

CHAPTER 5

Admissions and Student Services

Standard 501. ADMISSIONS

- (a) A law school shall maintain sound admission policies and practices consistent with the Standards, its mission, and the objectives of its program of legal education.
- (b) A law school shall not admit an applicant who does not appear capable of satisfactorily completing its program of legal education and being admitted to the bar.
- (c) A law school shall not admit or readmit a student who has been disqualified previously for academic reasons without an affirmative showing that the prior disqualification does not indicate a lack of capacity to complete its program of legal education and be admitted to the bar. For every admission or readmission of a previously disqualified individual, a statement of the considerations that led to the decision shall be placed in the admittee's file.

Interpretation 501-1

Among the factors to consider in assessing compliance with this Standard are the academic and admission test credentials of the law school's entering students, the academic attrition rate of the law school's students, the bar passage rate of its graduates, and the effectiveness of the law school's academic support program.

Interpretation 501-2

Sound admissions policies and practices may include consideration of admission test scores, undergraduate course of study and grade point average, extracurricular activities, work experience, performance in other graduate or professional programs, relevant demonstrated skills, and obstacles overcome.

Standard 502. EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- (a) A law school shall require for admission to its J.D. degree program a bachelor's degree that has been awarded by an institution that is accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education.
- (b) Notwithstanding subsection (a), a law school may also admit to its J.D. degree program:
 - 1) an applicant who has completed three-fourths of the credits leading to a bachelor's degree as part of a bachelor's degree/J.D. degree program if the institution is accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education; and
 - 2) a graduate of an institution outside the United States if the law school assures that the quality of the program of legal education of that institution is equivalent to that of institutions accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education.
- (c) In an extraordinary case, a law school may admit to its J.D. degree program an applicant who does not satisfy the requirements of subsections (a) or (b) if the applicant's experience, ability, and other qualifications clearly demonstrate an aptitude for the study of law. For every such admission, a statement of the considerations that led to the decision shall be placed in the admittee's file.
- (d) Within a reasonable time after a student registers, a law school shall have on file the student's official transcripts verifying all academic credits undertaken and degree(s) conferred.

Interpretation 502-1

Official transcript means: 1) a paper or electronic transcript certified by the issuing institution and delivered directly to the law school; or 2) a paper or electronic transcript verified by a third-party credential assembly service and delivered directly to the law school. With respect to electronic copies, it is sufficient for transcripts to be maintained at the law school or off-site by a third-party provider as long as the law school has access to the documents on demand.

Interpretation 502-2

The official transcripts for any student admitted as a transfer student shall include verification of any academic credits undertaken at any other law school attended.

Standard 503. ADMISSION TEST

A law school shall require each applicant for admission as a first-year J.D. degree student to take a valid and reliable admission test to assist the school and the applicant in assessing the applicant's capability of satisfactorily completing the school's program of legal education. In making admissions decisions, a law school shall use the test results in a manner that is consistent with the current guidelines regarding proper use of the test results provided by the agency that developed the test.

Interpretation 503-1

A law school that uses an admission test other than the Law School Admission Test sponsored by the Law School Admission Council shall demonstrate that such other test is a valid and reliable test to assist the school in assessing an applicant's capability to satisfactorily complete the school's program of legal education.

Interpretation 503-2

This Standard does not prescribe the particular weight that a law school should give to an applicant's admission test score in deciding whether to admit or deny admission to the applicant.

Interpretation 503-3

- (a) It is not a violation of this Standard for a law school to admit no more than 10% of an entering class without requiring the LSAT from:*
 - (1) Students in an undergraduate program of the same institution as the J.D. program; and/or*
 - (2) Students seeking the J.D. degree in combination with a degree in a different discipline.*
- (b) Applicants admitted under subsection (a) must meet the following conditions:*
 - (1) Scored at or above the 85th percentile on the ACT or SAT for purposes of subsection (a)(1), or for purposes of subsection (a)(2), scored at or above the 85th percentile on the GRE or GMAT; and*
 - (2) Ranked in the top 10% of their undergraduate class through six semesters of academic work, or achieved a cumulative GPA of 3.5 or above through six semesters of academic work.*

Standard 504. QUALIFICATIONS FOR ADMISSION TO THE BAR

- (a) A law school shall include the following statement in its application for admission and on its website:**

In addition to a bar examination, there are character, fitness, and other qualifications for admission to the bar in every U.S. jurisdiction. Applicants are encouraged to determine the requirements for any jurisdiction in which they intend to seek admission by contacting the jurisdiction. Addresses for all relevant agencies are available through the National Conference of Bar Examiners.

- (b) The law school shall, as soon after matriculation as is practicable, take additional steps to apprise entering students of the importance of determining the applicable character, fitness, and other requirements for admission to the bar in each jurisdiction in which they intend to seek admission to the bar.**

Standard 505. GRANTING OF J.D. DEGREE CREDIT FOR PRIOR LAW STUDY

- (a) A law school may admit a student and grant credit for courses completed at another law school approved by the Council if the courses were undertaken as a J.D. degree student.
- (b) A law school may admit a student and grant credit for courses completed at a law school in the United States that is not approved by the Council if graduates of the law school are permitted to sit for the bar examination in the jurisdiction in which the school is located, provided that:
 - (1) the courses were undertaken as a J.D. degree student; and
 - (2) the law school would have granted credit toward satisfaction of J.D. degree requirements if earned at the admitting school.
- (c) A law school may admit a student and grant credit for courses completed at a law school outside the United States if the admitting law school would have granted credit towards satisfaction of J.D. degree requirements if earned at the admitting school.
- (d) A law school may grant credit toward a J.D. degree to a graduate of a law school in a country outside the United States for credit hours earned in an LL.M. or other post-J.D. program if it offers if:
 - (1) that study led to successful completion of a J.D. degree course or courses while the student was enrolled in a post-J.D. degree law program; and
 - (2) the law school has a grading system for LL.M. students in J.D. courses that is comparable to the grading system for J.D. degree students in the course.
- (e) A law school that grants credit as provided in Standard 505(a) through (d) may award a J.D. degree to a student who successfully completes a course of study that satisfies the requirements of Standard 311 and that meets all of the school's requirements for the awarding of the J.D. degree.
- (f) Credit hours granted pursuant to subsection (b) through (d) shall not, individually or in combination, exceed one-third of the total required by the admitting school for its J.D. degree.

Standard 506. ENROLLMENT OF NON-DEGREE CANDIDATES

Without requiring compliance with its admission standards and procedures, a law school may enroll individuals in a limited number of courses, as auditors, non-degree candidates, or candidates for a degree other than a law degree, only if such enrollment does not interfere with the ability of the law school to operate in compliance with the Standards and to carry out its program of legal education.

Standard 507. STUDENT LOAN PROGRAMS

A law school shall demonstrate reasonable steps to minimize student loan defaults, including provision of debt counseling at the inception of a student's loan obligations and again before graduation.

Interpretation 507-1

The student loan default rates of a law school's graduates, including any results of financial or compliance audits and reviews, are relevant in assessing the extent to which a law school complies with this Standard.

Interpretation 507-2

For a law school not affiliated with a university, the school's student loan cohort default rate is sufficient if it is not greater than 10% for any of the three most recently published annual cohort default rates.

Failure to comply with Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, or having a student loan cohort default rate greater than the rate permitted by Title IV is cause for review of a law school's compliance with the Standards. A school shall demonstrate that it has resolved all areas of deficiency identified in financial or compliance audits, program reviews, or other information provided by the United States Department of Education.

Interpretation 507-3

A law school has complied with this Standard if the university of which the law school is a part takes the steps described in this Standard.

Standard 508. STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

A law school shall provide all its students, regardless of enrollment or scheduling option, with basic student services, including maintenance of accurate student records, academic advising and counseling, financial aid and debt counseling, and career counseling to assist students in making sound career choices and obtaining employment. If a law school does not provide these student services directly, it shall demonstrate that its students have reasonable access to such services from the university of which it is a part or from other sources.

Standard 509. REQUIRED DISCLOSURES

- (a) All information that a law school reports, publicizes, or distributes shall be complete, accurate and not misleading to a reasonable law school student or applicant. A law school shall use due diligence in obtaining and verifying such information. Violations of these obligations may result in sanctions under Rule 16 of the Rules of Procedure for Approval of Law Schools.
- (b) A law school shall publicly disclose on its website, in the form and manner and for the time frame designated by the Council, the following information:
 - (1) admissions data;
 - (2) tuition and fees, living costs, and financial aid;
 - (3) conditional scholarships;
 - (4) enrollment data, including academic, transfer, and other attrition;
 - (5) numbers of full-time and part-time faculty, professional librarians, and administrators;
 - (6) class sizes for first-year and upper-class courses; number of seminar, clinical and co-curricular offerings;

- (7) employment outcomes; and
- (8) bar passage data.
- (c) A law school shall publicly disclose on its website, in a readable and comprehensive manner, the following information on a current basis:
 - (1) refund policies;
 - (2) curricular offerings, academic calendar, and academic requirements; and
 - (3) policies regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education. The law school's transfer of credit policies must include, at a minimum:
 - (i) A statement of the criteria established by the law school regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution; and
 - (ii) A list of institutions, if any, with which the law school has established an articulation agreement.
- (d) A law school shall distribute the data required under Standard 509(b)(3) to all applicants being offered conditional scholarships at the time the scholarship offer is extended.
- (e) If a law school makes a public disclosure of its status as a law school approved by the Council, it shall do so accurately and shall include the name and contact information of the Council.

Interpretation 509-1

Current curricular offerings, for the purposes of Standard 509(c), are only those courses offered in the current and past two academic years.

Interpretation 509-2

A law school may publicize or distribute information in addition to that required by this Standard, including, without limitation, the employment outcomes of its graduates, so long as such information complies with the requirements of subsection (a).

Interpretation 509-3

A conditional scholarship is any financial aid award, the retention of which is dependent upon the student maintaining a minimum grade point average or class standing, other than that ordinarily required to remain in good academic standing.

Interpretation 509-4

Articulation Agreement means a formal written agreement between a law school and another accredited university or institution providing for the transfer of defined academic credits between the parties to the agreement.

Standard 510. STUDENT COMPLAINTS IMPLICATING COMPLIANCE WITH THE STANDARDS

- (a) A law school shall establish, publish, and comply with policies for addressing student complaints.
- (b) A law school shall maintain a record of student complaints submitted during the most recent accreditation period. The record shall include the resolution of the complaints.

Interpretation 510-1

A “complaint” is a communication in writing that seeks to bring to the attention of the law school a significant problem that directly implicates the school’s compliance with the Standards.

Interpretation 510-2

A law school’s policies on student complaints must address, at a minimum, procedures for filing and addressing complaints, appeal rights, if any, and timelines.