

Passing the **National Admissions Test for Law**

Third edition

Part I

Introduction

1. The National Admissions Test for Law (LNAT[®])

The level of competition for places on some university law courses is extremely fierce. As a means of filtering applicants, even those with A grades, a number of universities require they sit a standardised admissions test called the National Admissions Test for Law (LNAT[®]).

The LNAT[®] is an on-screen test with two sections.

Section A has changed for the 2010–11 testing year increasing the number of passages from ten to 12, questions from 30 to 42, and the time from 80 to 95 minutes. This section is designed to assess a candidate's ability to read, understand, analyse and make logical deductions from passages of text in formal English. The test is designed to be an assessment of 'the verbal reasoning skills at the heart of legal education' and does not require any knowledge of the law.

Section B requires that a candidate can write a reasoned and substantiated argument that justifies their response to one of the five questions provided. The time allowed for the essay is 40 minutes and it should be about 500–600 words in length, and at the most 750 words. The test is designed to be an assessment of fundamental intellectual skills and as with **Section A** requires no prior knowledge of the law.

The LNAT[®] is set by Pearson Assessments and Testing in conjunction with Edexcel. Pearson is also responsible for marking the multiple-choice element of the test. Each law school operates a slightly different admissions policy and so each one will use the free essay component in a slightly different way. Some may refer to it, for example, throughout a student's interview. Others will compare it against a student's personal statement on the UCAS form. The essay may also be used as a means of distinguishing between borderline candidates when the A-level results are announced. The setting and administration of the test is overseen by LNAT[®] Consortium Ltd, a company jointly owned by the participating universities.

Because of these variations in the way in which the test results will be used, there is no fixed weight or 'pass mark' to the LNAT[®]. This may seem slightly odd, particularly for those students who have just spent the last five years of their education being assessed against nationally agreed pass/fail criteria. However, just because there is no pass mark it does not mean that the LNAT[®] is easy or irrelevant. The LNAT[®] results and A-levels

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(or equivalent qualifications), along with AS-levels and GCSEs, will be assessed in combination with other elements. These may include the personal statement and reference from the UCAS form and, in certain cases, performance at interview. Therefore the LNAT[®] forms an important element in the overall criteria against which applications will be judged.

As well as taking the LNAT[®], you need to apply for your chosen course in the normal way. Undertaking the LNAT[®] does not constitute an application to any university. The LNAT[®] is sat at a test centre near your home, school or college; there are about 150 test centres in the UK with the network extending to other places in the world including Singapore, Prague, Toronto, Buenos Aires and three centres in China. A current fee of £50 is charged for sitting the LNAT[®] at UK/EU test centres and £70 at test centres outside the UK/EU.

More detailed information and ‘frequently asked questions’ can be obtained from the LNAT[®] website at **www.lnat.ac.uk**.

The universities/courses currently requiring applicants to sit the LNAT[®] are listed below:

University of Birmingham:	M100, MR11, MR12, M1N1
University of Bristol:	M100, MR11, MR12
University of Durham:	M101, M102
University of Glasgow:	M114, M1R7, M1R1, M121, M1R2, M122, M1R3, M1M9, M1RR, M1R4, M123, MN11, MN12, MV13, ML11, MQ13, MQ15, ML17, MV11, MV15, ML12, MR17
Kings College London:	M100, M121
University of Leeds	M100, MR11, MN14, MN12
University of Nottingham:	M100, M101, M1R1, M1R2
University of Oxford:	M100, M101, M102, M141, M142, M144, M145, M146
University College London:	M100, M101, M102, M141, M142, M143, M144, M145, M146

The following non-UK universities may also require the LNAT[®]:

NUI Maynooth: MH115, MH406 and MH119
(mature entry only)

IE University (choice of tests applies)

2. How will this book help me?

This book has been produced to provide any person preparing for the National Admissions Test for Law (LNAT[®]) with an in-depth understanding of both Parts A and B of the Test.

Part I of the book examines your choice of a career in law and the admissions process to university. The process outlined is simply a summary and is not intended to replace the UCAS Progression Series publication *Law: For entry to university and college*. The UCAS book is really a must for any applicant, providing not just details about admissions but all the law courses available at UK universities.

Part II provides a clear explanation of the rationale, development and use of verbal reasoning tests. It also examines the style and format of the multiple-choice questions used in the LNAT[®] and how best to approach these. Finally, this part provides a step-by-step, developmental approach to answering verbal reasoning questions. By the end of this part you should have a good understanding of verbal reasoning type questions and how best to arrive at the correct answer.

Part III replicates Section A of the LNAT[®]. In the actual test candidates are allowed 95 minutes and you might consider using the practice test to time yourself against this constraint for some indication as to your level of performance. Bear in mind that the on-screen test will have the passage of text and questions on the same screen whereas with the book when answering questions you will need to keep turning back to the page containing the passage; inevitably this will increase your time by several minutes overall. This practice test has not been written to be time constrained but as a vehicle: (a) to consolidate what has been learnt from the previous part; and (b) to give you the confidence when dealing with such questions. Rather than simply giving the 'correct response', the answers to the practice test provide the rationale for both the correct and incorrect answers. This approach has been proved to be effective in developing a person's knowledge and understanding of a particular subject.

The excellent LNAT[®] website gives candidates the opportunity to take two on-screen practice tests and you are strongly advised to complete these. Although a separate file provides a scoring template to check whether your answer is correct or not, there is no rationale for either correct or incorrect answers. Although the answer might often be 'obvious' there are occasions where a more detailed explanation would be beneficial.

Finally, Part IV looks at essay writing skills. This is not meant to be an exhaustive review of these skills but does include essay style and structure, the use of critical thinking skills and the use of grammar and punctuation to enable you to write a well-reasoned essay.

In addition to the practice tests and information given here, there are other things that can be done to prepare for reading law at degree level. While it may seem very informal, one of the most effective ways both to prepare for and succeed in studying law and jurisprudence is to read a 'quality' newspaper. In fact the LNAT[®] Consortium recommends this.

This book does not claim to be able to help you do well in the test but it should speed up your reactions and give you confidence in the style of questions you will encounter. GOOD LUCK!

3. Application to read law

For an undergraduate law degree you are required to apply online to both UCAS (www.ucas.com) and LNAT[®] (www.lnat.ac.uk) following the general timetable below:

- August:** LNAT[®] registration begins.
September: UCAS applications and LNAT[®] test sittings commence.
January: Submit UCAS forms and end of LNAT[®] test sittings.
June: Final closing date for late applications and those outside the UK.

Note that for the University of Oxford, LNAT[®] registration is required by October and the LNAT[®] to be sat by November.

Exact dates, details about choices, clearing and deferred entry are available on the UCAS website.

Deciding if law is really for you

You should already realise that training to become a solicitor or barrister demands a considerable commitment over a number of years. For example, once you decide to become a solicitor, it will take at least three years to train if you are a law graduate. However, if you are a non-law graduate it takes at least four years, and at least six years if you are not a graduate. This is just a reminder then that qualifying as a solicitor or barrister is not easy; you will have the intellectual challenge of exams, and you will need to fund your own studies.

According to the Law Society, the representative body for solicitors in England and Wales, a career as a solicitor will demand several qualities of you:

- intellectual ability – law is a complex entity
- versatility – no two days will be the same
- a desire to work with and for people
- commitment – training to become a solicitor is rigorous, requiring substantial effort and resources.

Exam results

Increasing competition for places at law school now demands a common entry requirement of AAB at A-level. There is no specific requirement in relation to the subjects at A-level but comments by the Russell Group suggest that member universities will favour traditional subjects (or at least two such subjects). English, history and economics are a good example of relevant subjects as to an extent they reflect some of the rigour and skills found in studying law. Although an A-level in law is not a pre-requisite, this obviously evidences an interest in the subject and is looked on favourably by universities.

Finding out about life in the law

The Law Society and Law Careers Advice Network (LCAN) are probably the two better known organisations providing law career details and both have useful information available on their websites. Another useful website is that of the Solicitors Regulation Authority and in particular the section headed *Student membership and completion of the academic stage of training*. This section also includes a subsection *Your character and suitability to be a solicitor* – this may be worth a read. For example, if you have been convicted of armed robbery you may want to reconsider whether a career in law is your best option!

Deciding on a university

There are currently over 100 universities offering degrees in law. However, you need to find the university (or college) which best suits your needs in relation to the specific areas covered, the actual course content and the teaching methods employed. All of these are important to ensure you have the best opportunity of achieving your full potential. It will be worth spending time with this. Obviously, you should also remember that only nine UK universities currently use the LNAT® in their application process.

Make sure the degree you are applying for is a qualifying LLB (Bachelor of Law) degree. Some universities offer BAs (Bachelor of Arts) in law. But unlike the LLB, some of these courses may not be counted as one of the steps towards qualifying as a lawyer, as they do not cover all seven foundations of legal knowledge, namely: criminal law; equity and trusts; EU law; contract law; tort law; property law; and public law (including constitutional law, administrative law and human rights law). The Solicitors Regulation Authority website (www.sra.org.uk) keeps a list of all qualifying law degrees and the universities that offer them.

It is interesting to note that although commercial law firms make a big deal of their willingness to recruit students from any university, the fact remains that, at least for the time being, the majority of trainees still hail from older universities, so take this into account when choosing a university.

Writing your personal statement

Before offering a place, universities are looking at three main things: your exam results, your referee's statement and your personal statement. Exam results and referees' statements seldom help universities to make selection decisions, whereas the personal statement is your opportunity to convince the university to offer you a place. They want to see that you will fit into university life, not just academically but socially as well.

Apart from telling the reader of your personal statement why you want to read law you should also include information about your work experience, volunteer work, academic commitment and extracurricular activities.

Work experience can often be difficult for those of you who are coming straight from full-time education but access schemes at weekends and during holidays are often available, especially in the final year of A-levels. If you have a family member or friend working in the legal profession then they may be able to arrange a placement, or your school or college may have a placement scheme with local law firms. However, do not be dismayed if you have problems gaining work experience; universities are aware of how difficult this can be.

Volunteer work is considered by many as important in the sense that it demonstrates a commitment to helping others in the community and develops your people and softer skills. Getting involved is easy and you should look for something you would enjoy and that you might stick at for months or longer. Lots of volunteering positions only require up to four hours' commitment a week and with some there are opportunities to attend training courses, e.g. first aid. Careers advisers may be able to help organise volunteer work or you can visit the following websites: **www.volunteering.org.uk** (this is the Volunteering England site and contains information and addresses); **www.do-it.org.uk** (this is 'volunteering made easy' – just enter your address and the type of project you want to get involved with). So if you aren't volunteering you might consider it's time to get off your backside and start to help others – oh and by the way, it can be FUN and it's FREE!

Academic commitment means demonstrating that you understand the commitment required for the hard work you will face to complete your degree and beyond. Your exam results do not amply demonstrate your commitment to studying but reading up on an area of law that might interest you would do – so make a note of everything you read outside your A-level course work in preparation for completing the personal statement.

Extracurricular activities are important as these provide evidence that you are a well-rounded person with a number of hobbies and interests. This may include playing representative sport, being a member of a society, being a musician or undertaking the Duke of Edinburgh Awards scheme. Where possible evidence of positions of responsibility is beneficial to demonstrate your leadership skills and the fact that you are confident and willing to undertake such responsibilities.

The importance of the personal statement cannot be overemphasised. You need to start it early in the application process and ensure it is providing the best impression of yourself, your skills and your ambitions. No doubt you will not be completely alone in preparing the statement as teachers and tutors take considerable interest in its preparation.

Interviews

First of all, not all universities use interviews; some interview as a matter of process, while others only interview where clarification of the application may be required. Assuming you are called for interview you will undoubtedly be required to demonstrate the following:

- academic ability
- capacity to deal with the rigours of the course
- commitment to a career in law
- logic and reasoning ability
- knowledge of current affairs, especially those concerning the law.

These areas are really what you would expect and the last point reiterates the benefits of regularly reading a 'quality' newspaper.