

Concurrent Degree at Harvard Law School and The Kennedy School of Government: Juris Doctor/Masters of Public Policy Program

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Founded in 1817, Harvard has long served as the quintessential American law school and is the oldest existing law school in the United States. Since its beginning in the early 19th century, when six students were taught by two professors, more than 60,000 students have studied at Harvard Law School. Harvard has more course offerings, more extracurricular activities and more opportunities than almost anywhere else. Today a faculty of nearly 100 offers over 1,700 students more than 251 courses in law. Last year nearly 6,800 prospective students competed to be among the 559 men and women admitted to the Harvard Law School's entering class, making this law school the second most selective in the country. Years later and thousands of miles away, graduates still refer to Harvard as "The Law School."

The school certainly boasts some of the brightest students and legal scholars in the country. With an overall acceptance rate of about 12 percent, admission to Harvard Law School is difficult. Most students they admit are in the top ten percent of their college class, have LSAT scores in the top five percentiles, and have substantial accomplishments in work or outside activities. However, Harvard's admission committee does look far beyond the "numbers" and admits some applicants who do not have such high college or LSAT standings but whose combined academic and personal achievements are comparable nonetheless. In fact, it is Harvard's policy not to offer the average LSAT scores of entering students as they do not want prospective students to feel that they must focus on that aspect alone. The objective of the admissions committee is to have an entering class with a diversity of interest, background, and experience.

Columbia University students have historically contributed significantly to both Harvard's application pool and its student body. In 1998, 32 Columbia College students and five Barnard College students enrolled in Harvard Law School. But despite the disproportionate number of Ivy Leaguers, the student body shows a great variety in racial, ethnic, political, economic, and geographical backgrounds. The women and men of the school represent all fifty states and some twenty foreign countries, as well as an abroad range of political opinions, life-styles, and personalities. Of the

students presently enrolled, the average age is 24, 41 percent are women, and 28 percent identify themselves as part of a minority group.

But everyone who comes to study law at Harvard is affected by the school's particular approach to legal education, an approach that is more general than specific and more theoretical than pragmatic. The faculty seeks to impart the enduring principles of law, legal philosophy, and the historical development of legal institutions, rather than to emphasize the mastery of legal detail and memorization of terminology. Harvard's goal is to develop one's ability to analyze the web of facts at the core of a problem and then to solve that problem using legal methods. They believe that a firm understanding of judicial principles and reasoning better equips one to deal with new legal problems as the law changes and evolves. For that reason the degree one receives from Harvard Law School is a general J.D. because their philosophy is that "once one graduates one can do anything one desires." Their focus is on breadth and depth as opposed to an emphasis on one area of law.

The curriculum consists of 251 courses and seminars and includes such diverse subject areas as constitutional law, environmental law, criminal law, corporate finance, negotiation, family law, and international and comparative law. Most first-year classes are still taught by the Socratic method, but in some the professor gives advance warning to those who will participate. Half of the first-years are assigned to the experimental sections, which take a more interdisciplinary approach to the standard introductory courses. Students in the experimental sections can expect to be exposed to philosophical trends like critical legal studies, legal realism, and law and economics.

Students are also quick to point out that a Harvard education puts them in touch with great people: The best professors in the field and a dynamic, intellectual student body. One student noted that "the strengths of Harvard Law School are its excellent faculty, who are on the cutting edge of research and practice in their fields, as well as its student body." In fact, student-faculty contact is not as rare as the size of the school would suggest. The student-faculty ratio is 28:1 and includes distinguished attorneys and judges such as that of Alan Dershowitz, Justice Stephen Breyer '64, William Brennan Jr. '31, David Souter '66 and Ruth Bader Ginsberg '58 of the US Supreme Court.

It has been said that Harvard Law School turns out two types of people: Those who always had the desire to enter large corporate firms, and those who have been converted to it. Actually, every year finds a noticeable minority of students following other paths. Indeed, Harvard has a long-standing public interest commitment and encourages all students to work in

the public interest field at some point during their law school careers. A strong clinical program offers students a wide range of fieldwork and simulation courses as well as opportunities to participate in for-credit and extracurricular practice-related activities in one of several Harvard-operated legal services clinics, among them the Hale & Dorr Legal Services Center and the Immigration and Refugee Clinic.

In addition to a challenging curriculum, students can choose among numerous extracurricular activities, including more than 80 student organizations—for example, the Legal Aid Bureau, the International Law Society, the Battered Women's Advocacy Project, and the Prison Legal Assistance Project—and 12 student-edited law journals. Intramural sports, dramatic productions, and two dozen special interest and ethnic groups provide social activities for law students as well.

Aside from the law school's own panoply of courses and activities, students may cross-register in courses throughout Harvard University. In cooperation with certain other Harvard graduate schools, a limited number of unusually qualified students may pursue two separate degrees by designing their own concurrent degree program at both the Harvard Law School and another Harvard professional school. A few students envision careers, for example, where a degree in public policy may complement the study of law. Enrollment in a concurrent program permits students to earn a second professional graduate degree in a shorter period of time than if they pursued each degree independently. However, concurrent degree programs differ from joint degree programs and the only joint degree program that Harvard Law School offers is with Harvard Business School, which leads to a J.D./M.B.A. Applicants to the concurrent J.D./M.P.P. program, on the other hand, must satisfy the application requirements of both the Harvard Law School and the Kennedy School of Government.

Admission to the Kennedy School is competitive. Applicants with exceptional qualifications and accomplishments are considered. The Kennedy School selects students from diverse backgrounds and experiences who have strong academic records, a commitment to public service, and whose promise for leadership and career growth is outstanding. It is the school's belief that diversity enhances the value of all the school's activities, from its research and curriculum to its academic programs and public affairs activities. Approximately 200 students are enrolled in the Masters in Public Policy Program each year; the typical class consists of 44 percent women and 34 percent minorities, and students are an average age of 25.

The goal of the Masters in Public Policy Program is to prepare students for positions as policy analysts and leaders in public service. The curriculum provides students with the tools to grapple with institutional

analysis, internal and external management, and the effects of managing in an environment governed by elective politics. Students are encouraged to think critically about the ethical challenges of public policy management, to understand the special obligations imposed by managing public resources in a democracy, to learn how to recognize the frequent conflicts of obligation that arise, and to resolve these conflicts in a manner consistent with the public interest.

In addition to their various academic pursuits, members of the Harvard community also enjoy a stimulating and entertaining environment. The school is one block from Harvard Square's innumerable bars, coffeehouses, ethnic restaurants, bookstores, and unique shops. Culturally, the Square holds five performing arts theatres, four movie theatres, and nine museums ranging from the arts to the sciences. Downtown Boston is a fifteen-minute subway ride away and New England skiing and Cape Cod beaches are at the end of a couple of hours' drive. Closer to home the law school forum brings in speakers on law, literature, sports, entertainment, and politics. Past speakers have ranged from Fidel Castro to Malcolm X. Students write and stage a fall revue and a spring musical rife with inside jokes. Whatever one's tastes are, one is sure to find activities catering to them.

The power that a law and masters degree from Harvard University grants is still unparalleled among US graduate institutions. One student, when asked to name Harvard's strengths, put it this way: "Prestige, Prestige, Prestige." It is true that Harvard grads, even those who coast through with average grades, are virtually assured of jobs upon graduation. Though jobs have definitely become scarcer with the excess of new lawyers on the market, the pace of recruiting and hiring here would leave students from most other schools breathless. Although Harvard can't eliminate all the difficulties of one's transition into law school, one's transition out of law school will be relatively painless. Overall, Harvard is Harvard, a school that provides one of the most distinguished graduate degrees in the country. For many people that says it all.