PRE-PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS

Pre-Law

As indicated by the official guide to American Bar Association (ABA) approved law schools, there is no single path or degree that must be pursued in order to gain admission to law school and to pursue a career in law. Legal education programs and law school admissions boards welcome and value diversity of experience and education.

While the ABA does not specifically recommend courses of study or undergraduate majors, there are several that, because of the skills they specifically aim to develop, are traditionally regarded as preparing students for law school admissions: History, English, Philosophy, Political Science, and Business. In the current social climate, degrees in fields as diverse as communication, education, nursing, or science are also excellent paths to a legal education.

Every student seeking admission to law school must develop the following set of core skills:

- Analytic and problem solving skills,
- Critical reading ability,
- Written skills,
- Oral communication and listening skills,
- Research skills,
- Task organization and management skills.

In addition, persons pursuing a legal education must develop a strong sense of value relating to the faithful service of others and the promotion of justice. A Northwest University education specifically aims at encouraging both of these values and informing them from a distinctly Christian worldview. Students pursuing legal education are strongly encouraged to participate in educational, extra and co-curricular activities, life experiences that will assist in developing the core skills and attributes necessary for success in the legal profession.

The ABA further defines five areas of basic knowledge that are helpful to a legal education and to developing competent lawyers:

1. A broad understanding of history and the factors that have influenced the development of our society.
2. A fundamental understanding of the American political system and of political thought in general.
3. A basic understanding of mathematics and finance appropriate to the analysis of financial data.
4. An understanding of human behavior and society.
5. An understanding of the nature of culture and cultural diversity.

Courses that may help the student develop these understandings at Northwest University include, but are not limited to:

- Political Science/Legal Studies courses such as: American Government, Judicial Process, Legislative process, American Presidency, Constitutional Law, and Political Philosophy.
- Communication: Advanced Speech, Debating Controversies, Debate team
- Economics: Survey of Economics
- English courses such as: Advanced Expository Writing, Media Writing, Business Writing, Literature courses,
- Foreign languages and cultures
- History: United States History, Diplomatic History
- Philosophy: Logic, Critical Thinking and Writing, Political Philosophy, History of Philosophy
- Mathematics: Pre-calculus (minimum)
- Psychology and Sociology

Objective criteria for admission to law schools

- Law School Admissions Test (LSAT). Scores from this half-day standardized test are used by most law schools as a common measurement of potential for success in law school.
- Undergraduate GPA. Applicants submit undergraduate transcripts to the Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS), which converts grades to a cumulative grade point average using a set of consistent values. This data is used by committees in comparing applicants.
- Applicant index. Many law schools ask LSDAS to combine applicants LSAT scores and GPAs with weighted constants to produce a single number which they may use to assess and compare potential for success in completing a law degree.

Students desiring to pursue a legal education are encouraged to contact the College of Arts and Sciences pre-law advisor, and to participate in the pre-law advising cohort.


Pre-Medicine

A medical education provides access to a broad and inclusive profession from clinical practice to medical administration, public health, community health, biomedical research, and medical education.
Students seeking to pursue a career in medicine must build a strong foundation in the sciences and mathematics. Most students preparing to enter medical school major in biology or biochemistry. Other majors are possible, but the student must complete all of the core science courses required by the medical school. In addition, medical schools expect a broad education in the liberal arts. The unifying factor is the student’s ability to demonstrate in-depth scholarly exploration and the development of life-long learning skills that are essential to a career in medicine.

Because medicine is practiced in a social context, medical schools look for applicants with strong communication and interpersonal skills, a deep appreciation of the needs of society, and a set of values such as truthfulness, compassion, altruism, and justice. Northwest University provides students with the opportunity to develop these values through the integration of faith and learning in all of the traditional fields of study in humanities, natural and social sciences, and though the core biblical and theological studies in the Core Curriculum. In addition, Northwest University encourages students to directly apply these understandings and values through a variety of ministry and community outreach opportunities.

Medical schools look for students who demonstrate dedication to duty and altruism through service learning experiences specifically related to the values of healthcare professions. Such experiences will typically include participation in clinical science research, shadowing of a healthcare professional, participating in community healthcare or social agency outreach efforts, or the like. Students should seek out multiple opportunities to engage in experiential learning. Each student in the pre-professional biology track will participate in a cross-cultural service experience as a part of the program requirements.

Because the process for admission entrance to medical school is rigorous and competitive, the admission standards are very high. Letters of recommendation by the Medical School Advisory committee, which are necessary for application to medical schools, are only given for students who in the judgment of the committee meet the standards of strong grades, quality and quantity of service learning experience, and cross-cultural competence. Completing any particular degree does not guarantee recommendation.

**Core Science Requirements** *(Source: Medical School Admission Requirements, 2008-2009, AAMC)*

- General Biology (2 semesters)
- Physics (2 semesters)
- General Chemistry (2 semesters)
- Organic Chemistry (2 semesters)

**Note:** Premedical students intending to apply college credit earned through Advanced Placement (AP) and College Level Examination Placement (CLEP) to meet premedical requirements should be aware that medical schools restrict the use of such credits. Accordingly, Northwest University may require either taking the courses in the science core at Northwest University, or validating any transfer courses through successful completion of upper-level science courses. It is strongly recommended that all science courses be taken at the university level.

Because mathematical competence is foundational to science, and because medicine requires the ability to evaluate medical literature, Calculus and Biostatistics are generally expected.

**Other criteria for admission to medical school**

- A strong GPA in a rigorous and demanding selection of courses.
- Strong scores in the four sections of the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT).
- Letters of recommendation
- Documentation of service experience

Pre-medicine students will be expected to participate in the pre-med advising cohort and to regularly engage with the pre-medical advisor. Students may get more information by contacting the College of Arts and Sciences secretary in HSC 221 for a Pre-med handbook.

**Pre-Dentistry**

Students seeking to enter dental school should follow the preparation requirements for medical school admissions. Students are also advised to contact the dental schools to which they may wish to apply for specific pre-admission requirements. In place of the MCAT, dental school admissions require strong scores on the American Dental Association Dental Admission Test. Information on this test can be obtained from the Department of Natural Sciences and Mathematics.

**Other Post Graduate Health Professional Programs**

Students interested in preparing for other health care professions in areas such as pharmacy, optometry, medical technology, or podiatry, may also do so within the science programs at Northwest University. Because each of these professional areas has its own basic science and core curriculum requirements, a student seeking entrance into a professional school should determine the specific requirements by consulting the catalogs of the school(s) and tailoring the course of study at Northwest University to meet them. Information on some of the health care professions is available from faculty in the Science and Mathematics department.