

Admissions Policy

The University of Michigan Law School's admissions process is designed to assemble an exceptional community of talented and interesting students who will flourish in and out of the classroom and go on to accomplished careers. Two crucial points follow from this goal. One: our assessment is forward-looking, not backward-looking. Two: our evaluation criteria are holistic, in two senses. First, each application features a wide range of relevant considerations that can't be reduced to any mechanical formula. Second, we are always thinking about the mix of people we are assembling, not merely making a series of discrete decisions on individual applicants. Here we expand on each point.

One: We are not rewarding past performance, but assessing the likelihood of outstanding engagement with the School and with whatever career follows. Past performance is of course the basis of our assessment and we look for a record of impressive accomplishments. But strictly speaking no one deserves or is entitled to admission on the basis of that performance, however impressive. Quantitative measures of academic performance – LSAT and GPA – neither preclude nor guarantee admission. We look for highly intelligent people who welcome challenging experiences, who have demonstrated leadership and community service, who have shown determination and discipline, who are eager to outdo themselves, and who are creative and resilient in dealing with adversity. We pay attention to evidence of academic progress. So, too, we pay attention to considerations – working many hours, coming from an educationally deprived background, having primary care responsibilities for family members, and so on – that may provide a context for the formal record of academic achievement.

Two: The Law School is warmly cooperative and intellectually invigorating. We seek students who relish both working together and engaging in constructive and challenging debate. Our graduates go on to succeed in every imaginable domain of the law and beyond: public interest law, private firms, government service, the bench, solo practice, academia, corporate counsel and leadership, business, politics, and more. We seek students who will continue this tradition of excellence in varied careers. Our commitments to collegiality, to bracing debate, and to enabling our students to pursue a wide range of options explain why the School has long been committed to diversity along many dimensions. In assembling an entering class, then, we look for individuals with intriguingly different backgrounds, experiences, goals, and perspectives. Academic majors, work experience, extracurricular activities, distinctive moral and political outlooks, socioeconomic background, time living or working abroad, and more inform our admissions decisions. We urge applicants to supply whatever information they think will most fully present their qualifications and attributes.

The dean of admissions regularly consults with the Law School's dean and the faculty admissions committee on questions arising in implementing this policy.