Legal Studies

Master of Arts
Bachelor of Arts

www.uis.edu/legalstudies/
Email: les@uis.edu or les-online@uis.edu
Office Phone: (217) 206-6535
Office Location: PAC 350

Many professionals need a comprehensive understanding of what the legal system is, how it works, how it interrelates with social change, and how it assists people in asserting their rights. The Master of Arts in Legal Studies addresses these needs within the framework of an interdisciplinary liberal arts education.

M.A. students work with professors, not teaching assistants. We offer small class sizes to facilitate learning and clinical education opportunities. M.A. students tailor their degrees to suit their needs and interests.

Both the Master of Arts Degree in Legal Studies offered on campus, and the online program allow students to gain professional skills, as well as study legal theory and the role of law in American Society. The Legal Studies M.A. provides students with a broad general understanding of the legal system, how it works, how it interrelates with societal change, and how citizens can assert their rights within the legal system.

The degree is particularly suited for U.S. students who are pursuing professions where practical knowledge of the law and legal system is required; participating in judicial processes as witnesses, investigators, or resource persons; enforcing compliance with the law, working with legal forms or requirements; or needing to know how legal regulations affect businesses. It is also useful for those who practice law in another country, who are required to interact with U.S. lawyers and businesses, but do no need to be a U.S. lawyer.

The curriculum seeks to develop students’ professional and scholarly abilities with a view to the kinds of skills they will need in law-related careers or more advanced studies. Particular emphasis is placed on analytical thinking, research, and writing skills. Our online students have the same curriculum requirements as our on campus students.

The Master's Degree

The Master of Arts program in Legal Studies is designed to present the master’s candidate with an interdisciplinary 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 and its role in society and public policy. It emphasizes analytical and conceptual thinking, legal and scholarly research and writing, substantive areas of the law, ethical and public interest concerns, public policy advocacy skills, and the role of law in society.

The objectives and outcomes for the M.A. graduate are to:

1. Outline the functional structure and operation of the American legal system.
2. Conduct and critique legal research and empirical research.
3. Use legal theories to explain real-world phenomenon.
4. Effectively advocate legal arguments both orally and through the written word.
5. Use social theories to explain legal phenomenon and behavior.

Advising

Applicants should consult with the Department Chair, and/or the Legal Studies Online Coordinator for preliminary advising. Students admitted to the program will be assigned a faculty advisor who will be identified in the acceptance letter. If the advisor is not available for any reason, the student may contact the Department Chair.

Grading Policy

Students must maintain a B (3.0) or higher average within the program and must earn a B (3.0) or better in all LES core courses (grades of B- or lower are not accepted). In LES elective courses, students may have a maximum of four hours in which they earn less than a B but at least a C (grades of C- or lower are not accepted). In non-LES elective courses, students may have an additional four hours in which they earn less than a B but at least a C (grades of C- or lower are not accepted), as long as an overall B (3.0) average is maintained. Clinical education courses, tutorials, and thesis courses are graded on a credit/no credit (CR/NC) basis. Campus policy on Master's Degree grades can be found in Grades Acceptable Toward Master's Degrees.

Degree Requirements

Pre-registration advising is important because many legal studies courses must be taken sequentially and not every course is offered every semester. Course requirements and sequences are available on the LES website.

Required preliminary courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LES 401</td>
<td>Legal Research And Citation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Core Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
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<tbody>
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Elective courses (with approval of advisor)

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Total Hours
40

1 All students who have not completed LES 401 or its equivalent should take LES 401 during their first fall semester. Students who wish to receive credit for an equivalent course for which they received a grade of B or better or for other competency in this area must apply for a waiver. (See Waivers section below.) The LES waiver committee will decide whether a course taken at another institution is equivalent to the LES course(s). Students requesting a waiver should consult with their advisor for further information and instructions.
Graduate students must take 16 hours of electives, including a minimum of eight hours of LES-prexifed electives. Students are encouraged to choose a focus in a particular area of law or legal policy in consultation with their advisor. Students may choose two of the four PAD courses required for the graduate certificate in Public Sector Labor Relations. Students may also create their own focus from the resources of the Department, College, or University. Suggested areas of focus include, but are not limited to, Law and Public Policy (online option); Human Rights/Social Justice (online option); Criminal Justice; or Regulatory Compliance (online option).

**Clinical Education**

The clinical education experience provides students with skills necessary to be successful in a legal environment. Master’s candidates may earn up to four hours of clinical education credits, which will be applied toward LES elective credit.

Government agencies, the Illinois Supreme Court, and other organizations sponsor internships, both paid and unpaid. Placement options include courts, administrative agencies, state and federal attorneys’ offices, legal aid offices, private law firms, and other public interest groups. Students enrolled in the UIS Graduate Public Service Internship Program (GPSI) may count the GPSI Seminar course towards their non-LES electives. Similarly, students enrolled in the Illinois Legislative Staff Internship Program (ILSIP) may count the ILSIP: Academic Seminar towards their non-LES electives.

**Waivers**

Students must fulfill all 36 hours of required courses and, if necessary, the four hours of preliminary courses. If it is impossible for a student to take a required course, or if a student has already taken one of the core courses or its equivalent as an undergraduate at another institution and wants to waive the requirement, the student must still complete the credit hours in some other course, with the exception of waivers for required preliminary courses.

**Master’s Closure**

Completion of LES 504 or a master’s thesis is required of all master’s degree candidates as a closure exercise. Students selecting the thesis option may enroll in up to eight hours of the master’s thesis course (LES 590). They may accrue that total in increments.

Campus policy requires that students be enrolled in at least one semester hour of master’s closure credit for each regular semester (fall/spring) after they have begun their master’s closure exercise until that exercise is completed. For LES students choosing the thesis option, this requirement means that if the thesis is not completed during the initial four hours of enrollment in LES 590, students must register for LES 590 for one credit hour in each subsequent regular semester (fall/spring) until eight hours are accumulated or the thesis is completed. If the thesis is still not completed by the time eight hours of continuous enrollment in LES 590 have been accumulated, students must register for LES 598 (zero credit hours, one billable hour) each regular semester (fall/spring) until the thesis is completed. Likewise, if students choosing to take the graduate seminar fail to complete the required course work/project during the initial four hours, they must enroll in LES 597 (zero credit hours, one billable hour) each regular semester (fall/spring) until the course work/project is complete. Department policy allows students until the end of the first week of classes in the subsequent semester to complete closure requirements before they are required to re-enroll in the closure course.

**Online Master’s Program**

The Master of Arts in Legal Studies is offered in a blended on campus and online format. The online M.A. Legal Studies program is designed with the working professional in mind. We provide online classes (students can complete their degree 100% online) and night classes. Online delivery permits a student to master the course material by attending classes from any location around the world, saving them the time and expense of having to attend the classes in person by either living on campus or computing to and from campus.

The online-only program allows students to gain professional skills, as well as to study legal theory and the role of law in American society. It presents the master’s candidate with an interdisciplinary 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 and its role in society and public policy. It emphasizes analytical and conceptual thinking, legal and scholarly research and writing, substantive areas of the law, ethical and public interest concerns, public policy advocacy skills, and the role of law in society.

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For more information, contact the Legal Studies Online Coordinator at (217) 206-8545, or at les-online@uis.edu.