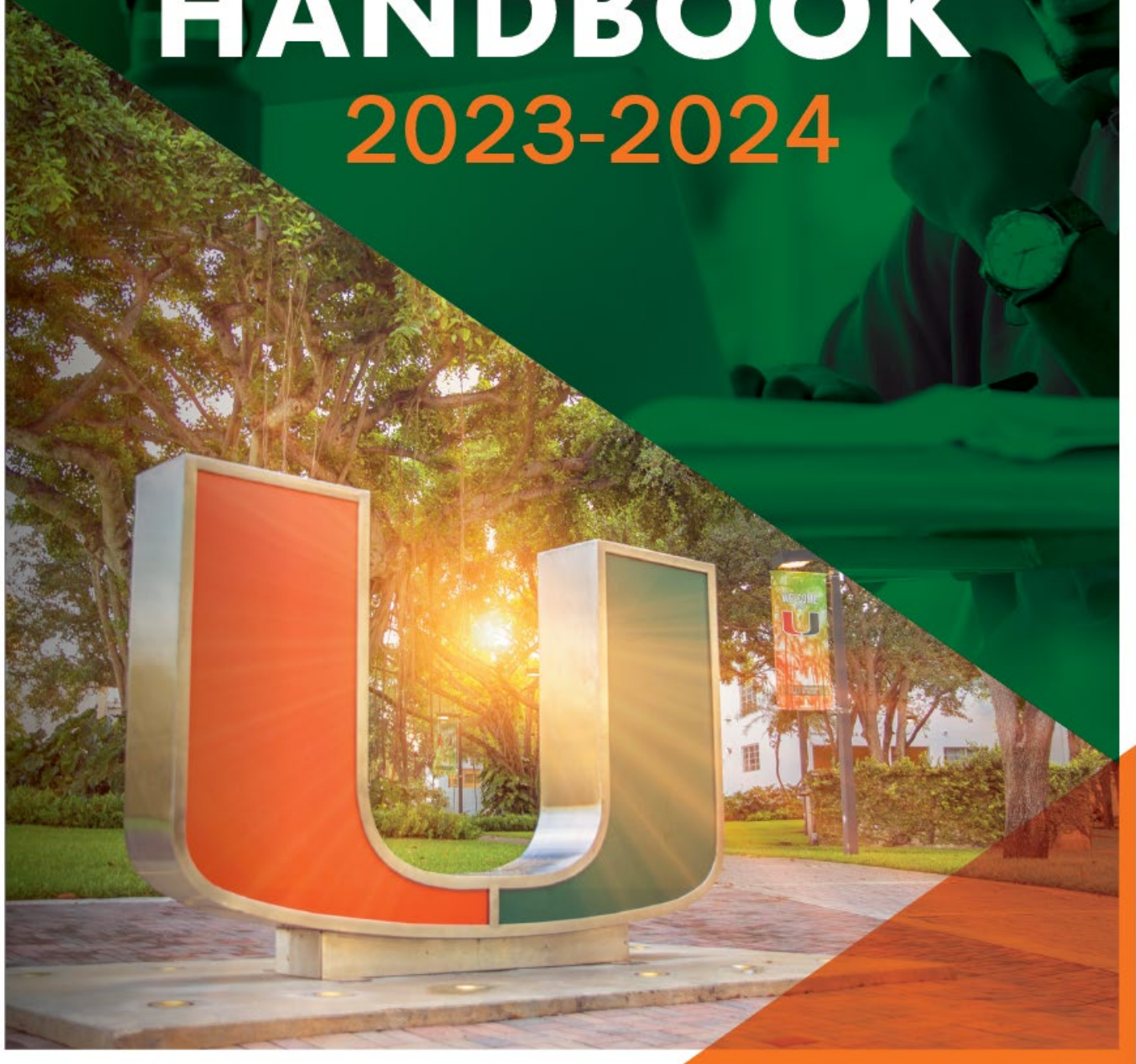




# PRE-LAW HANDBOOK

2023-2024



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*The Pre-Law Handbook is prepared by the University of Miami School of Law Office of Admissions and intended for use by the University of Miami undergraduate community and alumni wishing to learn more about applying to law school. Some of the information contained herein is general information about the law school admissions process, while some is specific to Miami Law. The Pre-Law Handbook is not intended for mass production, distribution, or use by those outside of the University community. For questions, please email the Office of Admissions at [admissions@law.miami.edu](mailto:admissions@law.miami.edu).*

## I. EXPLORING LAW SCHOOL

The decision whether to attend law school is one that should be made with careful consideration. Law school is a unique and rewarding experience and an excellent preparation for a variety of career paths. It is also a serious academic, financial, and personal commitment. It is important to assess your own interests, goals, and specific circumstances in order to arrive at a well-informed decision.

### Do Your Research

There are many ways to learn more about law school and the legal profession.

#### 1. Pre-Law Counseling

The University of Miami Offices of Pre-Law Counseling offers services to assist you. These services complement the academic advising you receive in the department of your major. Our offices provide one-on-one advising appointments, free LSAT preparation workshops, pre-law emails, as well as many educational and informational events throughout the year. The LSAC Forums and other events and webinars hosted by Miami Law will provide you with valuable information.

*For a pre-law coaching appointment, please contact:*

[Toppel Career Center](#)

5225 Ponce De Leon Blvd; 305-284-1808; [toppel@miami.edu](mailto:toppel@miami.edu);

Join drop-in hours in-person or [online via Zoom](#)

Monday to Friday from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm

**\* All undergraduate students**

Office of Student Academic Services, Ashe Building, Room 200; (Phone) 305-284-4333

**\* College of Arts & Sciences majors only**

#### 2. Miami Law Office of Admissions

The University of Miami School of Law's [Office of Admissions](#) offers in-person and virtual events for prospective students, including open houses, campus tours, webinars, class visits, and one-on-one meetings. For more information, please click the links below or contact the Office of Admissions at [admissions@law.miami.edu](mailto:admissions@law.miami.edu) or 305-284-6746.

Prospective students website - <https://admissions.law.miami.edu/index.html>

Fast facts - <https://admissions.law.miami.edu/about/fast-facts/index.html>

Upcoming events - <https://admissions.law.miami.edu/connect/events/jd/index.html>

Admissions advice - <https://admissions.law.miami.edu/about/admissions-advice/index.html>

Individual appointments - <https://calendly.com/miamilawadmissions>

Application process - <https://admissions.law.miami.edu/apply/jd/index.html>

#### 3. Law School Admission Council (LSAC) and DiscoverLaw.org

The [Law School Admission Council](#) provides excellent information for prospective law students, including information regarding the application process, [Khan Academy LSAT prep materials](#), a list of all ABA-accredited law schools, and [financial aid information](#).

[DiscoverLaw.org](http://DiscoverLaw.org) is a program sponsored by LSAC to encourage students to discover career opportunities in law and chart a path to help them succeed. With information about what law school is like, inspiring stories about law school graduates, answers to frequently asked questions about how to prepare for law school, and more, [DiscoverLaw.org](http://DiscoverLaw.org) provides students with resources, tips, and tools on how to become a competitive law school applicant.

#### **4. Informational Interviews with Current Law Students and Lawyers**

We highly encourage you to learn more about law school and the legal profession by speaking to current law students and those working in the field. An informational interview gives you an opportunity to obtain suggestions and advice regarding the best ways to achieve your goals while also providing an inside look at the law school experience and the legal profession. To set up an advising appointment or to learn more about informational interviews, contact the [Toppel Career Center](#).

#### **5. Internship Experience**

While not required for admission to law school, pursuing a legal internship is an invaluable way to learn more about the profession. Internships provide you with hands-on experience while allowing you to explore whether law-related work appeals to you.

For resources to assist you in securing a legal internship, contact the [Toppel Career Center](#).

## **II. CAREERS IN THE LAW**

Before applying to law school, it is important to educate yourself about the legal profession. Law school graduates pursue a vast array of careers in many different fields and industries. Lawyers fill many different roles for their clients - sounding board, counselor, educator, advocate, litigator, liaison, and gatekeeper. Lawyers must also be acutely mindful of their professional and ethical responsibilities and attentive to business and relationship development. The modern practice of law requires excellent communication skills, technological and cultural awareness, and heightened accessibility. For the vast majority of attorneys, the job is not nine to five, though there are ways to maintain work-life balance and a successful career.

The happiest and most fulfilled lawyers take an active role in designing what they want their careers to look like. That process begins with self-assessment—taking inventory of your strengths, weaknesses, interests, values, and prior personal and professional experiences. Successful self-assessment results in a personally fulfilling career that integrates your work into your life and satisfies your financial requirements. Below is a sampling of areas in which lawyers practice:

- |                                  |                           |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Administrative Law               | Family Law                |
| Antitrust Law                    | Health Care Law           |
| Appellate Law                    | Immigration Law           |
| Arbitration & Mediation          | Insurance Law             |
| Banking & Commercial Finance Law | Intellectual Property Law |
| Business Law                     | International Law         |
| Child Advocacy                   | Labor & Employment Law    |
| Civil Litigation                 | Medical Malpractice       |
| Civil Rights Law                 | Military Law              |
| Corporate Practice Law           | Privacy Law               |

Constitutional Law  
Criminal Law  
Cyberspace Law  
Disability Law  
Elder Law  
Entertainment, Arts & Sports Law  
Environmental Law  
E-commerce Law

Personal Injury Law  
Property Law  
Real Estate Law  
Regulatory Law  
Securities Law  
Tax Law  
Telecommunications Law  
Trusts and Estates Law

Attorneys practice these and many more legal specialties within a variety of settings. Listed below are some work settings in which lawyers practice:

Law firms (varying sizes)  
Businesses and corporations  
Academic institutions  
Associations (professional and trade)  
Non-profit organizations  
Public interest organizations  
Courts  
Bar associations  
Government (municipal, county, state, and federal)  
Lobbying firms

While working as a practicing attorney tends to be a common career path for law school graduates, there are also a variety of non-traditional ways to use a law degree. Some attorneys decide not to practice law in the traditional sense either from the onset of their career or at some point thereafter. Non-traditional legal jobs can be found in nearly any industry. Some areas where attorneys have found satisfying careers outside of traditional legal practice include:

Academia	International affairs
Alternative dispute resolution	Law firm recruiting
Banks	Legal search firms
Bar associations	Legal/professional consulting
Business (including executive positions)	Courts
Criminal justice and law enforcement	Legislative/government affairs
Entrepreneurship	Media, arts, and entertainment
Foundations and non-profit organizations	Politics
Health care	Trade and investment
Human resources	Writing and editing
Insurance and risk management	

While an attorney's career options are broad, the decision whether to attend law school should be given serious consideration. If you are contemplating going to law school, you should first engage in an honest self-assessment to arrive at a clear understanding of what you hope to gain from the experience. With that being said, the law school experience is extremely rewarding and will equip you with the type of critical skills that will enable you to succeed not only in the legal profession but also in every aspect of your life.

### III. PREPARING FOR LAW SCHOOL

In recruiting future lawyers, law schools look for talented, well-rounded, and interesting applicants who will enhance their communities. There is no single curriculum that is the ideal preparation for law school. Therefore, your undergraduate years are a time to become intellectually engaged in a rich variety of experiences. Rather than choosing courses that might be “good for law school,” you are far better advised to select rigorous courses in any discipline that will challenge you to think, write, and expand the underlying critical thinking skills required to succeed in law school. These skills include analytical and problem-solving skills, research and writing skills, oral communication and listening skills, and effective time-management skills.

Below are some suggestions for preparing for law school:

**1. Select a major that interests you and do well.** In Miami Law’s 2022 entering class, there were 93 undergraduate majors represented. Rather than expecting applicants to select from law-related majors, admissions officers would prefer that you select a well-rounded, rigorous course load about which you are passionate and in which you will succeed. Avail yourself of opportunities to challenge yourself academically, like getting published, writing a thesis, engaging in writing competitions, debate, mock trial, etc.

**2. Participate in extracurricular activities.** Participating in extracurricular activities can help develop leadership, organizational, and communication skills while also making you a well-rounded individual. Do not participate in activities simply for the sake of a resume or application but rather to broaden your skills and depth of knowledge. It is better to have leadership roles in one or two organizations than be just a member of many.

## IV. APPLYING TO LAW SCHOOL

### Step 1: When to Apply

#### Timetable for Pre-Law Students

Freshman Year (or whenever you decide to explore a career in the law):

- Visit and set up a meeting with your undergraduate pre-law advising office.
- Begin building a record of academic achievement.
- Attend fall and spring pre-law information sessions.

Sophomore Year:

- Begin building your resume, perhaps with a legal internship.
- Take part in and position yourself for leadership in extracurricular activities.
- Research law schools.

Junior Year:

- Decide when you will take the LSAT, GRE, or JD Next Test. Register and begin preparing for an entrance exam. Take the test for the first time in the winter or spring of your junior year. Give yourself plenty of time if you need to retake the test before submitting your applications.
- Make an appointment with your undergraduate pre-law advisor to discuss your desire to apply to law school.
- Attend prospective student events at Miami Law (virtually or in-person) and/or an LSAC Forum.
- Begin visiting and touring law schools.
- Sit in on a law school class (virtually or in-person).
- Near the end of the academic year, ask recommenders if they will write you a letter of recommendation.

Summer before Senior Year or Earlier:

- Take the LSAT, GRE or JD Next Test. Obtain advice from your pre-law advisor or call law school admissions offices directly to determine if you should take the test again.
- Register for the Candidate Referral Service and Credential Assembly Service at [LSAC.org](https://www.lsac.org). Begin reviewing application procedures.

Senior Year:

- Complete and submit applications. It is ideal to apply in the fall to best position yourself for admission and scholarship.
- Fill out your FAFSA as soon as possible after October 1. Submitting a FAFSA does not bind you to attend the law schools to which you submit the information.
- Visit the law schools to which you are admitted. Most schools plan admitted student events in the spring prior to deposit deadlines.
- After graduation, send the law school where you are attending a final transcript showing your bachelor's degree has been conferred.

## Step 2: Where to Apply

In selecting a law school, you should examine the following factors and weigh them according to your individual priorities:

### 1. American Bar Association Accreditation

Choose an [ABA-accredited law school](#). Most states require a JD from an ABA-accredited law school to sit for their bar examination.

### 2. Median LSAT/GRE Score and Undergraduate GPA

Each school publishes its 25<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> percentile LSAT/GRE score and undergraduate GPA. Your LSAT/GRE score and undergraduate GPA and weigh heavily in the admissions process. The majority of law schools to which you should apply should be schools where your undergraduate GPA and highest LSAT score fall within the 25<sup>th</sup> to 75<sup>th</sup> percentiles on each parameter, i.e., close to the median, to give yourself a stronger chance of admission.

However, you may also wish to apply to “safety” or “reach” schools. Safety schools are schools where your LSAT/GRE and undergraduate GPA exceed the 75<sup>th</sup> percentiles on each parameter. You may have a better chance at receiving merit scholarship funding at safety schools. Reach schools are schools where your LSAT/GRE and undergraduate GPA fall below the 25<sup>th</sup> percentiles on each parameter. Do not expect to receive merit-based scholarship funding if admitted to a reach school.

The JD Next is a new type of assessment accepted at 38 law schools at the time of publication. More information is available here: <https://aspenpublishing.com/pages/jdnext>

### 3. Cost of Attendance

Attending law school is a serious financial commitment. See the “Financing Your Legal Education” section of this handbook, below, for specific financial aid information.

### 4. Geographic Location

Location is somewhat more important in selecting a law school than an undergraduate institution because where you attend professional school has a bigger impact on where you begin and establish your career. In considering where to attend law school, you should think about:

- Where you plan to live/practice upon graduation
- Whether the law school has a national presence (i.e., Will this law school allow me to practice where I want, even if it's out of this state/region?)
- The legal market and community of the city in which the law school is located

## Step 3: How to Apply

### LSAC, the Credential Assembly Service, and the LSAT

The [Law School Admission Council](#) (LSAC) facilitates the law school admissions process. Everything you need to apply to law schools, including the online applications to all ABA-approved law schools, is available on the LSAC website.





The [LSAC's Credential Assembly Service \(CAS\)](#) evaluates, organizes, analyzes, and summarizes your academic information and reports this information along with your applications, undergraduate transcripts, LSAT score(s), and letters of recommendation to the law schools to which you are applying.

The [Law School Admission Test \(LSAT\)](#) is a standardized test designed to evaluate the skills necessary for success in the first year of law school. All law schools accept the LSAT and use it as part of their evaluation process. For detailed LSAT information, including fees (and the fee waiver program), locations, and exam preparation information, please visit [LSAC.org](#).

The LSAT is administered numerous times during the application cycle. Test dates may be accessed [here](#). It is advisable to take the test early (the summer before your senior year or earlier) so that if you decide to retake it, you have adequate time to regroup and earn a more competitive score. This will enable you to submit your applications well in advance of deadlines, which will receive a more favorable reading at most law schools and may affect scholarship funds available to you.

Thorough preparation for the LSAT is essential. Many schools will take your highest LSAT score, but all scores reported within the last five years will be on your CAS report. A [free LSAT preparation](#) course through the Khan Academy and other materials are offered through [LSAC](#).

For information about taking the LSAT with accommodations, please click [here](#). Should you need verification or contact with the University of Miami's Office of Disability Services, they are located at 1307 Stanford Drive, Student Services Building, Second Floor. OAS staff can be reached at 305-284-2800. Requests for accommodations as a student at University of Miami may be made online [here](#). Another resource is the School of Law's [Office of Student Accessibility and Inclusion](#) (305-284-9907, [access@law.miami.edu](mailto:access@law.miami.edu), 1311 Miller Drive, Suite A212) for specific questions about the School of Law policies and resources.

Some law schools, including Miami Law, also accept the GRE or JD NEXT in lieu of the LSAT. The GRE exam is managed by ETS; more information is available here: <https://www.ets.org/gre.html>. The JD Next exam is managed by Aspen Publishing; more information is available here: <https://aspenpublishing.com/pages/jdnext>.

## V. APPLICATION CHECKLIST

The following checklist, prepared by LSAC, broadly illustrates the sequence of events in the law school application process. Applicants are responsible for monitoring their own progress throughout the application process.

- [Create your secure LSAC.org account](#).
- Register with the [Candidate Referral Service \(CRS\)](#) so law schools can recruit you.
- Find the pre-law advisor at your undergraduate school and arrange a call or visit.
- Prepare for the LSAT. [Download a free sample test](#) or [purchase official LSAT prep books](#). Free official LSAT test prep is available through the [Khan Academy](#).
- Use LSAC's [searchable database](#) to research law schools, admission requirements, and application deadlines.
- Sign up for a [Law School Forum](#), where you can meet with many of the law school

- admissions experts from ABA-approved law schools.
- Register for the [LSAT](#), [GRE](#) or [JD Next](#) Exam. Taking the test early is advised. Prepare fully for the first LSAT, but build into your game plan time to regroup and retake the LSAT should that be needed.
  - Sign up for LSAC's [Credential Assembly Service \(CAS\)](#) to easily meet law school requirements for transcripts, recommendations, evaluations, and applications. You need not register for CAS at the same time you register for the LSAT, but you should register long before your first law school application deadline.
  - Arrange for registrar's offices to send your official transcripts to LSAC. Request forms are available from your LSAC account. Allow at least two weeks from the time of receipt to process your U.S. or Canadian transcripts. More time will be needed if your transcripts are from outside the United States, its territories, or Canada.
  - Contact, and if possible, meet with your recommenders to request your letters. Allow two weeks from the time of receipt to process your letters of recommendation.
  - View your Academic Summary Report in your LSAC account once all U.S./Canadian undergraduate transcripts have been summarized.
  - Use your LSAC account to apply online to as many U.S. law schools as you choose. You must pay for a law school report at the time you apply to each school.
  - Keep track of the status of everything related to your law school admission through your LSAC account.

## 1. Personal Statement

Most law schools require you to submit a personal statement with your application. The personal statement is important to admissions committees as it provides a sample of your writing skills and your ability to present ideas in a clear, coherent manner.

- Your essay should be concise and well-written.
- Know your audience. Law schools are looking for evidence of your academic and professional ability and commitment to a legal education.
- Make it personal. Give the admissions committee a sense of your talents, skills, and characteristics.
- Solicit feedback before submitting. Your statement should be well-edited with no errors.

## 2. Letters of Recommendation

LSAC's Letters of Recommendation (LOR) are submitted through the Credential Assembly Service (CAS). A letter discusses the qualities and characteristics of the applicant's ability, academic and otherwise, to study law. LORs may be submitted to CAS electronically or in hard copy. If you use LSAC's LOR service, your references will only need to submit their letters of recommendation once to LSAC—even if you intend to include these letters in every one of your law school applications. LSAC will make copies of each reference's original letter to include in your [law school reports](#).

Access to LSAC's LOR service is included in CAS registration. This service allows you to manage your letters of recommendation through your LSAC account. You get to assign which letters you want each law school to receive. LSAC will make copies of each assigned reference's original

letter to include in your law school reports.

Law schools typically require between two and four letters of recommendation. If applying to law school while still in undergraduate, two letters from professors who know you well are suggested. The others can be from employers, advisors, coaches, volunteer directors, or others who can speak to your candidacy.

Go to [LSAC's LOR webpage](#) for detailed procedural information.

- Choose recommenders who can comment on your depth and breadth of knowledge, analytical skills, writing acumen, problem-solving ability, critical thinking skills, and scholastic aptitude. Most schools do not consider general, unreservedly praiseworthy letters helpful.
- An email will be sent to each of your recommenders requesting them to complete and upload a letter for you; or you may print the required recommender forms to give to your recommenders if they would prefer to submit a paper LOR. Offer recommenders addressed stamped envelopes. If your recommender is submitting your letter of recommendation on paper, you must print the required LOR Form from your LSAC account and deliver it to your recommender. This form must accompany your letter of recommendation. Paper letters received without an accompanying LOR Form or without the recommender's signature will be returned to the recommender.
- Letters from non-faculty recommenders can discuss your non-academic ability such as communication style and interpersonal skills.

## V. FINANCING YOUR LEGAL EDUCATION

Federal and institutional aid may be available and come in two main categories:

- 1. Federal Funding: Direct Unsubsidized and Graduate PLUS Loans** based on your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- 2. Institutional Aid:** Scholarships which may be merit and/or need based.

### Deadline Dates

Deadline dates for federal aid and scholarships will vary by institution; therefore, be sure to review each school's website to adhere to their deadlines. The [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) is available as early as October 1 every year. More details about deadlines may be found [here](#). The FAFSA can be completed [here](#) using estimated income information, but you should update your application once your current year tax information is available.

Students working toward the completion of their graduate or professional degree are typically considered independent for purposes of federal financial aid. However, parental information may be required for some institutional scholarship opportunities. Please contact each school to determine how to successfully complete the scholarship process.

### General Sources of Aid Available to Law Students

- 1. [Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan](#):** Students may borrow up to \$20,500 in Federal Unsubsidized Loans per academic year. Interest begins to accumulate at the time the first disbursement is made. Repayment begins six months after graduation, if a student drops to less than half-time enrollment or withdraws from the program.
- 2. [Federal Direct Graduate PLUS Loan](#):** Visit this [website](#) for further details.
- 3. Private (Alternative) Education Loans:** For credit-worthy students who are not eligible for federal loans, there are private loans available from commercial lenders to help students meet living expenses and educational costs. As a credit check will be done by the lender, students should request a copy of their credit report to be sure that there are no errors and that all valid credit problems can be addressed ahead of time.
- 4. Scholarships:** Scholarships to attend law school are available from a number of different sources based upon a variety of criteria. If you are willing to do the research and leg work, you may find scholarship funds which are untapped because few people know about them. There are various search engines to get information about external scholarships, and some may be found [here](#).
  - Criteria – May include an applicant's academic merit, race, gender, ethnicity, religious affiliation, veteran status, geographic location, etc.
  - Sources – May include bar associations, fraternal, religious, and social organizations, state groups and agencies, veteran organizations, social fraternities and sororities, and children and/or employees of certain companies, unions, or credit unions.

The terms and amounts of applicants' scholarship awards may vary at different schools. LSAC has a webpage about [Financial Aid Options](#) and additional information about financing your legal education. The University of Miami School of Law website also includes important information about scholarships and loans: [Financing Your Legal Education](#), [Tuition/Cost of Attendance](#), [Scholarships from Miami Law](#), and [Scholarships from External Organizations](#).

### **Financial Aid Tips**

- Do not wait for your admission decision to apply for financial aid. Each law school may have different financial aid deadlines so be aware of the deadline(s), and get your application completed as soon as possible. Financial aid resources can be limited, and there is no guarantee of assistance for students who do not submit appropriate documentation by the deadline posted.
- Apply for an FSA ID from the Department of Education early:  
<https://fsaid.ed.gov/npas/index.htm>
- Keep a checklist and copies of all forms submitted. Put your name and UM ID# on all forms submitted.
- Use your most recent 1040 Tax Returns when completing the FAFSA. The application becomes available in October.
- Make a budget and adhere to it so that you are making smart financial decisions, whether it is budgeting or saving for your advanced degree. Since law schools encourage or require that you do not work during your first year of law school (full-time students), you should have adequate funds available prior to entry into your first year.

*Law school is not for spectators. Applicants who show they are proactive in seeking and grabbing opportunities to develop intellectually, professionally, and personally are ones we love to see. Prospective students should apply early to optimally position themselves for admission and scholarship consideration. Have your file submitted by Thanksgiving to avoid the holiday rush and delays. – Joseph Matthews at Miami Law*

## VI. Resources

[Miami Law's Admissions Advice](#)

[American Bar Association](#)

[National Association for Law Placement](#)

### **University of Miami School of Law Office of Admissions**

- Office: Room F203
- Phone: 305-284-6746
- Email: [admissions@law.miami.edu](mailto:admissions@law.miami.edu)
- Website: <http://www.law.miami.edu/JointheU>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MiamiLawSchool/>
- Twitter: [@MiamiLawSchool](https://twitter.com/MiamiLawSchool)
- Instagram: [@MiamiLaw School](https://www.instagram.com/MiamiLawSchool)
- Podcast: [Miami Law Explainer](#)

### **2022-2023 Pre-Law Events**

- [LSAC Law School Forums](#)
- [University of Miami School of Law Events](#)
- [Upcoming and Archived Webinars](#)

### **Pre-Law Related Clubs at the University of Miami**

- [Phi Alpha Delta Pre-Law Fraternity](#)
- [Above the Bar](#) – A multicultural organization for University of Miami pre-law students to ensure their successful matriculation into law school.
- [Debate Club and Debate Team](#)
- [Model United Nations Team](#)