

Covid-19 and Law school- What's the latest?

Below is a list of questions about how the COVID-19 pandemic, and the responses to it, might affect various aspects of the law school admissions process. This post will be updated regularly, but remember that events are moving VERY quickly, and circumstances are changing all the time, and will most likely continue to do so. When in doubt, double-check the info to make sure it's up to date. If you have applications pending right now, don't hesitate to contact individual law schools for the most accurate information about their own admissions process. I will continue to update this as warranted.

Updated July 10, 2020

What is the latest news?

On July 8, LSAC made three very important announcements. Please review them carefully and see Dr. Glennon or contact your specific law school with additional questions-

- **Given the continuing COVID-19 emergency, we will offer the online, remotely proctored LSAT-Flex in August**, instead of the in-person LSAT scheduled for August 29 in the U.S. and Canada. As you know, the [LSAT-Flex](#) gives candidates the opportunity to earn an LSAT score and continue their law school journeys despite COVID-19 restrictions on travel or public gatherings. Already, nearly 18,000 candidates have received scores via the May and June LSAT-Flex exams, and another 15,000+ candidates will take the LSAT-Flex the week of July 11. The August LSAT-Flex will be administered starting Saturday, August 29. Most test takers will test on Saturday, Sunday, or Monday, with a small number of tests occurring later in the week based on specific remote proctoring requirements. We will continue to provide loaner devices and quiet, internet-equipped places to test for candidates that need assistance, to help maintain diversity, equity, and opportunity in the face of COVID-19. Due to the demands of the LSAT-Flex administration, this will be an undisclosed test. We are targeting Friday, September 18 as the score release date.

Note: More information about next steps for candidates can be found in the second half of this email, and on our [LSAT-Flex FAQ page](#).

- **In response to requests and feedback from test takers, we have created a new score preview option for first-time test takers who wish to see their score before deciding whether or not to keep it as part of their LSAC transcript and report it to schools.** Score preview will cost \$45 for candidates who sign up prior to the first day of testing for a given test administration, or candidates may sign up during a specified time period after testing has concluded for \$75. First-time test takers who sign up for score preview will receive their scores at the same time other test takers receive theirs, (assuming they have completed their LSAT Writing and have no holds on their accounts), and will have six (6) calendar days to decide if they want to cancel or keep their score. If they take no action their scores will be added to their LSAC file and released to schools at the end of the six-day period. Of course, candidates are

welcome to discuss their previewed score with their pre-law advisor if they wish, and seek their counsel on the best path forward. **This feature will be available for purchase starting around August 1.**

Note: First-time test takers who have an approved LSAT fee waiver will receive score preview free of charge. In 2019, LSAC approved 7,939 candidates for fee waivers. Because there were 71,515 first-time test takers in the 2019-2020 testing cycle, that means 11.1% of those first time test takers would have automatically received the free score preview.

You can learn more about the score preview option at our

website: <https://www.lsac.org/lsat/taking-lsat/lsat-scoring/about-score-preview>

- **In response to feedback from our member law schools, we are reinstating the requirement that all test takers must have a completed LSAT Writing sample on file** before they will receive their score for the August LSAT-Flex or future tests. The writing sample has been a required part of the LSAT for decades, and law schools expect to see the LSAT writing sample when they review a candidate's application. Indeed, many schools have reported that they now find the writing sample even more valuable due to the improved readability of the online LSAT Writing format introduced in June 2019. To help candidates complete the writing portion of their test, we will now open LSAT Writing eight (8) days prior to every test administration. Candidates may complete their LSAT Writing at the time and date that is most convenient to them, but we will not release scores to candidates or schools until a candidate has a completed writing sample in their file.

Note: Candidates only need one writing sample. August (and future) test takers who already have a writing sample on file from a previous exam do not need to complete a new LSAT Writing sample.

For more information about LSAT Writing, see <https://www.lsac.org/lsat/taking-lsat/about-lsat-writing>

What candidates need to do next, regarding the August LSAT-Flex

Registration for the August test is open through July 15, so any candidate who wishes to take the LSAT-Flex may register until that date.

Any candidate who is already registered for the August 29 LSAT may either take the August LSAT-Flex or opt out and receive a coupon which can be applied to any future test between October 2020 and April 2021. Current August registrants should visit their LSAC account and submit the online form with their choice. If we do not hear from them by July 15, they will be automatically registered for the August LSAT-Flex on or about July 16. *Note: They may withdraw from the August LSAT-Flex any time up to August 21, 2020 and receive the coupon. After the withdrawal deadline, no coupon will be provided.*

LSAC is working to help every test taker have the equipment and other resources they need to take the LSAT-Flex. A candidate who does not have the necessary equipment or an appropriate place to test should alert LSAC to their situation via the same online form in their LSAC account no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time, Sunday, August 9, 2020. Please encourage your students to let us know if they need assistance. We will work with them to try to address their needs.

Because the August LSAT-Flex is an online, remotely proctored test, we are able to offer a variety of test start times for candidates to choose from. We will open the scheduling sign-up process in mid-August, and we will send more information and instructions prior to that time.

In the meantime, we encourage candidates to visit our [LSAT-Flex Frequently-Asked-Questions page](#), for more information about the format of the LSAT-Flex, security, technical requirements, and how best to prepare.

For candidates who want to familiarize themselves with the format and content of the LSAT-Flex, we recommend using the [free Official LSAT Prep practice tests available on LSAC's LawHub](#).

If you have any questions about any of these announcements, please don't hesitate to contact us at prelaw@LSAC.org.

What to consider as you decide whether to take the online Flex LSAT test or reschedule to a future test date:

First, we don't know when LSAC will be able to resume in-person testing. Fall testing may also be impacted if colleges and universities are online in the fall (robbing LSAC of testing locations) or if a second wave of infections necessitates another round of social distancing measures. In short, there is no certainty that a future LSAT will be in-person.

Second, LSAT-Flex is different from the in-person test. The online version has just three equally weighted sections (instead of the usual five, with four graded)—one each of Reading Comprehension, Logical Reasoning (arguments), and Analytical Reasoning (logic games). That means that the reading comprehension and logic games sections are weighted more relative to the in-person test, and the arguments weighted less (because each section type represents one-third of your score, rather than one-quarter or one-half, respectively). This may affect how you would want to prepare for the test. The online version is also only two hours, while the in-person test is much longer.

Third, LSAT-Flex requires particular equipment and operating systems, a stable internet connection, and an interruption-free environment for two hours. You should assess whether your current computing systems and environment can meet these requirements. You should also keep an eye on how the first online tests in May go—the success (or not) of that testing experience may prove instructive to you as you make your decision.

Finally, there is no indication that law schools will view the LSAT-Flex any differently from the in-person LSAT. However, LSAT-Flex scores will certainly be flagged as such.

For more information about the online, remotely proctored LSAT called the LSAT-Flex, including technical requirements, see the LSAT-Flex page here:

<https://www.lsac.org/update-coronavirus-and-lsat>

Will law schools consider how the pandemic has impacted test prep and might impact test experiences going forward?

It is nearly certain that they will. The admissions process is never *just* a numbers game, even as

the LSAT and GPA weigh heavily in decision-making, and admissions committees really do engage in holistic reviews of applications, taking into account all the many factors that have gone into shaping applicants and their experiences, perspectives, and so on. Without question, the pandemic and the challenges it is presenting to all of us will play a role in the admissions process from here on out.

UPDATE: LSAC confirmed that all candidates who apply to law school, at any point, with a 2020 spring term on their transcript will have a “Dear Colleague” letter attached to their profile that will serve as a reminder that many students will have an altered spring 2020 transcript.

Are law schools extending their application deadlines?

Many application deadlines had passed before the anti-COVID19 measures went into effect and are therefore not impacted by the epidemic. For those with late March or April deadlines we may see schools extending those dates either with a blanket deadline-change or on a case-by-case basis. If your ability to complete your application has been negatively affected by the current crisis, you should absolutely reach out to the particular law school to ask about their own accommodations for late submissions. This certainly includes those of you who were counting on applying with a March LSAT.

Are law schools extending their seat deposit deadlines?

If you’ve already been admitted to one or more law schools and are still trying to decide which offer to accept, you may face a more difficult situation with regard to the seat deposit deadlines. The earliest of these are coming up in April. Thus far no law schools appear to be issuing global extensions of these deadlines, but admissions officials are always open to considering extensions on a case-by-case basis. If there are specific reasons your decision has been impacted by the crisis (apart from inability to visit schools—see below), then definitely contact the schools to inquire about their flexibility.

How can I make a decision when I can’t visit the law schools?

It’s of course true that law school visits are critical to the decision-making process. Getting that “feel” for a school can be so important to your experience over the subsequent three years. Now that visits to most schools are impossible, how do you research that “feel”? Many schools are offering virtual tours and making faculty and current students available for video chats. You can also ask admissions offices to put you in touch with current students, especially those that match your interests or background in ways that might make their perspectives particularly useful to you. And you can also still reach out directly to Career/Placement offices at individual law schools, and to faculty—all should be available via email and/or phone. But don’t expect law schools to extend their seat deposit deadlines just because you haven’t had a chance to visit. Since that situation won’t change before you need to deposit, an extension wouldn’t help too much.

One or more of my Spring 2020 classes was converted to Pass/Fail—will that count against me in the law school admissions process?

No. Again, the law school admissions committees are looking at the whole picture, not just one grade or set of grades. Recall that law schools welcome addenda explaining anomalies in your academic record. A brief explanation of the circumstances will suffice to allay any concerns they

might have. This is true whether you are applying this year or several years from now with perhaps an odd-looking Spring 2020. And of course, it is likely that in different ways many applicants in the future will have “odd-looking” Spring 2020 semesters on their transcripts. Everyone on the admissions side will be aware of what has happened.

UPDATE: Now that ETSU has officially offered the P/F option to students, remember that you need to make an informed decision as to whether you should accept a letter grade or switch to P/F. Remember that P grades do not impact your GPA, so you can not raise your GPA by choosing this option. Also know what admissions directors will see your entire transcript, which means that if you have 3 As and 2 Ps they will be aware of the choice you made. This of course does not mean you should not choose this option. But it does mean that you need to be very cognizant of choices you are making and seek help from advisors if you need it.

Is ETSU still offering Pre-Law advising?

Of course!! You are free to email me with any questions or to make an appointment for a phone/Zoom meeting as well, feel free to reach out at glennon@etsu.edu

Special thanks to Diane Curtis, Director of Pre-Law advising at Umass-Amherst for providing the template for this update to all Pre-Law advisors.