



## A Course of Study for

# PRE-LAW

Academic preparation for law school takes place at the undergraduate level through a rigorous, comprehensive educational experience. Law schools are looking for well-rounded individuals with highly developed skills in the following areas: written and verbal communication, critical reading, analysis and problem solving, logic, listening, general research, and task organization and management. *Law schools do not require or prefer any particular major and pre-law is not a major.*

American Bar Association (ABA) approved law schools require a bachelor's degree and completion of the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) to be considered for admission. Three years of full-time study is generally required to earn the Juris Doctor (J.D.) degree. The A.B.A. requires that no full-time student hold an outside job for more than 20 hours per week. Students then take the bar exam in the state in which they wish to build their legal practice. California's bar exam is considered among the most difficult, with approximately a 45% pass rate.

### SMC LAW PATHWAY PROGRAM

In 2016, Santa Monica College joined the Pathway to Law School initiative which was created in partnership with the California State Bar Association's Council on Access and Fairness. The unique initiative established agreements with 29 community colleges and six law schools to create a pathway from community college to law school with the purpose of helping to diversify the legal profession. Students interested in participating in the Law Pathway Program must complete the following required courses:

- English 1, Reading and Composition
- English 2, Critical Analysis and Intermediate Composition
- Counseling 20, Student Success Seminar
- Communication Studies 21, Argumentation
- History 11, United States History through Reconstruction **OR** History 12, United States History Since Reconstruction
- Mathematics 54, Elementary Statistics
- Political Science 1, National and California Government
- Political Science 24, Introduction to Law **OR** Business 5, Business Law
- Political Science 94, Law Experiential Learning

*Some courses may be satisfied through AP course credit.*

Additional recommended courses that serve as preparation for law school but are **NOT** required for the Law Pathway program include:

- Philosophy 2, Ethics
- Philosophy 7, Logic and Critical Thinking
- Library Studies 1, Library Research Methods

Students are encouraged to complete the required Law Pathway coursework and participate in SMC's Pre-Law Society, as well as complete the appropriate transfer requirements in any major of their choice. Once a student transfers and then earns a bachelor's degree, in any major, Law Pathway students will receive *priority admissions review* to the six participating law schools:

Loyola Marymount University [www.lmsu.edu/](http://www.lmsu.edu/)  
 University of California, Berkeley [www.law.berkeley.edu/](http://www.law.berkeley.edu/)  
 University of California, Davis [www.law.ucdavis.edu/](http://www.law.ucdavis.edu/)  
 University of California, Irvine [www.law.uci.edu/](http://www.law.uci.edu/)  
 University of California, Los Angeles <https://law.ucla.edu/>  
 University of San Francisco [www.usfca.edu/law](http://www.usfca.edu/law)  
 University of Southern California [www.gould.usc.edu/](http://www.gould.usc.edu/)  
 Santa Clara University [www.law.scu.edu/](http://www.law.scu.edu/)

For more information on the SMC Law Pathway program visit: [www.smc.edu/academicaffairs/lawpathways](http://www.smc.edu/academicaffairs/lawpathways) The Law Pathway program is not open to students who have previously earned a bachelor's degree.

## LAW SCHOOL ADMISSIONS FACTORS

### UNDERGRADUATE GRADE POINT AVERAGE (GPA)

The more competitive law schools are looking for grade point averages in the range of 3.5 or higher. Improvement in grades and grade distribution is considered.

### SCORE ON LAW SCHOOL ADMISSION TEST (LSAT)

Along with GPA, the most important factor in determining admission is the LSAT score. The LSAT assesses reading comprehension, logical and analytical reasoning, and writing skills. Students are advised to take the test in the spring semester of their junior year of undergraduate study.

### UNDERGRADUATE COURSE OF STUDY

Admissions officials look for solid academic courses taken as part of a rigorous program. College curricular and extracurricular activities, work experience, and ethnic/racial background are also considered.

### PERSONAL STATEMENT

Evaluation of experiences and past accomplishments, exposure to law, and obstacles successfully overcome.

## HOW LAW SCHOOLS ARE CATEGORIZED

### A.B.A. APPROVED LAW SCHOOLS VS. NON-A.B.A.-APPROVED LAW SCHOOLS

Graduates from A.B.A.-approved law schools may take the bar exam in any state. Graduates of non-A.B.A. approved schools usually can only take the bar exam in the state in which the school is accredited unless they have practiced law for a significant period of time, five years for most states. Refer to <http://www.abanet.org/legaled> for specifics. Non-A.B.A. schools are generally less competitive for admission, and may not require completion of a bachelor's degree, but they also require a first-year exam (known as the baby bar). They are less expensive than their A.B.A. counterparts. However, bar passage rates tend to be lower, and career options may be more limited for non-A.B.A. approved schools. Correspondence law school graduates are not eligible to take the bar exam in any state except California, and then only under special conditions.

### RANKED BY TIERS

Although the A.B.A. officially discounts ranking systems, other sources rank law schools into four Tiers. The First Tier is the most highly selective, the most competitive, and difficult to enter, while the Fourth Tier is the least selective. Hierarchy is based on reputation, job placement success, strength of faculty, and prestige of parent institution, if there is one. U.S. News & World Report publishes annual law school rankings.

<http://grad-schools.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-law-schools/law-rankings>

## RESOURCES

Law School Admission Counsel: <http://www.lsac.org>

American Bar Association: <http://www.abanet.org>

US News Rankings: <http://www.usnews.com/education>

Cal Bar: <http://admissions.calbar.ca.gov/>

California Law, Inc: <http://www.CaliforniaLawInc.com>

Discover Law: <http://www.discoverlaw.org/>

## LAW SCHOOL FORUMS

Law School Forums, sponsored by the Law School Admission Counsel, provide an opportunity for prospective students to meet with law school officials from around the country. They are offered on a rotating basis throughout the U.S., and are usually held in Los Angeles once each year. Workshops include: The Application Process, Financing a Legal Education; Minority Information Panel; and What Do Lawyers Do? A current schedule for the Forums can be found at <http://www.lsac.org>.