

I. DEPARTMENT OBJECTIVES

The Master of Arts Program in Legal Studies presents the master's student with a course of study in public law, emphasizing law as a social phenomenon as well as a technical body of rules. It is a rigorous course of study, designed to develop the candidate's critical understanding of the legal system. Law is examined from an interdisciplinary liberal arts perspective emphasizing analytical and conceptual thinking, legal research and writing, substantive areas of the law, ethical and public interest concerns, public advocacy skills, and the role of law in society.

Knowledge of the law and legal systems is important for people in many walks of life: social workers, librarians, insurance executives, public administrators, union representatives, legislative liaisons, lobbyists, law enforcement officials, court administrators, historians, political scientists, auditors, hospital administrators, association executives, personnel administrators, human resource consultants, operations researchers, and Ph.D. candidates, to name a few. Comprehensive legal research, writing and related advancement in law-related careers including legal assistant positions, particularly in public law areas, are incorporated into the M.A. LES. degree program of study. In addition, it offers a solid foundation for understanding law as social science in the humanistic tradition. The Legal Studies Master of Arts program provides the professional and scholarly skills necessary for success in law-related careers or further graduate level study.

II. DEGREE AND UNIVERSITY REQUIREMENTS

In order to be a candidate for a Master of Arts in Legal Studies, students must complete all of the following requirements:

1. Full admission to the LES Program's Master of Arts course of study, including completion of all prerequisites. [View the LES admission requirements.](#)
2. Full admission to the University of Illinois at Springfield. [View the UIS Admissions Department web site.](#) (Separate application forms are required for program and university admission.) Prior completion of a baccalaureate degree is required for graduate level admission.
3. Completion of a minimum of 36 hours of course work, including all program course requirements set forth below. Full admission without completion of all prerequisites is possible. However, such students may be required to take an additional 8 semester hours to meet all of the degree requirements.
4. Satisfaction of all university graduation requirements. [View the UIS Registrar's Office web site, which contains University graduation information.](#)
5. Maintenance of a "B" grade point average or higher. A "B" grade point average (GPA) means a minimum score of 3.0 on a 4.0 grade point system for all of the courses taken together. A maximum of 4 credit hours of "C" are allowed in Legal Studies course(s) [An additional four hours of "C" are allowed in non-LES classes as long as a

"B" GPA is maintained.] All clinical education courses and tutorials are graded on a Credit/No Credit basis. Other courses may be taken on a Credit/No Credit basis at the student's option. Graduate students must earn a minimum of "B" to receive credit in a class for which they have chosen the Credit/No Credit option. [Classes taken at UIS to meet all admissions prerequisites are not factored into the graduate student's overall GPA.]

Catalog Requirement

Degree requirements are set forth in the [catalog](#) that is in effect when a student takes his or her first graduate level course. The student should keep a copy of that initial catalog for reference purposes! All students have the option of following the degree requirements set forth in the catalog in effect at the time of graduation. The option must be made prior to submitting the graduation contract.

Legal Assistant Certificate

UIS does not offer a separate, non-degree legal assistant certification program. Legal Assistants in Illinois are not otherwise individually certified. However, LES graduates receive a certificate verifying that they have completed a comprehensive legal assistant training program.

Closure Requirement

Students in LES have a choice of completing a thesis or taking a closing seminar.

Graduation

Prior to graduation, all students must file and obtain approval for a **Graduation Contract**. The graduation contract is submitted on a form required by the university early in the student's last semester, to the Legal Studies Department. It lists courses taken and pending and confirms that the student has met all the catalogued degree requirements. Graduation contract forms are available from the [University Registrar's Office](#).

Time Limitation

The student must complete all degree requirements within six years from the date at which the first graduate course used toward the degree is taken. The department may grant exceptions on a case-by-case basis, a) for inclusion of courses taken before the six years began, or b) for a leave of absence. Please note, students granted exceptions might be required to follow current catalog degree requirements.

Continuing Enrollment

Continuing registration until the degree requirements are completed is required by the university to maintain eligibility and matriculation status. If no class is being taken in any given semester, a student must register for one hour of audit for that semester. Even if a student has no more courses to take but is completing a thesis or incomplete course requirement, until the work is completed, the student must register for at least one hour of audit each semester unless a student petition for leave of

absence is granted.

III. ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

LES M.A. students come from a variety of educational experiences and backgrounds. No particular undergraduate major is required.

Prerequisites

1. An undergraduate course in American government or equivalent. Students lacking this prerequisite may still apply and be admitted into the program, but must take LES 301 - Legal Institutions and Processes or [LES 201](#) American Government or [LES 202](#) American Legal System in the first semester of study. No credit will be given toward the graduate degree for this course.
2. Seven semester hours of legal research and writing: [LES 401](#) Legal Research and Citation and [LES 402](#) Legal Writing and Analysis or [LES 472](#) Legal Studies Research Methods. [LES 401 is during the fall term and is a prerequisite for LES 402, which is offered during the spring term.]

A grade of "B" or better must have been earned in these to be considered sufficient to meet the prerequisite requirements.

If you wish to receive credit for an equivalent course and/or other competency, you must file a [waiver](#) request with the department. Determination of whether a course taken elsewhere is equivalent to a Legal Studies course is made on a case-by-case basis. Requests for waiver should be submitted on the student petition form available from the department office. NOTE: A short paralegal training course introducing legal research is not usually considered equivalent to the LES eight semester hours of "B" or better work requirement.

IV. ADMISSION PROCEDURES

Two separate admission applications are required: **one for the department and one for the university**. Candidates must be admitted to a department in order to be admitted to the university.

University admissions applications and information can be obtained from the [Office of Admissions](#), (office UHB 1080, telephone 206-4847). Legal Studies admissions applications are available from the LES Department Office (Public Affairs Center 340, 206-6535, les@uis.edu). All forms are also available for downloading on-line; just follow the links below.

[LES master's degree requirements](#)

[Application for admission to the LES master's degree program](#)

For LES admissions, applicants must submit the following:

1. Completed, signed, and dated LES Department application form

2. Three letters of reference, including, if possible, one academic reference
3. Representative writing sample written on a topic noted on the LES admission application that shows ability to handle the extensive expository writing and analysis required of LES graduate students; and
4. An official transcript showing satisfactory completion of all baccalaureate degree requirements or the equivalent undergraduate studies. (LES will receive a copy of the transcript submitted to University Admissions. A second transcript is not required.)
5. An official TOEFL score (foreign applicants only) sent directly by the testing agency. The institutional code number for the University of Illinois, Springfield (UIS) is 1787. Online Master's program applicants must have scores of at least 600 (PBT), 250 (CBT), or 100 (IBT). The minimum score requirement for on campus program applicants is 570 (PBT), 230 (CBT), or 88 (IBT).

Conditional Admission

The LES Department reserves the right to accept students provisionally on the condition that they agree to participate in further English language training, writing courses, or work at the [Center for Teaching and Learning](#). Foreign student applicants must also show sufficient English language facility to be able to complete competently the LES course of study by submitting official TOEFL scores.

When the department receives all the above materials, the LES Graduate Admissions Committee reviews the file. File reviews are conducted on an ongoing basis throughout the school year. When complete the admission decision is promptly communicated to the student and to the [University Admissions Office](#).

Material on financial aid, graduate assistantships, and legislative or other or intern positions must be submitted early in the calendar year. Graduate assistant applications are usually no later than early March. Internship and financial aid requests have other deadlines. Information on these programs and their requirements are available from Student Affairs Office, SAB 23. You may also follow the links below.

[Financial Aid website](#)

[Internships web site](#)

V. FACULTY ADVISERS

Each student is assigned a faculty adviser upon being admitted to the department. The faculty adviser is available to assist the student to plan the overall course of graduate study. The adviser also may provide advice, explain course options, and help if any academic difficulties or concerns arise while at UIS. Advisers are required to sign a variety of permission forms, including applications for clinical or thesis studies. Most advisers require, at a minimum, that the student meet with them before they will approve a project.

Students may change advisers at any time by filing a [university form](#) used for this purpose

available from the department secretary. It is the student's responsibility to make sure the new adviser has all pertinent academic records including the academic plan developed with the prior adviser. Students are asked to talk with their faculty adviser at least once a semester.

VI. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The courses fall into three categories:

- (a) Required preliminary courses if courses not previously taken (0-7 hours) ;
- (b) Program core courses (28 credit hours) ; and
- (c) Legal studies electives. Students should take electives that focus on modern issues of law and policy. These courses must be LES prefixed courses or approved in lieu thereof;
- (d) General electives are chosen by the student in consultation with the adviser (8 hours). These courses do not have to be taken in the LES program.

Many LES courses must be taken in sequence. Not every course is offered every semester. The department recommends that courses be taken the year and semester indicated in the recommended order. Almost all LES graduate level courses are taught only in the evening. Evening schedule for a four-semester hour course is usually once a week from 6:00 to 9:30 p.m.

VII. CLINICAL EDUCATION

Clinical Education offers a self-directed learning and work experience in a legal setting, enabling students to develop skills necessary for success in a legal environment. Participation is strongly recommended for students interested in areas such as social services, public administration, and legal assistant positions.

Credits

It is possible to earn up to 8 hours of Clinical Education credits. The core requirement is met with four hours. If an additional four hours are taken, they count as legal studies electives in [LES 554](#). Each credit hour is the equivalent of 50 working hours; a four-hour course requires 200 hours in the placement. The course is graded on a Credit/No Credit basis only. Students who do not take Clinical Education are required to take eight credit hours of general electives, chosen in consultation with the adviser.

Location

Placement options include courts, administrative agencies, state and federal attorney's offices, legal aid offices, private law firms, and other public interest groups. Some are paid some are not. Employment in a law related area, public service and legislative [internships](#) (e.g., Graduate Public Service Internships, or GPSI), as well as relevant graduate assistantships may be used for clinical education if your placement meets the requirements.

Alternatives

Independent study options comprising a project suitable to a student's learning needs and experiences is an alternative to a formal clinical job placement. Students working full-time or otherwise unable to work at a clinical placement can work with faculty advisers to develop a research or project alternative.

Timing

Clinical placements should be discussed with the appropriate faculty at least one semester before the student is planning to take the course.

A Clinical Education Course Form (available in the department office) must be approved by both the department's clinical education director and the student's faculty adviser before registration in the course will be allowed.

VIII. CLOSURE REQUIREMENTS

The university requires each graduate student to complete a closure exercise to enable the department to assess the student's level of learning and readiness to be a master's level candidate. Legal Studies has determined this requirement may be fulfilled either by completing a thesis or passing [LES 504](#) Graduate Seminar, a "Capstone Course."

Option A: Graduate Seminar (LES 504)

As described by the University, "a capstone course is an integrative course utilizing theoretical and applied aspects of the relevant discipline and shall include a major writing component such as a case study, project, or examination." In Legal Studies, the capstone course is [LES 504](#), which provides students an opportunity to build upon and further develop research, writing, and analytical thinking skills and to apply these skills to the resolution of current substantive legal problems or issues in such a way that the relationship of law to society and to social change is heightened. The course is normally offered every spring semester.

Seminar topic and design vary with the instructor, but always includes a major writing component. In addition, the department at the end of the course sponsors a presentation of student seminar projects developed in the course. These may include individual research presentations, panels presenting a variety of positions on the thesis topic, or other format depending on the seminar format. Presentations are announced and are open to LES faculty and students and other interested individuals.

Option B: Thesis (LES 590)

"A master's thesis represents a sustained research essay, original in either its research material or mode of integration, written individually by a student, on an approved topic germane to the field." Students can register for up to eight credit hours of thesis. Grading is on a Credit/No Credit basis.

To do a thesis, a student must choose a thesis adviser consistent with the student's interest and the proposed topic. The thesis adviser is a faculty member, not necessarily

from the LES faculty, who is willing to supervise the student work on the proposal project. The thesis adviser may be (but is often not) the same person as the academic adviser.

Completed theses are presented orally and in writing to a thesis committee for review and approval. A thesis committee consists of at least three persons, including your thesis adviser and two or more additional faculty members. At least one of the faculty members must be from Legal Studies. Another, from outside the department, is appointed by the dean after consultation with the thesis adviser. When all elements of the thesis exercise have been satisfactorily completed, each member of the committee signs the Closure Approval Form, which is attached to the written thesis and submitted to the dean.

NOTE: If the student does not complete the thesis after completing four credits, the student must register for one credit hour each semester until finishing or until eight thesis hours are accumulated. If the thesis is still not completed, the student must register to audit thesis for one credit each semester until completing the thesis unless a petition for leave of absence is granted.

Guidelines for proposing and writing a thesis are available in the department office.

IX. WAIVERS

Students must fulfill all program course requirements unless they receive a waiver of a requirement. Waivers are often requested when:

- * It is impossible for a student to take a required class.
- * A student has already taken one of the required classes as an undergraduate (or an equivalent) and wants to take an alternative class instead.

Waivers apply only to the requirement, not to the number of credit hours. The required credit hours to obtain the degree are not changed by obtaining a waiver. Waivers of LES requirements are unrelated to university admissions actions concerning transfer credits for courses taken elsewhere.

To request a waiver, a completed [University Student Petition Form](#) stating the requested waiver action, reasons it should be granted, and how it will affect the student's academic plan, and signed by the student's faculty adviser, must be submitted to the LES Waiver Committee. The Committee will notify the adviser when action has been taken. If approved, the signed petition is sent to the registrar for notation when checking final graduation comments.

If the request relates to a course requirement or prerequisite already met, the petition should include statements of:

- a. the work experience and course(s) already taken, including a detailed description of the course content and the text(s) used (attach syllabus if course is taken at another school);
- b. A statement of how that course or work experience meets the requirement for

which the waiver is being requested;

- c. A copy of the transcript showing that the course was completed and the grade
- d. earned in it; and
- e. The course being proposed in lieu of the required course.

If the request relates to a required course the student was unable to take, the petition should include a statement of:

- a. How many times the course requested to be waived was offered and why it was not taken at one of those times; and
- b. What other courses will be taken if the waiver is granted.

The Legal Studies Waiver Committee has the sole authority to grant waiver requests. Decisions are made by majority vote of the committee. Decisions may be appealed to the LES Department Committee as a whole.

READING SUGGESTIONS

Some of the students have asked us to suggest books to read before taking LES classes. Advance preparation is not required. However, the following books address issues frequently discussed in our courses or are otherwise interesting.

The Politics of Law, David Kairys

Reason in Law, Lief Carter

The Common Law, Oliver Wendell Holmes

The Federalist Papers, John Jay, Alexander Hamilton, and James Madison

A History of the Supreme Court, Bernard Schwartz

One L, Scott Turow (if you are thinking of going to law school)

The Spirit of Liberty and Other Essays, Learned Hand

Buffalo Creek Disaster, Gerald Stern

Gideon's Trumpet, Anthony Lewis, et.al