

A LEVELS & UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE

A LEVELS TO CHOOSE

When deciding which A-levels to choose, you should consider what you might want to study at university. The subjects you pick might differ if you want to go on to study a law degree, or a non-law degree. That being said, whilst there are some more commonly chosen subjects amongst people who go on to study law, there are typically no subject requirements in order to get a place at a law school.

A-LEVEL SUBJECTS TO CHOOSE IF YOU WANT TO STUDY A LAW DEGREE

The first question for many people is should I study law at A-level. The short answer is you do not have to have to in order to pursue a legal career. Not every school/college will offer law as an A-level subject, and there are no universities or legal recruiters who require it.

Subjects such as History, English Literature and Politics are generally good options to choose as they develop your analytical and critical thinking and writing skills. Foreign languages are also desirable if you think you might want to specialise in some sort of international law later on, whilst maths and science help to demonstrate your ability to solve problems. You will not be penalised if you pick other subjects not listed here.

Most universities do not accept general studies or critical thinking as one of your three core A-level subjects, as they are not considered to be traditionally academic.

Top Tip: Ultimately, the key thing to remember is that it is important to get good grades in the subjects you do choose in order to secure a place at a well-regarded university. Pick subjects that you enjoy and think you can excel in.

A-LEVEL SUBJECTS TO CHOOSE IF YOU WANT TO STUDY A NON-LAW DEGREE

There are no set subjects to choose if you do not want to study a law degree. However, what you do need to think about is whether the entrance requirements to your chosen course are subject-specific. For example, if you want to study a history degree, it is common that you will need to have an A-level in history.

ACADEMIC STANDARD REQUIRED

This will ultimately depend on what subject you choose and where you want to go to university. If you want to study law, most Russell Group universities require three A's in your chosen A-level subjects. (The Russell Group is an association of 24 leading UK universities.)

If you want to study a non-law degree, the entrance requirements may differ. They tend to vary depending on the university and the subject you want to study. However, what tends to be required is if you want to study a specific subject, you will need to have an A-level in that subject. Entry into Russell Group universities for humanities, languages, maths or science can range from A*AA, to AAA, AAB, or for some courses, ABB. If you have an idea what subject you would like to study at university, you should visit the following website: <https://universitycompare.com/>. You will be able to compare the course you are interested in at different universities and see what the entrance requirements are.

USEFUL LINKS (A-LEVELS)

The Uni Guide – What A-levels do you need to study law?

<https://www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/a-level-choices/what-a-levels-do-you-need-to-study-law#:~:text=many%20law%20students%20take%20at,keep%20their%20degree%20options%20flexible.>

The Lawyer Portal – What A-levels to take if you want to study law

<https://www.thelawyerportal.com/blog/what-a-levels-to-take-if-you-want-to-study-law/>

The Guardian – Choosing A-Levels for law

<https://www.theguardian.com/law/2016/dec/30/choosing-a-levels-for-law-its-the-grades-that-really-count>

WHAT DOES THE UCAS FORM NEED?

You apply to university through the online UCAS system (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service). The system operates on a central timetable and you can apply once a year. The UCAS form needs a variety of different information including your personal details, your course choices, your education and employment history and most importantly, your personal statement.

Your personal statement is your opportunity to tell the universities you are applying to all about you and why you would be a good fit for the course. The same personal

statement will go to all of the universities you apply to so you should not mention any particular university by name. However, you should read the course descriptions that you are applying to at each university: this will help you to highlight any relevant experiences you have had.

There are different ways to structure your personal statement, but you should generally try to include the following topics:

- Introduction (why do you want to study this particular course – note that this will be harder if you apply to a number of different course subjects);
- Academics (write about topics you have studied which are relevant to the course. This will be a large part of your personal statement);
- Interest in your subject outside of school/college (write about books you have read, podcasts you have listened to or other experiences you have had relating to your chosen subject);
- Work experience;
- Hobbies;
- Conclusion.

Top Tip: Your personal statement will go through many drafts as you perfect it, so make sure you start early! You should start to think about your personal statement during the summer before your upper sixth year. If you want to apply to Oxford and Cambridge you have to submit your application by mid-October (the exact date is subject to change each year). This is because these universities will also interview applicants. If you apply anywhere else (unless you are studying medicine, dentistry or veterinary science) the deadline will be mid-January. However, many universities will start to consider applications as soon as they are submitted so the sooner you submit it, the better!

There are many resources online in relation to writing your personal statement, particularly on the UCAS website. You should seek the help of your teachers or careers advisers at your school/college when writing it. It is also helpful to ask others – whether that be your peers, parents or other adults, to proofread your statement. There are bound to be typos or areas which require improvement in your statement and the more times it is read over, the better it will be.

USEFUL LINKS (UCAS)

UCAS – Filling in your UCAS undergraduate application

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/filling-your-ucas-undergraduate-application>

UCAS – Filling in your UCAS application (brochure)

<https://www.ucas.com/file/77801/download?token=N47ycGOr#:~:text=Start%20by%20registering%20for%20your,and%20set%20your%20security%20questions.&text=Add%20the%20buzzword%20your%20school%2C%20college%2C%20or%20centre%20gave%20you.&text=If%20you're%20applying%20independently,ask%20you%20some%20more%20questions.>

UCAS – How to write a UCAS undergraduate personal statement

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/writing-personal-statement/how-write-personal-statement>

Which? – How to write a UCAS personal statement

<https://www.which.co.uk/money/university-and-student-finance/getting-into-uni/how-to-write-a-personal-statement-a3bfp7h4yv7s>

Target Careers – What to include in your UCAS personal statement

<https://targetcareers.co.uk/uni/applying-for-uni/314661-what-to-include-in-your-ucas-personal-statement>

Target Careers – How to structure your UCAS personal statement

<https://targetcareers.co.uk/uni/applying-for-uni/314659-how-to-structure-your-ucas-personal-statement>

Times Higher Education – What happens after you submit your UCAS application

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/student/advice/what-happens-after-you-submit-your-ucas-application>

WHEN TO THINK ABOUT LAW COURSES?

The only extra consideration you need to take into account when thinking about studying law is that you may need to complete the LNAT (Law National Aptitude Test). Not every university requires completion of the test, so it is key to check the entrance requirements on the university websites.

Registration for the test opens over a year before you want to start studying. For example, if you intend to start your university course in September 2021, you can

register from August 2020 and take your test from September 2020 (the exact date is subject to change each year). Whilst you should think about registering as early as possible, make sure you do not register and take your test before the registration date.

For example, if you intend to start your university course in September 2021, do not take your test before August 2020 as it will not count. For those universities who require completion of the LNAT, you will need to have your result before you apply as it will be one of their considerations when reviewing your application.

USEFUL LINKS (LNAT)

LNAT – Registration dates and deadlines

<https://lnat.ac.uk/registration/dates-and-deadlines/>

LNAT – How to prepare

<https://lnat.ac.uk/how-to-prepare/>

The Lawyer Portal – How to prepare for the LNAT

<https://www.thelawyerportal.com/blog/top-5-lnat-tips/>

Oxbridge Applications – How to prepare for the LNAT

<https://oxbridgeapplications.com/blog/june-preparing-for-the-national-admissions-test-for-law-lnat/>

All About Law – How to prepare for the LNAT

<https://www.allaboutlaw.co.uk/school-leaver-law-careers/lnat/lnat-preparation>

SHOULD I STUDY LAW? WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES?

It used to be the case that if you wanted to be a lawyer you had to study law. However, that has now changed and many people are studying different undergraduate subjects at university and then completing the Graduate Diploma in Law afterwards (known as a ‘GDL’ or a law conversion course). This is the indirect route to qualification.

Law Degree vs. Non-Law Degree + Graduate Diploma in Law

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|-----------------------|--|--|
| Duration | 3 years | 3 years + 1 year |
| Cost | Approximately £27k | Approximately £37k |
| Law Modules | Core law modules + optional law modules | Core law modules only |
| Key Advantages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shorter and therefore cheaper; • Broader knowledge of legal subjects; | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefit of having different experiences and perspective; |

| | | |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studying alongside like-minded people with same career aspirations; • Access to resources and information about careers whilst completing your degree; • Flexibility enables you to explore different areas of legal practice; • Greater access to extra-curricular activities such as pro-bono projects and mooting whilst at university which will help when you apply for jobs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to study something you are truly interested in at undergraduate level; • The GDL is better preparation for the intensity of the Postgraduate Bar Course; • The Inns of Court scholarships cover the cost of the GDL (see guide on the Inns of Court); • Opportunity to access careers information and extra-curricular activities relating to law whilst studying for the GDL. |
| Key Disadvantages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some people find a law degree dry as it deals with the academic side (in addition to the practical side) of the law; • You do not have the opportunity to learn about different subjects. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The GDL adds an extra year of studying (at least) after going to university; • The GDL is expensive. |

Top Tip: Choose the course of study you are most passionate about. Completing a law degree does not give you an advantage down the line when it comes to applying for pupillage (the 12-18 month practical training period of becoming a barrister). The GDL is comprehensive and includes everything you need to know to proceed to the postgraduate stage.

USEFUL LINKS (DEGREES)

Target Careers – What degree should I do to be a lawyer

<https://targetcareers.co.uk/career-sectors/law/206-what-degree-should-i-do-to-be-a-lawyer>

All About Law – Graduate LLB vs GDL

<https://www.allaboutlaw.co.uk/law-courses/graduate-llb/graduate-llb-vs-gdl>

The Lawyer Portal – The big debate law degree or conversion course

<https://www.thelawyerportal.com/blog/big-debate-law-degree-conversion-course/>

