

Personal Statement: Law

Law is an exacting field, but one nevertheless filled with nuances and subtleties. It is a combination of the rational and the emotional, and of the intellectual and the psychological. It can be both dogmatic and ambiguous. It is these dualities and the complexity of ideas and principles that I find so fascinating, and I cannot wait to study and explore subjects as diverse as criminal law, human rights law, constitutional law and jurisprudence.

I am currently completing my International Baccalaureate (IB) at St. Julian's School in Lisbon, Portugal. The IB is a well-respected educational program and one which I believe has prepared me well for university study. My principal subjects – history, economics and English – have taught me how to be analytical and form balanced arguments and, as well as challenging me as a student, have also helped me start to challenge the theories and opinions of my teachers. There are no 'easy' shortcuts in the IB: essays are expected to be lengthy and always of the highest standard, and attaining a high mark is far more difficult than it was in my native country of South Africa. This challenging conclusion to my schooling has helped me to have an open and flexible mind, and a resilient and disciplined attitude – standing me in good stead for the mental rigour of a law degree.

My interest in law – and particularly the idea of becoming a barrister – was piqued when I became involved in public speaking, something I have loved ever since I won my first inter-house competition at the age of 10. Since then, I have been an active member of public speaking teams, representing both my school and my house, and winning numerous titles, including a Johannesburg region public speaking competition sponsored by the Rotary Club. I was also captain of my school's public speaking team for two years, a role which helped hone both my listening and leadership skills. I love the thrill and mental stimulation of articulating myself in front of an audience, especially the impromptu speeches, and though it can be scary when there is a full house, it is so exhilarating too! Learning to think on my feet and develop arguments both for and against a motion is a skill I will need to call on as a legal professional, and I look forward to developing this further by participating in mooting at university.

My competitive nature has also transferred to the sports arena, and I enjoy volleyball, swimming and athletics – representing my school in the latter two disciplines. Committing to a rigorous training schedule has helped me learn to balance the requirements of study and extra-curricular activity, whilst working with varied team mates has improved my communication skills and assertiveness. In fact, it was connections forged at a swimming gala that resulted in my securing work experience at a local law firm – an invaluable opportunity to shadow legal professionals and understand further how counsel and solicitors work together with the bench to achieve justice.

As an individual with a truly global outlook, I wish to study in the UK because I have a particular interest in English law – and also in British culture. Not only is English law full of interesting cases and precedents, making it one of the greatest legal systems in the world, but also Britain is a country of rich tradition and opportunity, with British universities providing a well-balanced, world-renowned education. As someone who has been schooled in different continents and learned to adapt to life in multiple countries, I have no doubt that I will cope well with the relocation and transition to university.

Having strived to excel in my academics, and adopt a sympathetic and sensitive outlook to the world and her citizens, I know that a law degree at an esteemed university will provide an excellent challenge, honing my mental agility and analytical skills, and exposing me to people and thought processes that will broaden my perspective. I believe my dedication to my future career, coupled with my personal skills and attributes, will guarantee me success in this demanding degree and profession.