

## ***Applying to schools in Canada – a few general pointers***

### *Preparing a research proposal*

As far as I know, the majority of LLM courses in Canada are research based (as opposed to taught). There are exceptions (Osgoode, for example), but not many. This means that you need to give a serious amount of thought to your proposal – not necessarily working out exactly where your research will take you, but having a good idea of the area or problem you intend to focus your research on. So spend some time on this and try to make it relatively detailed – again, not necessarily filled with amazing legal insights (that’s what the course is for, after all), but demonstrating that you have considered the field and have thought about what difficult questions you might have to address during the research.

### *Looking up potential supervisors*

The research based nature of the degree means there has to be someone at the faculty to which you apply that is able (and willing) to supervise you during the project. In many ways whether a faculty member turns out to be amenable to supervise you or not is out of your control, but there are certain things you can do to help your chances. First of all, look at the faculty’s website: here it will list the area(s) of interest for each faculty member. Check that there is someone (or, in an ideal situation, a number of people) who is interested in your area and who might be a suitable supervisor. Secondly, once identified, it is worth contacting the most likely candidate directly.

(Taking a step back, if you’re not sure of what you’d like to write about, then this online review of faculty interests would also be a good place to start. You can then tailor the whole project to the school to which you’re intending to apply.)

### *Contact potential supervisors*

Faculty at research institutions expect to be contacted by potential supervisees and so will not mind you doing this. Drop a potential supervisor an email setting out in a couple of sentences your proposed project, or just your general area of interest, and ask if it’s something they would consider supervising. Don’t be disheartened if you don’t get a reply, however. Ideally, you will get an encouraging response, although probably qualified by “I can’t make any promises until I’ve seen your file, but your project sounds interesting.” If you get a negative response (unlikely) then you should rethink your choice of potential supervisor, but at least that helps to narrow the field for you. Even if you don’t get any response at all, don’t panic – just bear in mind that faculty members are extremely busy and that silence is emphatically not a rejection of your idea. You’ve laid the groundwork, so it’s worth submitting your application anyway, particularly if there is a specific academic you wish to work with.

*Talk to the graduate course secretary*

Another good source of potential information is the graduate course secretary / coordinator (there will be one at every institution). He/she will have information – hopefully at their fingertips! – about the research interests of the faculty, the application process as a whole, and any proposal presentation or formatting questions etc.

*(Perhaps) mention funding*

It might be worth stressing, if you apply for the LLM after being notified of the successful award of the scholarship, that you are able to fund the year yourself (i.e. you are not reliant on university funding). Although this alone won't make an application successful, it might tip the balance in your favour. There is, of course, no way of knowing how influential in the application process this kind of statement might be (if at all). But every little helps.

*Make it clear why you have chosen the faculty of law at 'X' University*

Finally, you might want to make clear (if true) that you are only applying to that *particular* university / department and say exactly why. So, for example, if you want to study a particular area of legal theory that that faculty excels in, or work with a 'star' member of the particular faculty, or if there is a niche journal published from the faculty which focuses on the area in which you want to work, make this very clear in your application.