Legal Studies, M.L.S.

Degree Offered

- Master of Legal Studies

Nature of the Program

West Virginia University’s Master of Legal Studies (MLS) program is housed in the Department of Public Administration.

The MLS is a degree program designed to build greater public understanding of the law and the United States legal system, provide graduates with the ability to apply knowledge and skills gained to performing their jobs more effectively, and provide private and public organizations the benefit of enhanced experience. It is designed for professionals practicing in human relations, criminal and juvenile justice, the court system, journalism, social work, regulatory agencies, county and municipal government, military, business, and other professionals who work with, though not necessarily in, the legal system. It is neither a “pre-law” program nor a paralegal program. It does not prepare graduates to practice law.

The MLS is a 30-credit hour program offered entirely online. Courses are offered each semester, including summer terms. Students following the prescribed course of study should be able to finish the degree in 18 months.

The MLS degree offers Areas of Emphasis in Healthcare Systems and Justice Systems.

Prospective and current students should frequently check the program’s website (https://publicadmin.wvu.edu/students/master-of-legal-studies/) for up-to-date program information, forms, and other guidelines.

FACULTY

ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS

- Valarie Blake - JD (University of Pittsburgh)
- John C. Kilwein - Ph.D. (Ohio State University)

SERVICE ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

- Samantha Godbey - Ph.D. (West Virginia University)

LECTURERS

- Carrie Caviani - JD (West Virginia University College of Law)
- Irving Condon - JD (University of South Carolina School of Law)
- Michelle Mensore Condon - JD (Washington & Lee University)
- Cara Davis - JD (Duquesne University School of Law)
- Cheryl Dennis - JD (West Virginia University College of Law)
- Frederick Dimichele - JD (Indiana University School of Law)
- Kevin Gillen - JD (West Virginia University College of Law)
- Julie Hawkinberry - JD (West Virginia University College of Law)
- Ulysses N. Jaen - JD (West Virginia University College of Law)
- Jeri Kirby - Ph.D. (West Virginia University)
- Gregory Noone - JD, Ph.D. (Suffolk University Law School, West Virginia University)
- Thomas O. Patrick - JD (West Virginia University College of Law)

PROFESSOR EMERITUS

- Nancy L. Adams - Ph.D. (Fielding Institute)

Admissions

The Master of Legal Studies is a degree program designed to build greater public understanding of the law and the United States legal system. Graduates will be able to apply the knowledge and skills gained to performing their jobs more effectively and to provide private and public organizations the benefit of enhanced experience. Applicants must have a bachelor’s degree with an overall undergraduate GPA of 2.75 or higher. Preference is given to those with work experience broadly related to legal studies.

Standardized graduate-level test scores (GRE, GMAT or LSAT) are required unless the following circumstances apply, in which case the requirement can be waived:
• Applicants who earned a bachelor’s degree from a U.S. accredited college or university and achieved a cumulative GPA of 3.4 or higher may request a waiver of the graduate exam score requirement.
• Applicants who already hold a graduate degree or have successfully completed at least 18 credit hours and achieved a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher from another accredited graduate program.
• Applicants with at least five years of broadly related experience after completing their undergraduate degree. If applicant are active military or a veteran, they should include this information in their request as well as a description of all relevant professional experience and how it relates to legal studies and the applicant’s career goals.

List of Admission Requirements:
• See the steps to apply for admissions and access the application here (https://graduateadmissions.wvu.edu/how-to-apply/).
• Transcripts from all institutions attended.
• Standardized graduate-level test scores (GRE, GMAT, LSAT) unless exceptions described above apply. In that case, this should be addressed in the statement of purpose.
• A statement of purpose that describes the applicant’s career goals and how the M.L.S. program will support those goals. The statement should also address any exceptions to the graduate test scores as described above.
• Resume or CV.
• Two letters of recommendation.

International Applicants:
• See the steps to apply for admissions and access the application here (https://graduateadmissions.wvu.edu/how-to-apply/).
• International applicants should view additional requirements here (http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/graduateeducationatwestvirginiauniversity/ #internationaltext) and here (https://graduateadmissions.wvu.edu/information-for/international-students/).
• Language proficiency is required in order to hold a graduate teaching assistantship. See here (https://elli.wvu.edu/testing-resources/english-proficiency-gtas/).

Application Deadlines:
• The MLS program admits students for the Summer, Fall, and Spring semesters on a rolling basis.
• The priority review deadlines for all application materials are April 15th (Summer), May 15th (Fall) and November 15th (Spring).
• Applications will be considered after these deadlines on a space-available basis.

For questions, please contact: publicadmin@mail.wvu.edu

Certain application requirements may be waived based on a preliminary review of an application by the program.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS 2024-2025
The Admission Requirements above will be the same for the 2024-2025 Academic Year.

Major Code: 1408

Master of Legal Studies

Degree Requirements
• Credit Hours: Students are required to complete a minimum of 30 credit hours in graduate coursework.

• Grade Point Average: Students must earn a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0. Students must also earn a minimum GPA of 3.0 and a minimum grade of B- in all courses applied to the degree.

• Area of Emphasis: The MLS program offers three areas of emphasis 1) Healthcare, 2) Justice Systems, and 3) Homeland Security. Students may either complete an Area of Emphasis or 9 credits of electives.

• Benchmarks: For details, go to the Legal Studies Degree Progress tab (http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/eberlycollegeofartsandsciences/legalstudies/#degreeprogresstext)

Curriculum Requirements

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEGS 610</td>
<td>Law and the Legal System</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEGS 620</td>
<td>Researching the Law</td>
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<td>Select two of the following:</td>
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<td>LEGS 640</td>
<td>Administrative Legal Process</td>
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LEGS 645 Judicial Legal Process
LEGS 650 The Legislative Process
LEGS 660 Dispute Resolution 3
LEGS 700 Research Capstone 3
LEGS 760 Administrative Ethics 3

AOE or Elective Courses
Select three of the following (others approved by Master of Legal Studies Advisor): 9

LEGS 691 Advanced Topics
LEGS 720 Media and the Law
LEGS 730 Employment Law
LEGS 750 Criminal Law and Procedure
LEGS 751 Punishment and Corrections
LEGS 752 Homeland Security
LEGS 753 Immigration and Border Security
LEGS 754 Military Justice
LEGS 770 Healthcare Law
LEGS 771 Legal Issues for Adults in Care
LEGS 780 Constitutional Law

Total Hours 30

Areas of Emphasis Offered:
• Health Systems (p. 3)
• Justice System (p. 3)

Health Systems Area of Emphasis

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<tr>
<td>LEGS 770 Healthcare Law</td>
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<td>LEGS 731 State, Corporate, and Organizational Fraud</td>
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<td>LEGS 771 Legal Issues for Adults in Care</td>
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<td>LEGS 780 Constitutional Law</td>
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Total Hours 9

Justice System Area of Emphasis

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<td>ELECTIVES:</td>
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Total Hours 9
Degree Progress

Benchmarks: Students are expected to consult with their faculty advisor at least once a semester to review their progress in the program of study. More information is provided in the MLS Student Handbook.

Plan of Study: The Plan of Study should be discussed with the faculty advisor to ensure appropriate sequencing of courses to meet graduation requirements.

Evaluation Procedures: The Legal Studies faculty are committed to supporting all admitted students in their timely completion of the program. Students will receive a “good standing” letter from the Department Chair annually. They will also be provided feedback through academic assignments and individual meetings as needed. The academic advisor is available to discuss areas in which students may be experiencing challenges and/or need additional support. If the academic advisor is not available, students should feel free to contact the Chair of the Department of Public Administration.

Timeline: Master’s degree students are permitted to continue in a program for a maximum of eight years following their term of admission to the program. Students who have been inactive for two or more years or who exceed eight years following their term of admission are required to apply for readmission to the University and their graduate program.

Professional Behavior: The MLS program is a professional program preparing people for careers in public service. Adherence to professional standards and ethics is expected of students.

Degree Completion: Full-time students usually complete the MLS degree in five semesters.

More information is provided in the MLS Student Handbook.

Major Learning Outcomes
MASTER OF LEGAL STUDIES

Students will be able to:

• Effectively communicate the current state of knowledge, research, and bodies of legal doctrines in the field of jurisprudence and regulatory law.
• Identify and evaluate policy and procedure of the distinct governing bodies of legal mandates including the courts, legislatures, judiciary and other legal institutions.
• Apply professional practice, including mediation and ethics, as they relate to various legal professions, areas of regulation and broader social connections.
• Critically analyze the recognized literature and apply knowledge to conduct independent and original research in the field of jurisprudence and/or regulatory law.