LSAC’s Credential Assembly Service understand its procedures, a slight variation in GPA is not likely to affect a law school's admission decision.

You do not need a 4.0 to apply to law school. If, however, your GPA is below a 3.2, please make an appointment with the Pre-Law Advisor to discuss your personal circumstances and how they might be addressed in your application. Admissions committees understand that there are situations in which an applicant may be very well qualified to succeed in law school despite a GPA that is much lower than the reported median GPA for their school. Additionally, your GPA will be reviewed in the context of the courses you select and their level of difficulty. If your GPA is a serious issue, you may want to consider taking time off to work in order to gain perspective and maturity, as well as to show commitment to a certain field. You should speak with the Pre-Law Advisor before making this decision.
If you have withdrawn from a course or selected to take a course “pass/fail” this is not going to impair your application. Numerous withdraws or “pass/fail” grades will, however, alert an admissions committee to a potential academic problem.

Law school admissions committees do not require particular majors or activities as prerequisites for application. A range of classes by subject as well as a challenging course of study are viewed favorably. There are rich opportunities available to Brandeis students that will certainly make you an attractive candidate. We strongly advise that you select those academic and extra-curricular activities that are truly of interest to you. Assuming a leadership role in an extra-curricular activity, or demonstrating a commitment to underserved or needy populations (volunteer programs) is always well received. Exploring the legal field through internships and shadowing will help you articulate on your applications why law school is a good fit for you.

Because Brandeis University students often have multiple majors and/or minors, we need to assure you: Law school admissions committee members will not in any way frown upon you if you have “only” one major. One major is normal. Please only opt for multiple majors and/or minors if doing so is truly what you want to do. The number of majors you have has no bearing on whether you are accepted into law school.

D. Personal Statement

Law schools receive hundreds, sometimes thousands, of applications from people with identical GPAs and LSAT scores. Your personal statement is a terrific and important opportunity to make yourself stand out from all the other bright, hard-working law school applicants. For many candidates, a well-written, well-conceived personal statement can mean the difference between getting into the school of their choice and being wait-listed or denied admission. Your statement should be interesting and well written, and describe the qualities that you want the school to know about you. Be sure to read each school’s prompt and directions. You should meticulously answer whatever question is asked on the application. Most schools ask for two pages double-spaced, and other schools (generally on the west coast) allow for more length. The key is to follow the instructions given to you by each particular law school. You would be surprised by the number of law school applicants who do not follow the application instructions and hurt their chances of being accepted. If there is no length specified, two pages, double spaced should be submitted.

The personal statement is an opportunity not to be squandered – it can have a huge effect on the decision of an admissions committee because it allows you to introduce yourself as a real individual, beyond your numeric qualifications.

Before you begin writing

- Ask yourself – What will an admissions reader learn about you from your personal statement? After all, the purpose of this essay is so that the admissions committee can get to know YOU. Think about what makes you unique. There may be an experience or person in your life that molded you. Do you have an
interest, hobby or artistic ability about which you are passionate? Is there a challenge that you have overcome or an experience that has significantly influenced who you are today?

- Have a very clear understanding of why you want to go to law school, and why the schools to which you are applying are a good fit with your background and interests.

- Be aware of your long range goals, how a law degree will help you achieve those goals and how you might use your degree in the future.

- Be ready to articulate the most compelling reasons for an admissions committee to accept your application.

For any written portion of an application, it is a good idea to draw readers in immediately and make them want to know about your story. You will help yourself (and them) immensely if you make the reading of yours interesting or enjoyable.

Most schools will either ask you to share why you want to go to law school, or simply ask you to share something about yourself. In this situation, you should write about something that is important to you, that demonstrates why you are ready to enter the legal profession such as growth, maturity and/or good judgment. Even with an open topic, we have learned from speaking to law school representatives that some law schools still want you to relate your enthusiasm to study law, while others are truly looking forward to an essay that is not centered on why you want to be a lawyer. Attending info sessions will help you decipher what each school prefers. Ask the Hiatt Pre-Law Advisor to review your statement and work with you to explore topics, help with the flow of your writing, and make sure you are making the points that are important to you clearly and powerfully. Also ask appropriate faculty and the Writing Center staff for assistance. We are all here to help you. The most important thing you can do is make sure that your essay is about YOU, and well written.

A few notes of caution:

- Avoid clichés and common information. Almost all applicants are intelligent, hard working, and have a strong desire to pursue an advanced degree. There is no need to state that kind of information in the limited amount of space that you have.

- High school accomplishments are rarely relevant at this point in your professional development. Avoid mentioning experiences prior to your college career.

- If you choose to write about a controversial topic, consider your audience. If you feel passionate about a topic, it is certainly your right to express your feelings about it. Be aware that your audience may not share your strong opinions, and above all, be respectful. Remember, this is not a position piece – it’s still an essay about YOU.
• The personal statement is not the proper forum to address problems or weaknesses in your application. The addendum is the best vehicle for that. Keep the personal statement positive, even if the subject is overcoming adversity.

• Disclose only those personal aspects of yourself (personal, medical, religious, etc.) with which you are comfortable. Remember, you are talking to a stranger. Share with them who you are, but do not “overshare”.

Think carefully of the story you want to tell the committee and it should come naturally. Please make an appointment with the Hiatt Pre-Law Advisor at any time in the process, particularly if you are challenged in selecting a topic. This is a critical element of your application.

If any of the schools to which you are applying offer an opportunity for additional or supplemental essays, we strongly suggest you seize that opportunity. Specific questions are often posed as topics of these essays. Again, the Pre-Law Advisor can assist you.

E. Recommendations

Admissions committees want to have assurances that you will succeed academically in the rigors of law school. For this, they turn to those who have been closely involved in your learning. Generally they want to hear from two faculty members who can speak to your research and writing abilities, ability to grasp abstract concepts, intellectual curiosity and ability to work through course material that challenged you. Having one letter from a teaching assistant who is a graduate student is often acceptable. Schools also want to be informed of your leadership, motivation, judgment and work ethic. It is to your advantage to ask someone who knows you well rather than someone with a well-known reputation who is less familiar with your work. Admissions committee members can easily tell when a recommender knows you well or not. This is additional incentive to get to know your faculty well prior to requesting recommendations.

The importance of getting to know your faculty, and letting them get to know you, cannot be over emphasized. Students who actively engage in class – by coming well prepared, asking thoughtful questions in class, and meeting with faculty during office hours or after class – are well positioned to make a valid request for recommendations. Other strategies include becoming an Undergraduate Department Representative, participating in campus-wide committees with faculty members or tutoring in courses you enjoy. Conversely, students who remain anonymous to their professors will find it difficult, if not impossible, to obtain strong letters of recommendation.

The most important aspect of your letter of recommendation is the content of the letter, rather than the status of the writer. Admissions members are more interested in a letter from a professor that knows you well, than a high ranking judge, government official, famous lawyer, or even a member of our University Administration who has not had the opportunity to observe you in the classroom, who is not personally familiar with your writing skills or academic abilities, and does not know you well.
Some schools accept, prefer or even require a professional recommendation. If you have been out of school for about five years, you may do well by asking current or recent employers, or colleagues. The best way to determine whether this is appropriate is by reading each schools application, or if it is not clear, by calling a law school’s admissions office – they are happy to answer your questions.

Please read each application carefully. There are a few schools that want only one recommendation and others that will permit more than two. Be sure to follow the explicit directions of the law school when completing your application.

When requesting recommendations, it is best to make an appointment with your writers well in advance of when the applications are due. There are certain Brandeis faculty members who are called upon by many with these requests and you must respect their schedules, particularly around graduation or exam time.

While you may feel a bit awkward making a request for a Letter of Recommendation, writing recommendations is part of what faculty members do, and not unusual for professionals. You may want to approach them with a question like “Do you feel comfortable enough with my work, and have the time, to write me a strong recommendation to law school?” If the writer agrees, help him or her help you by providing the following:

**For Faculty**

- A typed list of classes you have taken with the professor, with the grades you received in each class
- Copies of any papers you may have written for that class

**For All Writers**

- Your updated resume
- Your current transcript
- A statement of why you want to go to law school
- A draft of your personal statement, if available
- For hard copy letters of recommendation, provide the forms from the CAS or your law schools, stamped envelopes and a list of your schools and the dates when recommendations are due

(You may want to inform the writer of the dates when you actually submit your applications so that they know where you are in the process. Writers submit their letters to the CAS. Receipt of the letter is noted in your LSAC account.)

- For online evaluation forms, provide your recommenders with the proper link
You may want to suggest areas of your accomplishments for writers to cover that are not addressed in other areas of your application. These recommendations are platforms for new information about you that the admission committee members have not yet seen.

You have the right to see your recommendations, but we encourage you to waive that right on your application. Our contacts in admissions offices indicate concern that writers are not as candid as they might otherwise be if the applicant is going to review the recommendation.

If you are planning to apply to law school at some point after graduation, we suggest you utilize either the CAS system, which is good for five years, or Interfolio, through which you can house letters until such time as you would like us to send them to the CAS. You can access this service through the “Interfolio” link on the Hiatt website. Writers can upload letters into your account at no charge to them and access the letters in the future to make any necessary updates or changes. When you are ready to apply, you simply request Interfolio to forward your letters. There is a cost to Interfolio, which you should review on the Interfolio website.

For more information, see the Hiatt website under “How To” > “Request References and Recommendations.” The Interfolio link is housed there.

F. Evaluations

Starting in the 2010 law school application cycle, the Credential Assembly Service offered an evaluation form in addition to, or in lieu of, the traditional letter of recommendation. Very few, schools have transitioned to accepting this form instead a letter of recommendation, and the majority of schools prefer a letter of recommendation. It is the responsibility of applicants to determine what they need for each school.

The new evaluation, which is online rather than hard copy, rates both cognitive and non-cognitive attributes and skills that have been identified as important to success in law school, using a scale that represents degrees of a particular characteristic (e.g. excellent, very good, etc.). When applicants request the evaluation form, an email will be sent to evaluators requesting them to complete the form online.

G. Transcripts

Request a copy of your official transcript from the Office of the Registrar in Room 121 Kutz. Please keep in mind that during the beginning and end of each semester they are particularly busy, so time your request accordingly. The turn-around time is usually 48 hours. There is currently no fee for this service. Transcripts can also be requested via Sage, assuming you have a UNet account. If you attended another institution of higher education, you will need an official transcript from that institution as well.

If you study abroad, it is not necessary to acquire a transcript from any foreign institution where you studied for less than one year. The notation on your Brandeis transcript is sufficient. If you
have studied at a foreign institution for more than a year, you will need to obtain a copy of your transcript either from the schools(s) where you studied, or from the program that organized your trip abroad.

It is important that you check your transcript carefully before graduation. While the possibility of finding an “Incomplete” or some other “red flag” on your transcript is remote, you want to check it in a timely manner so that corrections can be made prior to graduation. Please be aware that if the CAS finds a discrepancy between your application and your transcript (e.g. an “Incomplete”) they will freeze all of your law school applications until the matter is resolved, which could take months.

H. Resume

Most law schools require an updated version of your resume. A Hiatt staff member can help make sure your resume is as strong as possible. Your resume for law school should be complete by including all college experiences, positions, activities and study abroad programs. Law Schools want to know who you are and what you have done, and do not mind if your resume goes over one page. Your resume does not need to focus on “law” related experiences. Law Schools understand that many students work to supplement their income or even to put themselves through school, working in positions that may not be law related, or even skilled.

If you profess to have a great passion for a specific subject or field, then your resume should reflect that either in activities or positions held. While including volunteer experience, or some sort of “giving back” is often appreciated, be sure to demonstrate a sustained involvement, rather than a token contribution (such as doing something for a short period of time).

I. Addendum

The addendum is a portion of the law school application that allows you to explain a less than flattering or concerning aspect of your application, such as a drop in your grades, something that may have had an impact on your LSAT score (whether it be low, or a dramatic change if you have taken the exam multiple times). It is better for you address to issues up front than to let the reader fill in in the blank with a reason which may be completely wrong.

If you have any type of disciplinary issue, transgression related to academic integrity, criminal history or school suspension, it is best to be honest and forthcoming; explain what happened, take ownership, and demonstrate remorse and growth. It is not an apology or a complaint – just an explanation. Failure to disclose misconduct can result in expulsion from law school, disqualification from sitting for the bar exam, or even subsequent disbarment. Less than complete candor is not worth the price. Your law school applications and your applications to sit for the bar exam in any state WILL be compared, so better to disclose it all and to be accurate. Please make an appointment with the Pre-Law Advisor to discuss your personal situation. The general advice of law school admissions: disclose everything, even if it is expunged or not reported, and be concise.
J. Dean’s Certification Letter

Some schools require this document to confirm whether you have been involved in academic or disciplinary transgressions while at Brandeis. A form is available on the Academic Services website and should be submitted to the Office of Academic Services on the second floor of Usdan. Staff there will then forward the form to the Dean of Student Life’s office for signature. If your law school provides you with a form to fill out, you should still fill out a request using the form provided by Academic Services, and also provide them with the form provided by your school. If you there is any possibility that your Dean’s Certification Letter will indicate even a minor transgressions, please make an appointment to speak to the Pre-Law Advisor.

SECTION V: SUGGESTIONS BY CLASS YEAR

There is no official timeline for applying to law school, but there are some key dates and work benchmarks that should be reached for a more competitive application. The Pre-Law Advisor is available to meet with you to discuss your personal situation, interests and goals to map out a timeline that works best for you.

Below are some ideas about preparing for a law career, by year, although many suggestions, such as improving your writing skills and being careful with your money and credit, apply to all years. Do not feel that you must do all of these; the suggestions below provide a framework to help you prepare to be a strong candidate, and as importantly, explore whether law school is right for you. If you are reading this after your first year at Brandeis, read advice for prior classes for useful information.

A. First Years

- Select classes you enjoy.

- Work diligently to obtain grades that reflect your abilities, as they are a crucial element of a law school application.

- Sign up for the Hiatt_Law_Info Listserv to stay aware of different pre-law related events and opportunities.

- Research school and community service activities you think you will enjoy and join those that meet your interests. Community involvement is an attribute of a strong candidate and is valued highly by the legal field.

- Consider applying for a leadership position, such as in a club, Orientation Leader or leading a class or campus project; leadership is one quality that makes a law school candidate strong.
• Be mindful of your behavior. You must disclose any and all disciplinary actions on your law school application.
• Start developing relationships with faculty. You do not have select who you want to write your letters of recommendation at this point, but keep your professors in mind. For classes you like, or in which you do well, go to office hours so that the professor gets to know you.

• Begin to work on your professional resume; review the Hiatt Rubric and the Hiatt website: http://www.brandeis.edu/hiatt/howto/resume/index.html

• Create an account on the LSAC website and receive updates on the general law school application process. Do NOT sign up for CAS services.

B. Sophomores

• Continue to perform well academically; improve your grades if applicable.

• Apply for leadership opportunities, because leadership is valued in a law school candidate strong.

• Join and become active in clubs and volunteer activities, and/or get a part time job. Choose clubs, activities, even jobs, that interest you. Law schools want to know that you do more than just get good grades.

  o Getting a part-time job or internship shows responsibility. If it is law related, it also shows dedication to and sincere interest in the profession. “Law related” goes beyond law firms – also look at volunteer organizations that educate people on their rights or provide assistance to underserved populations as well as government agencies. It is also perfectly acceptable, and admired, to have a job that is not “law related”.

  o Participation in clubs is valued by admissions counselors as they want to know that you are a part of your community. Participation in groups/clubs/activities that interest you is part of your college experience! Your extracurricular activities do NOT have to be law related, but can be: consider the Pre-Law Society, Debate Team, Mock Trial Team, the Brandeis Law Journal, the Brandeis International Law Journal and The Innocence Project as possible groups.

• Pick a major that suits you. You do not need multiple majors to apply to law schools and there are no “preferred” majors. In general, lecture courses provide a good foundation, while seminars and smaller classes allow you to present, discuss, critique, and defend specific ideas and concepts. Smaller classes give you the opportunity to interact with faculty. Get to know them, and let them get to know you. In addition to being an active participant in class, you may want to attend office hours and conduct
research with faculty. Academic Services, Legal Studies faculty, and your faculty advisors are great resources to help you with this decision-making process.

- Make an appointment with the Pre-Law & Graduate School Advisor to clarify your interests in law school.

- Consider taking courses related to Legal Studies, or declaring a minor if you are interested in many of these courses. The classes offered will help you get a feel for law as a general subject, but they are not at the same level as law school. Participating in Legal Studies minor will also afford you an opportunity to either write a thesis on a topic of interest to you, or work at a law related internship for credit. The thesis and the law internship provide an excellent avenue for you to explore your interest in the law further. Law school admissions officers have no preference of one above the other. Do what interests you.

- Start speaking to lawyers – in your family, your family friends, Brandeis Alumni. There are innumerable areas of legal practice. Find out from practicing attorneys what they do, what they enjoy about the profession, as well as the drawbacks, to give you ideas of areas you may want to investigate further (such as through an internship) to help you decide if this is a degree you want to pursue.

- Hone your writing skills. Look for classes that offer opportunities for you to improve your writing skills and use staff at the Brandeis University Writing Center to help you during the course of your studies. They are in a position to help you well before it comes time to write a Personal Statement.

- Be careful with your money! You may well need to take loans out to finance law school, and a strong credit record will help you enormously.

- Continue to make smart choices about your behavior to avoid disciplinary actions.

- Continue to develop good working relationships with faculty – it’s a good idea in general, and is essential when it comes time to request letters of recommendation.

- If you are considering going to law school immediately after your graduation from Brandeis, think about your course load for Junior/Senior year, and when you might take the LSAT. You may want to take a lighter course load during the semester that overlaps your test preparation. For example, if you want to take the LSAT in June after your Junior year, you will start studying in March, and therefore a heavy course load, or taking several challenging courses your second semester may make studying more difficult. And remember, you want to keep your grades up! See p.14 of this Guide for discussion of considerations for deciding when to take the LSAT.

- Look into spending a summer or semester abroad, including with Brandeis in the Hague. This may also affect when you decide to take the LSAT.
C. Juniors

Fall

- Keep your grades up; grades remain extremely important for law school. Continue to take classes that are of interest to you – good grades in several introductory courses do not hold as much weight as good grades in substantive/challenging courses.

- Consider taking a leadership role in organizations and clubs.

- Continue networking with attorneys.

- Explore the possibility of a law related internship during the school year or the summer.

- If you have not already, make an appointment with the Pre-Law & Graduate School Advisor to clarify your interests in law school.

- You may find it helpful to attend the LSAC/CAS Law School Forum in Boston in the Fall. If one is not scheduled in Boston, consider attending a forum over the summer in another city, or in New York in the fall. The majority of American law schools send representatives to answer questions for potential applicants. See the LSAC website for details: http://www.lsac.org/lsacresources/dates-events/forums-and-other-events

- Prepare for and attend the Brandeis University Law School Reception. This smaller event provides a unique opportunity to interact on campus with law school admissions officers. Log into B.hired to keep an eye out for law school info sessions.

- Attend pre-law programs, whether sponsored by Hiatt, the Pre-Law Society or organizations off campus.

- Register with both the LSAC (http://www.lsac.org) well in advance of your test date. Do not register for CAS.

- If you are going to study abroad you may want to make an appointment with the Pre-Law Advisor prior to leaving to stay informed of what you can work on while abroad, and what you will need to complete upon your return to the United States.

Spring

- Begin researching the schools to which you might apply.

- If possible, start to visit the schools in which you are interested.

- Decide when you want to take the LSAT and select a test preparation strategy – commercial courses and self study guides work well, depending upon your learning style. See pp. 14-16 of this Guide.
• Continue developing and maintaining good relationships with faculty. Request letters of recommendation from faculty in the late spring (CAS has forms) if you plan on applying for law school the following fall. If you intend to wait to apply, you can wait to do this until the spring of your senior year.

• Start to consider potential topics for your personal statement. Most schools include a prompt that either asks you to discuss specifically why you are interested in law and/or being a lawyer, or allows you write on a topic of your choice that conveys to the reader something about who you are. Over the summer, write a draft or two. See p.19 of this Guide.

D. Seniors

• Update your resume.

If you are applying for law school immediately after graduation

• If you did not take the LSAT prior to the fall of your senior year, you have hopefully been studying for it for at least two months, which will give you time to prepare in a thorough way. Take approximately 6 practice exams.

• As discussed earlier (see p. 21), if you have not done so already, contact those who you would like a letter of recommendation. Check on their progress by the end of September. Remember to send thank you notes to those who wrote letters of recommendation and keep them informed of your progress!

• Finalize your school list and keep track of deadlines.

• Attend the LSAC/CAS Law School Forum in Boston in the Fall. If one is not scheduled in Boston, consider attending a forum over the summer in another city, or in New York in the fall. The majority of American law schools and many Canadian Law Schools send representatives to answer questions for potential applicants. See the LSAC website for details: http://www.lsac.org/lsacresources/dates-events/forums-and-other-events

• Attend the Brandeis University Law School Reception, researching schools of interest in advance. This smaller event provides a unique opportunity to interact on campus with law school admissions officers.

• Carefully read each application and be sure to answer all questions.

• Obtain a Dean’s Certification Letter (if required) from the Office of Academic Services website.

• Start filling out financial aid forms.
• Draft an addendum if you need to – it is an opportunity to explain any part of your application that may be less than flattering, confusing or questionable.

• Put the final touches on your applications and have them proofread.

• Continue drafting your personal statement. Have your statement reviewed by the Writing Center for grammar, structure and style, and make an appointment with the Pre-Law Advisor to review the Statement for content.

• To the extent possible, visit schools and contact Brandeis alumni who have attended them. Contact you Pre-Law Advisor for suggestions on how to find these alumni if you cannot find them on LinkedIn.

• Request your transcript from the Registrar’s Office in Kutz to be sent to LSAC.

• Make final determination of the schools to which you will apply.

• Try to submit your applications in the early fall, before Thanksgiving. Admissions are rolling, so the earlier the better.

• Enjoy Thanksgiving, do a great job on your finals.

• Keep your grades up! Law schools will see fall and spring semester grades.

• Send thank you notes to those who wrote letters of recommendation and keep them informed of your progress!

• In January, complete your financial aid forms when your tax information is available.

If you intend to apply to law school in the future:

• Attend the LSAC/CAS Law School Forum in Boston in the Fall. If one is not scheduled in Boston, consider attending a forum over the summer in another city, or in New York in the fall. The majority of American law schools send representatives to answer questions for potential applicants. See the LSAC website for details: http://www.lsac.org/lsacresources/dates-events/forums-and-other-events

• Prepare for and attend the Brandeis University Law School Reception. This smaller event provides a unique opportunity to interact on campus with law school admissions officers.

• Keep your grades up! Law schools will see fall and spring semester grades.
• Meet with the professors from who you will be requesting Letters of Recommendations before you leave Brandeis, and have them sent to CAS. See p. 21 of this Guide

• Remember, you have Hiatt Career Services for life. While it is strongly encouraged to meet with the Pre-Law Advisor while you are on campus, you can always make an in person, phone or Skype appointment to discuss your law school plans, or for help with your law school application and other related questions.

Follow the timeline for the previous section a year before you wish to be enrolled in law school.

SECTION VI: LOOKING AT SCHOOLS

Brandeis University students interested in law school have a wonderful opportunity each fall to attend the LSAC Law School Forum held in Boston and New York (for other locations during the summer and fall semester, see the LSAC website). More than half the nation’s law schools send admissions representatives to the large Forum to answer your questions and provide information. You are encouraged to attend this event.

The Hiatt Career Center also welcomes many law schools to campus for info sessions, to table in Usdan or the SCC, as well at our new Law School Reception. Although it may include other degrees and have a name that changes from year to year, the Reception is an opportunity not only to have more of an in depth conversations with admissions personnel from law schools of interest to Brandeis students than the circumstances of a larger forum affords, but also to hear them speak on topics of interest, including financial aid, how to optimize time off between graduation and law school, as well as other subjects. Announcements of these terrific events are made on Hiatt’s B.hired and through student and alumni emails. Business attire and research of schools is strongly encouraged.

Another very useful resource is the Boston College Law School Locator, found on the Law School page on the Hiatt website, which charts schools by LSAT score and GPA range, and can serve as a guide for applicants.

A. Common Considerations

1) Geography
• When choosing where to apply, one of the strongest considerations for where you apply to school should be the jurisdiction in which you plan to sit for the bar exam and practice after law school. The majority of lawyers begin their careers in the region, if not the state, in which they went to law school for many reasons.

• It is often easier to interview for summer positions in the same region as where your school is located, as many employers come to law schools to recruit. If you prefer to
work in a different state or region than where your law school is located, you will have to make more of an effort to build a network and make travel arrangements for interviews.

- Many schools have very strong reputations locally, even if they are not recognized nationally. “Locally” may mean within the state, as well as in a region, such as “the east coast” or “the mid-west”. Many successful attorneys, judges and people in business have graduated from law schools that are well respected locally, and are not necessarily listed very high in the US News and World Report rankings. Look into a school’s alumni base – alumni are proud of their education, and are usually willing to mentor, if not hire, graduates from their law school. A school with a large number of alumni in the region where you want to practice is worthy of your consideration. Many schools “teach to the bar” to prepare their graduates for their state’s exam. While this may be helpful, it is not a necessity. You may take the bar exam of any state with sufficient preparation.

- Many applicants choose schools’ locations because of family obligations. In addition, you will build a network of faculty, part-time employers, internship and clinical supervisors, and (perhaps most importantly) your fellow classmates.

2) Specialties

The first year curriculum is dictated in large part by the requirement of the American Bar Association, resulting in minimal variation. In the following two years, however, you have freedom to pursue personal and professional interests through course selection and participation in clinical programs, law review and moot court competitions. Some schools are known for their areas of specialty, such as intellectual property, public interest and government service, environmental, international or intellectual property law. If you would like to pursue a specialization, consider those schools that can meet your interests. Hiatt has digital copies of the NAPLA SAPLA Book of Law School Lists which the Pre-Law Advisor can share with you, which is an excellent resource to find schools offering special degree programs, dual degree programs and other information.

3) Cost

Many students use financial aid to some extent to finance law school. The difference between private and state schools can be significant. When considering the cost of law school, it is important to keep in mind your living and transportation expenses in addition to the cost of books and tuition. Cost of living can include rent, utilities, food, clothes, state and local taxes on these items (e.g. there is no tax on food or clothes in Massachusetts), car insurance and other expenses. You will also need to consider the cost of getting to/from school and the library to where you will be living, as well as transportation to your home if you will not be spending periods of academic recess near school. State schools generally have lower tuition rates for in-state students, however the difference in tuition rates has substantially decreased for many schools with the tight economy of recent years.

4) Size
Large schools have a wide range of opportunities in elective courses, clinical programs, activities and legal journals. Smaller schools have fewer of these, but in general have more faculty interaction and students may form a cohesive unit. You should also consider whether you want to be in a larger or smaller class. There are advantages found in both types of schools.

5) **Visit schools to the extent you are able**

Law schools have different “personalities” and some may be more suitable for you than others. Take a tour and attend a class. Visit the cafeteria, scan the library and speak with students about their perspectives and experiences. Ask questions about factors important to you, such as quality of and accessibility of faculty, competitiveness of students, career services, helpfulness of library staff, etc.

**B. A Word About Rankings**

It is important for you to know that it is not essential for you go to one of the top ten law firms to get a job. Even though some people (especially large law firms) give a great deal of credence to rankings of graduate schools, predominantly those created by *US News & World Report*, we encourage you to look beyond the rankings when making your decision as to which school is best for your personal aspirations. Many fine schools may be ranked “lower” but still provide an excellent education, especially in a particular field of law. Be mindful that the American Bar Association is the source of accreditation, and deemed these schools worthy of that distinction. Please also keep in mind that a school’s national reputation because of their undergraduate school may not extend to their graduate school programs.

If you do take the rankings into consideration, please be mindful of the criteria upon which schools are ranked, many of which may not be necessarily important to you. When choosing a school, there are other factors to weigh that may affect your decision that play no part in the ranking, including cost, financial aid, cost of living, class size, urban/suburban location, and whether you feel like you fit in with that school’s environment or culture.

**C. Day or Evening Programs**

A limited number of law schools offer part-time programs for those who work full-time, have other life commitments or cannot afford to go to law school full-time. These programs are very demanding for those working full-time while attending law school classes in the evening and sometimes on weekends. Part-time programs work well for people who choose not to interrupt their careers and incomes while in school, but these students may be unable to participate in many of the activities that make law school rewarding and exciting.
D. Accelerated Programs

Some law schools have offered an accelerated program, allowing students to graduate in less than three years. Be advised – the total number of hours of law school attendance does not change; it is merely condensed. What this usually entails is substantially reducing traditional periods of academic recess, especially the summer. Historically, law students use summer vacations to gain experience and earn money, obtaining summer associate positions, sometimes at large firms. These summer positions can also translate to post-graduate employment and networking opportunities. With the growing demand for law school graduates to be ready to hit the ground running, most law schools have modified or expanded their curriculum so that experiential learning is required, and may be a part of the traditional school year. It is important to review the details of the each program, and compare it to a traditional program to know if it’s the right fit for you. To help determine whether such a program fits your needs and preferences, consider

1) Is there a financial savings? Remember to consider the cost of housing and transportation.

2) Will you have sufficient opportunity to gain practical experience if you do not have summer break to work at a firm? Examine that portion of the school’s curriculum. Compare working 40+ hours per week for 3 months, versus possibly part time for a longer period. Will you get paid? Does the school have clinics or match you with an employer when experiential learning is required, or do you need to find the position on your own?

3) What is the rigor of the curriculum? Many students work part time in law school during their second and third years to help meet their expenses. Do you need to work part time, and will your academic obligations afford you the time to commit to a job? You may also want to be involved in extra-curricular activities, including clubs and moot court. Will the rigor and schedule of the curriculum affect your ability to be involved?

4) Are all of the classes offered in the traditional 3 year program (or the ones that matter to you) offered in the accelerated program? The accelerated programs may have different courses offered. Be sure that if you are choosing a school based on a certain specialization that you can still take advantage of those courses.

E. Joint Degree Programs

For those interested in specific areas of the law such as business or health, a joint degree program may be appropriate. There is a rich and wide array of these programs, combining a law degree with programs for social work, business, public policy, health administration or urban planning, just to name a few. One can combine a law and PhD program as well. Candidates for these apply to both programs, usually within the same institution, and must be accepted by both admissions committees. Programs vary with some requiring entrance exams for both programs.
(e.g. the LSAT and the GRE) while others will waive the non-LSAT exam. A convenient guide to these programs is the *NAPLA SAPLA Book of Law School Lists*, available in digital copy at the Hiatt Career Center.

**F. Great Resources**

- *ABA – LSAC Official Guide to ABA Approved Law Schools* is issued annually profiling all schools with their statistics, including employment and bar passage rates, as well as a two-page narrative description of each school. This publication is now only available on the LSAC website: [https://officialguide.lsac.org/release/OfficialGuide_Default.aspx](https://officialguide.lsac.org/release/OfficialGuide_Default.aspx)

- *NAPLA/SAPLA Book of Law School Lists* is just that – lists. Without describing the law schools (go to the ABA source for that), this resource informs you of schools’ academic and clinical program offerings, joint degree information and financial aid opportunities.

- *BC Law School Locator* is updated each year to provide the 25th to the 75th percentile LSAT scores and GPAs for each law school and can be used for comparative purposes as you research which law schools are right for you. While very useful, this resource cannot take into account additional important admissions factors such as your personal statement, letters of recommendation and addendum.

**G. Expectations**

No matter where you decide to apply, you are competing with other strong applicants. There are more qualified applicants that there are spaces available in each incoming class. You may fall within a school’s range of LSAT scores and GPA numbers, but that does not guarantee admission. Most law schools have to decline admission for highly qualified applicants. For that reason, you will be well served to apply to some schools for which you may be considered over qualified (i.e. “safety” schools). Excellent faculty and opportunities can be found at those schools as well as the prestigious, nationally known schools. We suggest you consider schools based on their suitability to meet your needs, and goals – geographic, economic and otherwise – rather than on their rankings.

**SECTION VII: FINANCING LAW SCHOOL**

It is best to work with your law school financial aid office before making a decision about financing law school. When applying for any assistance, earlier is better.

Law school is an important investment in your future. Consider the financial aid process as seriously as you do the law school application process. Law school education does not have the extent of financial aid resources available in undergraduate education. Most students rely on loan programs to pay for law school.
During your undergraduate years, spend your money wisely and pay your bills on time to ensure a good credit record. Questionable credit will affect your ability to borrow money for law school and other investments or large purchases.

If you are trying to keep debt to a minimum, consider state-supported schools or schools that offer merit-based aid. If you are considering a career in government or public interest law, investigate loan repayment assistance programs (LRAPs) that help law school graduates repay their school debt. As a career in public interest law does not usually come with a high salary, the purposes of LRAPs include making careers in public interest law feasible for more lawyers, enhancing the provision of legal services to low-income individuals and traditionally under-represented groups and demonstrating law schools’ strong commitment to public interest law. These programs are administered by individual law schools and should be researched on their websites. Use the ABA’s website as resource to start investigating which schools offer such programs: http://apps.americanbar.org/legalservices/probono/lawschools/pi_lrap.html

If you decide to find post-graduation employment as a public service attorney, the College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007 can help you in two ways:

- Lower monthly student loan payments on federally guaranteed student loans (Income Based Repayment). This went into effect July 1, 2009, but currently its funding level is uncertain. Law school financial aid offices can give you up-to-date information.

- Cancel remaining debt for public servants after 10 years of public service employment (Loan Forgiveness for Public Service). To take advantage of this program, a borrower makes 120 qualifying loan payments on a Federal Direct loan while working full-time for 10 years in public service employment. After that time the loan is forgiven.

A. Sources of Funds

1) Personal Savings/Family Support

To the extent possible, set aside your own funds to help pay for law school. This is one reason that people choose to work before enrolling in law school. Not everyone has personal or family resources to fund or help to diminish the cost of law school. Be sure to share your plans for continuing your education with your family to confirm what role, if any, family resources will play in meeting your law school expenses, including tuition, costs in addition to housing and transportation.

2) Grants and Scholarships

Grants and scholarships are awarded by law schools based upon criteria set by the school, which can include academic merit, financial need, ethnicity, specific talents, residency or other qualifications. Check with each law school early in the application process for more information. Information on schools’ offerings can be found in the NAPLA/SAPLA Book of
**Lists. Please note that some schools require scholarship recipients to maintain a certain GPA in order to keep their funding.** It is crucial to ascertain what percentage of funding recipients are able to meet the requirements.

There are a variety of resources based on geography, group affiliation, interest and other connections. You are also encouraged to think about connections to your community, whether it be your hometown or even a larger cultural community, as there are multiple organizations that might offer scholarships. High schools, newspapers, faith based organizations, employers and union affiliations of your parents, and even local bar associations, are just few resources that might offer financial assistance.

Start with the links collected on the [Mount Holyoke College Pre-Law webpage](https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/prelaw/financing_law_school) (https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/prelaw/financing_law_school) to see if any apply to you, or generate ideas of other resources you may have.

### 3) Federal Loans

The landscape of federally funded loans for graduate students is changing rapidly. The recent debt ceiling bill in Congress made changes to some aspects of student loans, but they WILL NOT affect the amount of funding available. Of most importance is that interest will accrue while students are in school, and during the six-month grace period.

Many students rely primarily on federal loan programs to finance law school. Total federal aid is currently available to cover, but not exceed, your student expense budget, which includes tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, transportation, and other select expenses. Because you are applying for graduate study, you are considered independent of your parents for these loans.

Generally, the following federal loans are available to law students:

**Subsidized Federal Stafford and Direct (Ford) Loan.** Up to $8,500 a year is available to students who meet the need criteria. The federal government pays interest while you are enrolled in school at least half-time.

**Unsubsidized Federal Stafford and Direct (Ford) Loan.** In combination with the subsidized loan, a student may borrow up to a combined total of $20,500 in subsidized and unsubsidized loans.

**Graduate PLUS Loans for Law Students.** Law students with an absence of bad credit may be eligible for these loans. Many law students are choosing Graduate PLUS instead of private loans to cover their remaining financial need beyond the $20,500 available through Stafford.

**Federal Perkins Loans.** These low interest loans are available at some law schools. Each student’s award is determined by the school, based on information obtained from the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid).
4) Private Loans

If federal loans and personal funds are insufficient to cover the costs of law school, students resort to private loans secured from banks and other lending institutions. Work with your law school financial aid office before making a decision about financing law school.

5) Earnings

The American Bar Association precludes first-year day division law students from working during the school year. The American Bar Association sets a 20-hour limit on employment for full-time second and third year law student.

Complete your FAFSA as soon as possible after January 1, prior to your first semester in law school. Completion is required for all federal student loan programs. Some law schools also use the FAFSA to collect information for their own institutional aid. Do NOT wait to complete the FAFSA until after you are admitted to a law school. You can list up to six law schools where you want reports sent, and update the list with additional schools.

B. Great Resources

- Accessgroup.org is the non-profit graduate student loan organization’s website.
- NAPLA/SAPLA Book of Lists, available in Hiatt and on our website.
- Discoverlaw.org, a website associated with LSAC, has a page on financial aid, and is a good website for other information.
- Mount Holyoke has put together a very useful list of loan and scholarship programs (https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/prelaw/financing_law_school)

SECTION VIII: DIFFERENT ADMISSIONS DECISIONS

A. Law Schools’ Decisions

In many ways this process is similar to undergraduate admissions decisions. You may hear of your acceptance into law school any time between late fall and July, the latter if you are waitlisted. The law schools to which you applied will contact you directly regarding their decisions. As you are accepted into law schools, most will host an “Open House” for admitted students. Through these events you can meet faculty and administrators, as well as current students and alumni. To the extent possible, you are encouraged to attend these events.
B. Early Decision

This option varies from school to school. Read each school’s policy carefully. Most require you to withdraw applications to other schools once you are accepted to their program. Generally, if you are accepted early, schools will ask for some level of financial commitment from you. While this kind of early admission relieves you of the stress of waiting, it can be limiting, particularly in finding out about any financial aid packages you may have been offered from other schools.

C. Deferrals

Law schools’ policies on deferring enrollment differ greatly. Some schools encourage deferral, others are accommodating for certain reasons, and others would prefer that you not apply until you are sure you are ready to enroll. It has become more common for schools to allow a limited number of accepted students to defer their law school career for a brief amount of time, generally one year. In most cases, if there is a financial reason, a family matter or acceptance into a fellowship, service or other graduate degree program, or an amazing opportunity that will advance your legal career and make you an even more interesting member of your class, many law schools will try to accommodate a candidate’s request to defer. You should contact the school directly, however, and not assume the deferral will be granted. Law schools rely heavily on having all of their classes filled. Also keep in mind that any financial aid package that you may be offered may not be guaranteed.

D. What If You Are Waitlisted?

Being placed on a wait list can be an extremely stressful situation. On the one hand, it does mean that the admissions committee found your credentials compelling. On the other, you continue to be uncertain about your position at the school, and chances of being accepted from the wait list vary from school to school and from year to year. You may want to discuss the situation with the Pre-Law Advisor, because you may not find out whether you are admitted until well into the summer, after you have placed a deposit at another school. There are some strategies you can employ to improve your chances of being admitted to a school that reserves a decision on your application:

- Write to the Director or Dean of Admissions expressing your strong interest in the school (“Letter of Continued Interest”). If it is true, mention in your letter that you are ready to attend if you are admitted. Write this letter approximately once per month from January – April. From May forward, you can communicate more frequently, such as every 2-3 weeks.

- When available, provide supplemental information in your letter of continued interest including grades, achievements and honors, law-related experiences (such as from an internship or job) and other activities. This is not a second personal statement. A strong
E. What If You Are Accepted into Multiple Schools?

Depending upon the timing of your acceptance, law schools generally provide a significant amount of time before they require accepted students to make a firm commitment to attend. Issues may arise, however, if you are accepted into one of your “safety” schools prior to hearing about the decisions of schools higher on your wish list. Generally speaking, when you make a commitment to a school, it is final. If you need assistance in the decision-making process, please contact the Pre-Law Advisor.

You may receive multiple acceptances in the same time period. This is indeed a happy dilemma but there is a strong word of caution. Do not accept a position at more than one law school. Since 2008, the CAS has been issuing “Overlap Reports” to all law schools listing the names of candidates who have accepted positions at more than one law school. A possible ramification of having one’s name placed on this list is the risk of all acceptance letters being rescinded. Again, you are encouraged to confer with the Hiatt Pre-Law Advisor if you face this situation.

SECTION IX: HOW DOES LAW SCHOOL DIFFER FROM UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION?

Almost all law schools have an orientation program to assist students in adjusting to the rigors and style of legal education. Orientation sessions also provide an opportunity to meet faculty, staff, and classmates.

First-year law school curriculum is established by the American Bar Association. There is little or no choice of classes in that year which include:

- Torts – the study of civil (non-criminal) wrongs
- Contracts – agreements between two or more parties
- Property – the study of ownership and transfer of real and personal property
- Civil Procedure – how non-criminal cases are initiated and proceed through resolution
- Constitutional Law
- Criminal Law
- Criminal Procedure
- Lawyering/Intro to Legal Advocacy – introduction to client contact and court cases
- Legal Research and Writing

Legal writing is different from what you are probably used to, and will take some time to learn. This process is a challenge for many first-year students, but is well worth the effort. You will learn to write in a more concise and clear manner, no matter what your level of writing skills are.
when you enter. You will learn new and specific legal language (some of it Latin) in law school, as well as new precision to the language you already use.

Your Brandeis University education will provide you with a solid foundation of academic skills to assist you in law school. Many courses are taught through the Socratic method of question and answer (students are called on without volunteering) designed to engage all students and teach them to analyze arguments, facts and legal principles quickly. There are few definitive answers to be found in first-year law classes.

**A word about competition:** Law students tend to be a competitive group by their nature. Competition can be a motivating force, or it can take an unpleasant turn. Be mindful and steadfast in your personal approach to competition. It is strongly recommended that you speak to current students at schools in which you are interested to find out what the student body is like – sometimes the reputation for competition is warranted, and at other times it is blown out of proportion.

**SECTION X: BRANDEIS ALUMNI**

The Hiatt Career Center maintains a database of volunteer alumni who are happy to communicate with students and other alumni on a host of issues related to law school such as advice on preparing for the LSAT, how they assess their schools and how they came to their career decisions. Please contact your pre-law advisor for tips on how to contact these mentors.

**Brandeis University Senior Statistics Class of 2013**

In the 2013-2014 Academic Year 60 Brandeisians applied to law schools, 18 of whom were seniors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measurement</th>
<th>Brandeis</th>
<th>National Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance Rates to 1 or more schools</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average LSAT score</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average GPA</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>3.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clearly Brandeis University applicants experience a higher than average percentage of success in applying to law schools. All of the top 15 law schools have admitted Brandeis applicants. A substantial number of applicants were admitted to more than one top law school.

**SECTION XI: CONCLUSION**

The decision to apply to law school can be life altering. We hope that you have found this manual to be of assistance in guiding you through the decision making and application processes. You are encouraged in the strongest terms to utilize all of your Brandeis University resources, especially the Hiatt Career Center. Should you have any suggestions regarding this Guide, Hiatt
staff would appreciate hearing from you. And of course, if you wish to speak to the Pre-Law Advisor or another Hiatt Counselor, please come to drop-in hours, Monday – Friday from 11:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. during the academic year, or contact us to set up a time for an appointment: 781-736-3618 or hiattcenter@brandeis.edu.
Resources and Bibliography

Law and Legal Study


American Bar Association: http://www.americanbar.org The ABA is the national professional organization for the legal profession.

Law Students Section:
Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession


1,000 Days to the Bar, Dennis Tonsing, William S. Hein & Co., 2003. A guide for first-year law students in time management and useful strategies for thriving during school.


Internet Legal Research Group, a website with a categorized index of over 4,000 law related websites. http://www.ilrg.com.


Financial Aid


http://Equaljusticeworks.org/finance -- Information on public interest law programs and law school loan repayment assistance programs (LRAP).

http://apps.americanbar.org/legalservices/probono/lawschools/pi_lrap.html

Disability Support

http://www.disabilityresources.org/index.htm -- Comprehensive site listing and providing links to information about all disabilities, reasonable accommodation, and educational resources.

http://www.jan.wvu.edu/links/adalinks.htm -- Comprehensive site with many resources about the ADA, maintained by the Job Accommodation Network (JAN).

http://www.abanet.org/disability/about/home.shtml -- Information by and for lawyers and other advocates.

http://www.ahead.org/resources/best-practices-resources/documents -- A guide to the best types of documentation for the provision of appropriate disability support services in higher education.

http://lsac.org/LSAT/accommodated-testing.asp - A site with information on how to apply for accommodations on the LSAT and all necessary forms.