

# LSAC STATEMENT OF GOOD ADMISSION AND FINANCIAL AID PRACTICES

## Introduction

The Statement of Good Admission and Financial Aid Practices is intended to focus attention on the principles that should guide the policy and practice for all law school admission and financial aid programs. No attempt has been made to develop legislative guidelines, because no absolute rules apply to every situation. The statement provides recommendations to improve the admission and financial aid processes in law schools and to promote the highest standards of professional conduct for all participants.

This statement is presented to all member schools, is made available on LSAC.org, and is disseminated to participants in the LSAC Newcomers Workshop.

## General Principles

The following are the general principles that represent the statement's core ideals.

### Professionalism

The primary purpose of the law school admission process is to serve applicants, law schools, and the legal profession by making informed judgments about those who seek legal education. This responsibility demands the highest standards of professional conduct and ethical behavior.

### Integrity

Law school admission offices should avoid impropriety or the appearance of impropriety, as well as any conflict of interest or the appearance of conflict. They should not accept anything for themselves or the law school, or pursue any activity, that may compromise or seem to compromise their integrity or that of the admission process.

### Accuracy and Candor

Law school admission offices should strive to achieve and maintain the highest standards of accuracy and candor in the development and publication of print, electronic, and other materials designed to inform applicants. Any errors should be corrected promptly.

### Knowledge

Law school admission offices should ensure that all parties involved with the admission process are familiar with and observe institutional guidelines and policies, applicable federal and state laws, and accreditation standards.

### Fairness

Law school admission offices should strive to maintain and maximize fairness to all applicants. Applicants should have the freedom to explore as many opportunities to pursue legal education as they choose.

### Equity and Inclusion

Law school admission offices should give equal opportunity in admission considerations to applicants who are members of underrepresented groups in the legal profession. These may include applicants from LGBT, ethnic, and racial backgrounds; applicants with disabilities; applicants who may not have enjoyed adequate opportunities to develop or demonstrate their potential for academic achievement; and those who would not otherwise be meaningfully represented in the entering class or legal profession.

### Confidentiality

Law school admission offices should respect the confidential nature of information received about applicants. While a policy of openness and accessibility should form the basis for all communications with applicants, law schools should be scrupulous in maintaining the privacy of applicants in accordance with institutional guidelines and all applicable federal and state laws.

### Collaboration and Community

Law school admission offices should and are strongly encouraged to work together in good faith using the highest standards of professionalism and conduct to address any issues that may arise between them. Member schools may consult LSAC with any concerns or requests for clarification of the principles outlined in this statement. LSAC, however, reserves the right to defer to the judgment of member schools.

### Responsibility in Use

Law school admission offices should carefully review all terms and conditions for any LSAC services and products [e.g., the LSAT score, the Credential Assembly Service (CAS) report, the Candidate Referral Service (CRS), and any other related LSAC services or products].

## Admissions

The following conventions represent a set of understandings and standards among member schools regarding best admission practices to advance the admission profession.

### Recruitment and Promotional Activities

Law schools may actively seek to share information about their institution and programs through participation at LSAC forums, law school recruitment events, and pipeline programs, and through promotional materials and media.

Member law schools should:

- perform an oversight role in training anyone who represents their institution, to ensure that all individuals representing their institution and programs do so according to the General Principles outlined in this statement;
- promote their institution and programs without making broad and unfounded comparisons with or disparaging remarks about other law schools, including the use of surveys or rankings that purport to compare the quality of law schools;
- comply with all applicable requirements from the American Bar Association and regional accrediting agencies for providing consumer information about their institution and programs in their promotional materials;
- provide anyone who advises prospective students, applicants, and admitted students with their admission requirements, processes, and institutional programs to assist them in advising;
- inform applicants on how they may access bar eligibility rules when applicable; and
- update qualified designated school officials (DSOs) periodically with their admission policies and procedures and refer applicants to DSOs regarding visa applications and immigration status.

### Application

The application is the applicant's opportunity to provide accurate, relevant, and necessary information to determine their admissibility for the study of law.

Member law schools should:

- develop an application that states clearly what information is being sought;
- seek only information on an application that will assist the law school in assessing the applicant's candidacy for admission or assist the law school in developing recruitment efforts; and
- state clearly the applicant's continual obligation to provide accurate, current, and complete information in their application, and state the consequences of providing false, misleading, or incomplete information, including the possibility of notifying LSAC's Misconduct and Irregularities in the Admission Process Subcommittee.

### Admission Policies and Procedures

Admission policies are the written description(s) of the general approach a law school takes in admissions and the specific instructions available to prospective applicants and admitted students.

Member law schools should:

- develop concise, coherent, written admission policies that describe the factors (e.g., academic record, LSAT score, letters of recommendation, written statements, English proficiency tests, interviews) that may affect a decision;
- state clearly admission policies, processes, and deadlines to all applicants and apply them consistently to all applicants;
- include in their admission policies procedures for reporting suspected instances of misconduct or an irregularity to LSAC's Misconduct and Irregularities in the Admission Process Subcommittee; and
- review their admission policies periodically.

### Binding Early Decision

A binding early decision plan is one under which an applicant and a law school mutually agree at the initial point of application that the applicant will be given an admission decision at a date earlier than usual. The applicant must commit to enroll, withdraw all pending applications at other law schools, and not initiate new applications if admitted via binding early decision.

Member law schools that have a binding early decision plan should:

- state clearly the policies, terms, and conditions of their binding early decision plan to all applicants, including any consequences for violating the agreement, impact on financial aid and scholarship eligibility, and/or policies regarding release from the agreement.

### Commitments

A commitment is defined as an affirmative step taken by an applicant (e.g., submitting a seat deposit or an enrollment form) to indicate their intention to matriculate at an institution.

Member law schools should:

- state clearly the policies and processes for submitting a commitment and holding a commitment and, if applicable, their policies regarding admitted students who may violate a commitment agreement, including any possible consequences that may result from holding multiple commitments simultaneously;
- request commitments of any kind only from admitted applicants no earlier than **April 1**, except under binding early decision plans or for academic terms beginning in the spring or summer;
- allow applicants to freely accept a new offer from a law school even though a scholarship has been accepted, a deposit has been paid, or a commitment has been made to another school;
- provide financial aid awards to admitted students who have submitted a timely financial aid application, before requesting any commitment; and
- report and update a student's commitment accurately and in a timely manner.

### Waiting Lists

Placement on the waiting list represents a non-final evaluation of an applicant's candidacy for study at a particular school.

Member law schools should:

- set policies for maintaining the length and duration of waiting lists that will balance a realistic likelihood of admission with the interests of wait-listed applicants;

- provide wait-listed applicants information about the process and policies of admission from the waiting lists;
- ensure that final decisions about wait-listed applicants are rendered and communicated to the students in a timely manner; and
- state clearly the process and deadlines for students admitted from the waiting list to accept or decline an offer of admission.

### Transfers

Some member law schools allow JD students at other law schools to apply for admission as a second-year JD student typically based on the applicant's first-year academic performance in law school.

Member law schools should:

- state clearly the admission policies, deadlines, required documents, courses accepted for credit, and course equivalency to all prospective transfer applicants;
- provide applicants information about the programmatic implications of transferring before requiring a commitment; and
- provide applicants information about the transfer process broadly rather than targeting any particular law school.

### Financial Aid

For many, access to legal education often depends on access to financial assistance. The following are conventions that represent a set of understandings and standards among member schools regarding best financial aid practices to advance the admission profession.

#### Collaboration with Financial Aid Offices

All law school admission professionals should have an understanding of the financial aid process in order to present accurate, coherent, and complete information to prospective applicants and admitted students.

Member law schools should:

- keep abreast of institutional and federal financial aid policies on scholarships and grants, loans, and cost-of-attendance budgets;

- provide cost-of-attendance budgets that include tuition and fees, books and supplies, room and board, transportation, and other costs and expenses related to attending law school;
- state clearly the application deadlines for financial aid and/or scholarships;
- provide information on the average debt of graduating JD students, the existence of and policies surrounding loan repayment assistance programs (LRAP), if applicable, and educational debt management, as part of the admission process; and
- refer to the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators Code of Conduct for additional best financial aid practices.

### Scholarships

Scholarships may represent an important opportunity for law schools to recruit applicants that advance their institutional goals, while allowing students to reduce the overall cost of attending law school.

Member law schools should:

- develop fair, coherent, and consistent policies in their scholarship awarding process and (if applicable) scholarship revision or reconsideration requests;
- provide applicants and admitted students with the general guidelines used in scholarship awarding;
- request commitments of any kind from admitted students to accept an offer of institutional aid no earlier than **April 1**, except under binding early decision plans or for academic terms beginning in the spring or summer; and
- state clearly the requirements and policies for scholarship retention (e.g., academic or service requirements, or any consequences if the student transfers to another law school).

*Any inquiries concerning the LSAC Statement of Good Admission and Financial Aid Practices should be directed to: LSAC, Office of Education and Prelaw Programs, 215.968.1228.*

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