



GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

GVSU Pre-law Advising Guide
Dr. Mark Richards

What is Pre-law?

You're interested in going to law school

A law degree is a 3-year postgraduate program to earn a Juris Doctor (JD). It's a professional degree. Lawyers must have a license (be admitted to the bar) to practice.

Pre-law is not a major

GVSU does not have a designated pre-law major as law schools don't want everyone to major in the same thing. There are many different majors suitable for pre-law (see below).

Pre-law at GVSU

Advising

Pre-law advisors can help you throughout your undergraduate career and after you graduate, as you are preparing for law school. We can advise on choice of major, minor and classes, and the law school application process, including the personal statement.

Law Society student organization

GVSU Law Society is a student-led group that hosts speakers from law schools and the legal community, plans events, and provides networking opportunities. To [join Law Society, please fill out this form](#) and sign up for the Pre-law Google group (see below).

Your major

Develop your analytic, verbal and writing skills. Find something that you care about so that you will work hard and succeed, because grades are one of the two biggest factors in law school admissions.

GVSU Pre-law Faculty Advisors

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GVSU Pre-law FAQ & Advisor Contact Information: [Pre-law - Grand Valley State University](#)

Sign up for the GVSU Pre-law Google group

To receive helpful pre-law advising information:

1. Sign into your GVSU student e-mail. Make sure you are signed out of any other Google accounts.
2. Send a message to gvsuprelaw+subscribe@mail.gvsu.edu and leave everything else blank. Delete your signature.
3. Look for a message in your GVSU student e-mail with subject "Join request for gvsuprelaw"
4. Open the "Join request email" and click the blue "Join This Group" button. If adding from a mobile device you may need to click desktop version in the footer.
5. Once your request has been approved, you will receive a message confirming you have been added to the group
6. If you have any problems joining the group you can email Dr. Mark Richards for assistance (richardm@mail.gvsu.edu). You can unsubscribe at any time.

Keys to success while in college: Make the most of your time here

Grades are one of the most important factors in law school admissions.

Develop your skills

Be involved! Law schools are looking for sustained involvement and leadership.

Choosing a major

Skills in your major

Analytic skills:

Reading and analyzing challenging texts

Conducting research

Can include quantitative skills such as statistics, depending on the major

Verbal skills: Public speaking, presentations, debates, simulations

Writing: Even if you are a good writer, you need to continue to develop.

Pre-law majors at GVSU include, but are not limited to:

- *Business*: accounting, economics, finance, international business
- *Humanities*: classics, communication, English, history, philosophy, writing, languages such as French and Spanish
- *Sciences*: biology, chemistry, computer science, engineering, physics
- *Social and behavioral sciences*: anthropology, criminal justice, geography, legal studies, international relations, political science, psychology, sociology

Take at least one class related to law

Classics: CLA 367 Thinking Like a (Roman) Lawyer

Criminal Justice: CJ 302 Criminal Law, CJ 305 Constitutional Rights and Civil Liberties, CJ 325 Criminal Justice and Human Rights

Legal Studies: LS 101: Law in our Lives, LS 224: Legal Research, LS 226 Civil Litigation, LS 324 Legal Research and Writing, LS/WGS 370 Women and the Law

History: HST 328 U.S. Constitutional and Legal History

Philosophy: PHI 330 Crime, Morality, Punishment: Philosophy of Law

Political Science: PLS/HRT 105 Introduction to Human Rights, PLS 206 American Constitutional Foundations, PLS 306 & 307 Constitutional Law I & II, PLS 314 International Law

Business: BUS 201 Legal Environment of Business,
MGT 334 Employment and Labor Law

Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies: WGS 310 LGBTQ Rights and the Law

For more classes, see the pre-law FAQ.

Internships

Internships are not required for law school but they are **recommended**. They may be required for your major. An internship is **normally done for credit within your major** so check with your major advisor or the internship advisor for your major.

Internships do not have to be in the legal field. Business, politics, government, non-profit and community organizations are all excellent options.

- *GVSU Handshake (Career database)
- *Legal Assistance Center (downtown Grand Rapids)
- *Networking
- *The Washington Center ([GV in DC](#)).

LEAP

3 LEAP Programs at GVSU: Business, Legal Studies, and Political Science

3 + 3 programs. Earn a bachelor's and a JD in 6 years.
3 years at GVSU + 3 years at MSU Law. Save the time and expense of your senior year of college.

Upon completion of the first year at MSU Law, credits are transferred back to GVSU to complete your bachelor's degree.

Business: 91 credits (+29 from MSU Law)

Legal Studies: 91 credits (+29 from MSU Law)

Political Science: 91 credits (+29 from MSU Law)

LEAP Requirements and contact information

Business

Contact Prof. James Sanford sanfordj@gvsu.edu

Legal Studies

Contact Prof. Adrian Copeland copelaad@gvsu.edu

Political Science

Contact Prof. Mark Richards richardm@gvsu.edu

LSAT

LSAC Prep provides links to:

Law Hub Official LSAT Prep: free practice materials

Law Hub Advantage Subscribe for expanded access to official LSAT PrepTests

GVSU Law Society LSAT prep sessions

Books

LSAT Trainer by Mike Kim, PowerScore "Bibles"

Find a method that works for you.

Alternatives: Tutoring, online classes

Personal statement

Check out the [pre-law FAQ](#) for advice.

Pay attention to each school's guidelines.

Work with several people to make sure it is well polished.

Faculty advisors are available to help review your statement and give feedback.

Diversity

Diversity, equity and inclusion are values shared by GVSU and the law schools. Take advantage of classes and extracurricular programming to learn more about these important values.

Many law schools provide the opportunity to write a diversity statement. You are encouraged to work with a faculty pre-law advisor to get feedback on your diversity statement. See the pre-law FAQ to learn more about local and national diversity-based opportunities.

Letters of Recommendation

Normally you need at least two.

Law schools want them to be from someone who can speak to your academic ability, so get to know your professors a bit. Visit office hours and talk about your plans.

Ask ahead of time.

Link is sent via LSAC.

Students should give their references:

- a resume
- a copy of their personal statement
- a list of courses that you have taken with the professor, with your grade and the semester you took the course
- a deadline.

For more information

Feel free to reach out to a pre-law advisor whenever you have a question. You will have different questions at different stages.

GVSU Pre-law Advisors and FAQ: [Pre-law - Grand Valley State University](#)

Don't hesitate to contact the law school admissions offices. They are there to help you!