

Frequently Asked Questions From First- and Second-Year Undergraduates

Podcast Transcript

Yessenia: Hola. Hello, this is Yessenia García Lebrón from the Office of Diversity Initiatives at the Law School Admission Council. Welcome and bienvenidos to all of our DiscoverLaw.org registrants. We're always happy to have you listen in on our podcast as you invest early in your law school admissions process. Our topic today will address some frequently asked questions from our first- and second-year students. By starting to address these questions early, we wish to provide you with up-to-date information and dispel any myth you may have heard. Today we are going to talk with Troy Riddle, an Assistant Director for Diversity Initiatives at the Law School Admission Council, sponsors of the DiscoverLaw.org website. First question, Mr. Riddle: Does being a diverse candidate give you an edge in admission?

Troy: That's a great question. Being a diverse candidate alone does not give a law school applicant an edge in the law school admission process. It is, likewise, no guarantee that you will be admitted, but law schools are very interested in having candidates from diverse backgrounds in the classroom, as it makes for rich discussion and helps to bring different perspectives to the study of law.

Yessenia: So, while diversity provides rich information about a candidate, diversity alone will not be the only factor in admissions.

Troy: Absolutely, and, in fact, there are some law schools that cannot even consider race in the admissions process.

Yessenia: Okay, good. Thank you. Okay, so let's talk about some of the requirements to attend law school.

Troy: Okay. Well, requirements of—to attend law school are numerous but very simple in many ways. You need a strong undergraduate academic record, which means you have to have good undergraduate grades. You can major in anything. What's more important is that you have a strong, competitive undergraduate GPA when deciding to apply to law school. You will have to complete an application for each law school that you're interested in attending. Letters of recommendation—preferably from professors who can

speak to your academic acumen and those skills that will be necessary for success in law school. You'll also need to craft a personal statement. Length varies by law school in what they prefer, but the personal statement is your opportunity to tell your story and why you deserve a seat in the incoming class. You'll have to provide transcripts for all of your undergraduate work. And then the well-known Law School Admission Test, which is also a requirement for law school. And you have to be able to meet deadlines because deadlines are critical to whether or not you get your file reviewed in time for the admissions committee to make their decisions.

Yessenia: You mention that a student can major in anything they wish, so what about students who have science backgrounds? Do they put a prospective student at a disadvantage for applying to law school?

Troy: Absolutely not. As I said earlier, students can major in anything that they choose to at the undergraduate level. What's important is that they have a strong record when it's all said and done. Science—a science background actually may be helpful to some students in terms of preparing for the test itself. Students, however, may need to do some extra work around traditional writing, as opposed to technical writing, which will be important to success in law school.

Yessenia: That's really good information to know about, that writing additional work. And my final question that many of our registrants want to know: Does it carry more weight if students go straight to law school from undergraduate school?

Troy: The short answer to that, Yessenia, is no. It does not carry more weight if you go straight through law school from undergrad. In fact, it could be helpful. It could be advantageous to students who are already in school mode, so to speak, as they prepare for the LSAT, and they have developed their study habits to get through undergrad, it might be beneficial for them to go straight through. But sometimes it's a good idea to take time off, maybe even work, a summer internship, gain some experience so that that student has a better idea of what they actually want and then, in turn, can use those experiences in their personal statement to share with the admissions committee why they're ready for law school and the study of the law.

Yessenia: So, there are different options of going straight to law school after undergraduate or, for reasons that are particular to an individual, they can decide to go afterwards. Good ideas to think about.

Troy: Absolutely. In fact, we're seeing a lot of applications from students who are what are considered nontraditional, where they've taken time off and worked sometimes one or two years, sometimes ten, twenty years. It just depends. But once again, that adds to the diversity of the classroom because they're bringing different experiences to the study of law, so, you know, either way it's a good thing.

Yessenia: Thank you. And that ends our session for today. Thank you, Mr. Riddle, for being with us and helping our DiscoverLaw registrants learn more about the law school admissions process. We want you to stay involved with DiscoverLaw, so stay tuned for more podcasts.