

DEPARTMENT OBJECTIVES

Welcome to the Legal Studies Department at the University of Illinois at Springfield!

In this handbook we expanded on the information provided in the [UIS Catalog](#). As a student, you are responsible for the rules explained in the Catalog as well as in this Handbook. If you have any questions, please ask us for more information!

What do we mean by "legal studies" at UIS?

The Legal Studies Department (LES) presents students with courses, information, and faculty expertise that emphasize law in a societal context within an interdisciplinary liberal arts curriculum. Our demanding course of study examines law as a social phenomenon as well as a technical body of rules. It emphasizes public law (e.g., rights, equality, government, criminal law) rather than private law (e.g., contracts, bankruptcy, private property). Our goals include developing your knowledge and understanding of the legal system and enhancing your skills in analytical thinking, research, and writing.

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. Many professionals need to understand what the legal system is, how it works, how it interrelates with social change, and how it assists people in asserting their rights. Legal studies provides the professional and scholarly skills necessary for a general understanding of the law as well as for law-related careers, law school, or further graduate level study.

The LES Department has a number of formal objectives:

1. Develop analytical skills necessary to appreciate law as a social phenomenon;
2. Develop an understanding of how law is created, applied, interpreted and changed;
3. Impart knowledge of substantive areas of the law;
4. Provide clinical or direct working experience in legal environments;
5. Perfect student skills in legal research, writing, and analysis; and
6. Provide an interdisciplinary liberal arts education.

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II. ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS & ADVICE

Legal Studies is a rigorous major. Students seeking admission to the Legal Studies Department must meet all [university requirements for undergraduate](#)

[admission](#). There is no separate department application.

- *Although no special background is required, you should **complete all your general education requirements** (or approved equivalents) before taking any legal studies courses.*
- *Lower-division classes (100 and 200 level) taken to fulfill general education requirements cannot be used toward upper-division degree credit.*
- *To receive degree credit for non-UIS courses, you must have received a C or better. To receive number credit for non-UIS courses, they must be equivalent to LES courses at UIS. In general, paralegal courses taken elsewhere are not the equivalent of the LES legal research and writing courses.*

Note: Regardless of how well you write, we recommend that you take additional writing courses either before your arrival or once you are here. Without well-developed writing skills, you will have considerable difficulty with legal writing. In addition to good oral and written communication skills, you should also have a strong interest in the legal profession and in the role of law in society. You also must have a willingness to spend many hours doing research in the library and working on writing research papers.

A. LES APPLICATION OF UNIVERSITY REQUIREMENTS

UIS requires students to complete at least 13 hours in Engaged Citizenship Common Experience (ECCE). Applied Study and Experiential Learning Term (AST) fulfill portions of the Engaged Citizenship Common Experience.

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LES Department's AST Requirements

An AST provides you with a work based experience that develops skills needed for success in a legal environment. Placement options include courts, administrative agencies, state and federal attorney's offices, legal aid offices, private law firms, and public interest groups. Lists of suitable placements and projects are available through the LES Department and the [AST Office](#).

Talk to your academic advisor. Close discussion between you and your advisor will help ensure that your AST will fulfill your specific educational needs and career explorations.

One credit hour of AST is the equivalent of 40 hours working in your placement. Students normally do their AST after taking [LES 402](#), *Legal Writing and Analysis* or [LES 472](#) *Research Methods*.

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LES Certification of UIS Communication Skills Requirement

The University requires students to demonstrate proficiency in writing skills before obtaining a degree. Students identified by their LES instructors as having writing difficulties are required to develop an improvement plan with their adviser. Although most LES courses require substantial writing, formal certification of communication skills for LES majors occurs in LES 307 *Law and Society*. Passing the writing portion of the course with a grade of C or better certifies the student as meeting the university requirement. Students who do not demonstrate adequate writing skills receive an incomplete in LES 307 until demonstrating sufficient skills. The instructor has the option of requiring the student to enroll in a formal remedial writing program.

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B. DEPARTMENT REQUIREMENTS

Required department "core" courses provide essential legal background and develop needed skills. Elective department courses allow students to focus in a specific area of interest to meet individual goals.

Unless your adviser recommends otherwise, we strongly recommend that courses be taken the year and semester indicated here. When that is not possible, talk to your adviser about alternatives. Many LES courses should be taken in sequence. Most courses are not offered every semester. If you take courses out of sequence, you may be unable to graduate in the semester you desire.

Getting advice before registration is important!

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Pre-LES Preparatory Course

See UIS Catalog

REQUIRED CORE COURSES:

See UIS Catalog

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C. GENERAL ELECTIVES OR MINOR

Beyond required university and department courses, you choose 16 credit hours of general electives. You do not have to take these electives in the LES Department, although you may choose to do so. The LES Department recommends that you **do not** take only LES courses for all your general

electives. You are more likely to benefit from taking a broad array of courses than from overspecializing. You have a number of choices:

You may choose to take a **formal minor** in another department (or to "double major" in two departments at once).

- Not all departments offer a minor. You should consult departments you are interested in to see what courses they require and what procedures you must follow.
- Some courses are "cross-listed" with two or more departments, making it possible to satisfy requirements in two departments at once - though this does not satisfy the requirement for the overall number of credits needed in the major. Check the [UIS Catalog](#) for cross-listings.
- You may choose courses designed to improve basic skills or to remedy deficits that become apparent during your regular coursework or from your initial assessment tests. These include courses in writing, library research skills, computer skills, and so on. If your professors' point out problems, make sure you discuss options with your adviser.
- You may take advanced courses in any UIS Program designed to elevate your good skills to an even higher level (e.g., courses in expository writing, critical thinking, logic, history).
- You may take courses that just sound interesting. Have some fun.

As always, it's a good idea to discuss your options with your adviser.

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Double Major/Second Degree

Some students choose to major in two departments at once, or to obtain a second bachelor's degree after completing the first. To do so, you must arrange your course of study in consultation with advisers from both departments. You must meet the usual LES and university requirements listed above, in addition to all the requirements of the other major. Graduation contracts must be signed by both departments. (In most cases double-major students need to take more than the normal 60 credits to graduate.)

Other considerations:

- Even if the other major does not require an AST, you must do an AST to satisfy the LES requirement.
- Any student seeking a LES degree as a second bachelor's degree,

when the first degree was not awarded by UIS, must meet the usual LES and university requirements of 44 credits (all courses except general electives).

Note: LES does not offer a minor.

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IV. RECOMMENDED COURSE SEQUENCE

Our recommendation takes into account the amount of time each course requires, the progressive nature of course content, required prerequisites, faculty scheduling, and the past experiences of other LES students. If you cannot follow this sequence - if you do not enter in the fall, if you are not a full-time student, if you have a course or work conflict, if you cannot take courses in the summer - you may need to remain an extra semester to complete your degree.

College courses typically assume students spend about two hours outside class preparing for every hour in class - a three-credit hour course thus requires six hours of home work and preparation. A fifteen hour course load requires those fifteen hours in class plus thirty hours outside class, for a total of forty-five hours a week on school work. A twelve hour load means thirty-six hours a week.

Most full-time LES students should take no more than 12-15 credit hours the first semester. Students who take the recommended three 3-credit classes generally do better. After the first semester, if you want to take more than 12 hours, consult your adviser. If you work or have time-consuming family responsibilities, we recommend that you keep your course load at or below 12 hours.

Follow the sequence for courses listed in **boldface** whenever possible.

Also *remember to register early*, especially when a course is listed in the schedule as "WPI" - with permission of instructor.

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For students entering LES as Freshman or Sophomores:

V. ADVISING FOR CAP/LEGAL STUDIES MAJORS

Capitol Scholars Honors students planning to major in Legal Studies will need to complete the requirements as listed at the following site:

<http://www.uis.edu/legalstudies/students/capscholars.html>

During their first two years, the Legal Studies Department recommends that students complete courses that emphasize creative and expository writing, communications skills, logic, critical thinking, American history, statistics and /or survey research methods. All CAP Scholars Honors students intending to

become LES majors should take [LES 201](#), *The American Political System* and [LES 202](#), *The American Legal System* prior to taking any other Legal Studies courses.

Details for completing the LES major in conjunction with a semester abroad should be worked out with your LES adviser beginning as early in your academic career as possible.

Course levels are designated by the numerical prefix which precedes them. 500 level courses are for graduate students only. The Department reserves the right to cancel the registration and remove students from courses for which they have not had the necessary prerequisites or which are inappropriate for someone of their academic status. Checking with an academic adviser in the Department prior to registering for courses will prevent inappropriate course registration problems.

Non-majors interested in going on to law school should speak with the Department Pre-Law Adviser, Dennis Rendleman, in order to choose helpful electives. He may be reached at: 206-6324 or via email: Prelawcenter@uis.edu.

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VI. GRADING POLICY

LES generally follows university policy on grades. In most cases you can choose to take courses either for a *grade* or on a *credit/no-credit* basis. You choose your grading option when you register. You can change your decision during the semester before the deadline noted in the semester course schedule. After the deadline, the choice is irrevocable. However, ASTs, and tutorials (independent studies) are graded only on a credit/no-credit basis.

A primary purpose of the credit/no-credit option is to encourage you to take courses that interest and challenge you. "Credit/no-credit" means that grades of C or better are listed on the transcript as credit. Grades lower than C are listed as no credit. A C- is considered lower than a C and earns no credit. In either case, the grade does not count in the grade-point average. Remember, though, that in LES courses, a C requires good college level work. Students who plan to "get by" with minimal time and effort sometimes end up with no credit instead.

There is no limit on how many courses you can take for credit/no-credit. However, the majority of your courses must be graded to receive honors such as placements on the [Dean's List](#) (see the *Catalog*). Employers looking for good Legal Assistants frequently ask what grade was earned in legal research and writing. If you plan postgraduate education, keep in mind that graduate schools and law schools may expect the majority of your courses to be graded. You should discuss the benefits and drawbacks of the grading choices with your adviser.

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Incompletes

An *incomplete grade* for a course you do not finish is not automatic - it is given *only if you request it and only if the instructor agrees*. If you receive an incomplete, work out a schedule with your instructor specifying how and when you will complete the work. When you receive an incomplete, the instructor must also give a provisional grade. If you do not live up to the agreement, the grade will be changed in one year to the provisional grade. The Legal Studies Department lists all provisional grades as "F" Failure. Thus, if you do not satisfy an Incomplete within one year, it will turn into a flunking grade no matter how well you were doing prior to taking the Incomplete. Try to avoid incompletes! Many students who take incompletes find it difficult or even impossible to catch up later. Too many incompletes can place the student on academic probation and may limit future enrollment options.

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VII. FACULTY ADVISERS

Your faculty adviser is assigned by Legal Studies when you reach your junior year. The adviser is the faculty member with whom you plan your overall course of study. He or she provides advice, explains different options, and assists you if any difficulties arise during your UIS career. Advisers are required to sign off on a variety of forms.

You may change your adviser whenever you wish by filing a form for this purpose available from the department secretary. If you do so, make sure your new adviser has all of your academic records and is aware of the academic plan developed with your prior adviser. *You should talk with your faculty adviser at least once a semester.*

Although your adviser will help you plan your program and evaluate your progress, remember that following university and department rules and policies is your obligation. Keep track of policy changes! Keep track of the courses you have taken and the courses you need to take! We do not track you down to remind you what you need to do. It is up to you to ask your adviser for advice and feedback.

New students and others without an official adviser should refer to the department office for advising until an adviser is assigned.

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VIII. UNIVERSITY CLOSURE REQUIREMENTS

Graduation Contract

The university requires students to file and obtain approval for a **Graduation**

Contract no later than eight weeks after the start of your final semester.

You may submit your contract prior to your final semester if desired. The contract lists courses taken and pending - a final check to ensure that graduation requirements are met. Contract forms are available from the department secretary, PAC 340 or the [Registrar's Office](#), UHB 1094.

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Catalog Requirement

Your degree requirements are set forth in the catalog and come into effect when you take your first UIS course. For this reason, keep a copy! However, you have the option of following the degree requirements set forth in any more recent catalog - if the department or university changes requirements while you are a student, you can choose to switch to a newer catalog. The catalog year chosen must be designated on your graduation contract.

Students who do not graduate within seven years from the date of entry may be required by the department to meet the requirements of the catalog in effect during the graduation year.

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Graduation Ceremony

To march in the spring [graduation ceremony](#) before completing all your coursework in the summer, you must file a student petition before the deadline noted in the class schedule. You must have no more than 8 hours remaining for your degree, with no outstanding incompletes.

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IX. WAIVERS

You must fulfill all department course requirements unless you receive a waiver of a requirement. Waivers are most often requested under two circumstances:

- when it is impossible for a student to take a required class.
- when a student has already taken one of the required classes elsewhere (or an equivalent) and wants to take an alternative class instead.

Waivers apply only to the requirement, not to the number of credit hours - you must still complete the credit hours in some other course. Waivers of LES requirements are unrelated to university admissions actions concerning transfer credits for courses taken elsewhere.

To request a waiver, submit to the LES Waiver Committee a completed University Student Petition Form (available from the department secretary, PAC

340), signed by your adviser, well in advance of the semester in which graduation is anticipated. The adviser may help identify situations in which a waiver is appropriate.

The petition must state:

1. The requirement you want waived and how you will meet (or have met) it.
2. If the request relates to a course requirement you believe you have already met:
 - a. The work experience or course(s), including a detailed description of the course content and the text(s) used (attach syllabus if course was taken at another school);
 - b. A statement of how that course or work experience meets the requirement for which the waiver is requested;
 - c. A copy of the transcript showing the course was completed with a grade of "C" or better; and
 - d. The course you want to take in lieu of the required course
3. If the request relates to a course you are *unable* to take:
 - a. How many times the course requested to be waived was offered and why you were unable to take it those times; and
 - b. what other courses will be taken if the waiver is granted.

The LES Waiver Committee has the sole authority to grant waiver requests. decisions are made by majority vote of the committee. You will be notified directly by copy of the petition. You can appeal a denial of waiver to the Department Committee as a whole.