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 part of the Department of Public Administration. The M.L.S. is a degree program designed to build greater public understanding of the law and the United States legal system, to provide graduates with the ability to apply knowledge and skills gained to performing their jobs more effectively and to 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 M.L.S. is a 30-credit hour program offered entirely online. Courses are offered each term, including summers. Students following the prescribed course of study should be able to finish the degree in 18 months.

The M.L.S. degree offers Areas of Emphasis in:

- Healthcare
- Homeland Security
- 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

CHAIR

- Maja Husar Holmes - Ph.D. (Syracuse University)

GRADUATE PROGRAM COORDINATOR

- Cheryl Dennis - JD (West Virginia University)

COORDINATOR

- Carla J. See - M.A., M.S. (West Virginia University)

ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS

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

TEACHING ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

- Cheryl Dennis - JD (West Virginia University)

SERVICE ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

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

LECTURERS

- 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)
- Frederick Dimichele - JD (Indiana University School of Law)
- Kevin Gillen - JD (West Virginia University)
- Julie Hawkinberry - JD (West Virginia University)
- Ulysses N. Jaen - JD (West Virginia University)
- Patricia A. Keller - JD (West Virginia University)
- Jeri Kirby - Ph.D. (West Virginia University)
Admissions

The Master of Legal Studies program admits new students for the summer, fall and spring semesters on a rolling basis. Priority application deadlines are April 15 for the summer semester, May 15 for the fall semester or November 15 for the spring semester. Applications will be considered after these deadlines.

CRITERIA

- Bachelor’s degree
- Cumulative undergraduate GPA of 2.75 or higher
- Work experience broadly related to legal studies preferred

Application for admission and transcripts: Apply here [https://graduateadmissions.wvu.edu/how-to-apply/](https://graduateadmissions.wvu.edu/how-to-apply/)

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

- Transcripts
- Standardized graduate-level test scores (GRE, GMAT, LSAT) or request exemption of test scores in the Personal Statement. See exceptions to test scores below.
- Statement of Purpose. One to two pages about how and why the MLS program will further your career.
- Resume or C.V.
- Two letters of recommendation.
- Additional requirements for international applicants can be found [here](https://graduateadmissions.wvu.edu/information-for/international-students/).

The requirement that applicants submit GRE, GMAT or LSAT scores can be waived under the following circumstances.

- Admission based on Undergraduate GPA: The applicant who earned a bachelor’s degree from a U.S. accredited college or university and achieved a cumulative GPA of 3.4 or higher are eligible to waive the GRE/GMAT/LSAT requirement to apply for the program.
- Evidence of graduate level competence: Applicants who already hold a graduate degree or have successfully completed at least 18 semester hours in another accredited graduate program may request a waiver of the graduate exam score requirement.
- Significant experience related to legal studies: Applicants with at least five years of broadly related experience after completing their undergraduate degree may request a waiver of the graduate exam score requirement. If you are active military or a veteran, please include military experience. Include a description of your professional experience and how it relates to legal studies and your career goals in your statement of purpose.

Additional information and forms may be found on the program’s website or by calling the program at (304) 293-7977.

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

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 3.00 in coursework applied to the graduate program. Students must also earn a minimum grade of C in all required MLS courses. Students must earn a B or better in non-LEGS courses that contribute to the MLS degree program of study.

- 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.

- Graduation Requirement: Students must complete the curricular program of study and earn a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better.
• **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.

• **Degree Completion:** Full-time students usually complete the MLS degree in four semesters.

**Curriculum Requirements**

Minimum GPA of 3.0 is required.

**Required Courses**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEGS 610</td>
<td>Law and the Legal System</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEGS 620</td>
<td>Researching the Law</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Select two of the following:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEGS 640</td>
<td>Administrative Legal Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEGS 645</td>
<td>Judicial Legal Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEGS 650</td>
<td>The Legislative Process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<td>LEGS 660</td>
<td>Dispute Resolution</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEGS 700</td>
<td>Research Capstone</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEGS 760</td>
<td>Administrative Ethics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Elective Courses**

**Select three of the following:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEGS 691</td>
<td>Advanced Topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEGS 720</td>
<td>Media and the Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEGS 730</td>
<td>Employment Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEGS 750</td>
<td>Criminal Law and Procedure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEGS 751</td>
<td>Punishment and Corrections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEGS 752</td>
<td>Homeland Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEGS 753</td>
<td>Immigration and Border Security</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEGS 754</td>
<td>Military Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEGS 770</td>
<td>Healthcare Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEGS 771</td>
<td>Legal Issues for Adults in Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEGS 780</td>
<td>Constitutional Law</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Hours**

30

**Areas of Emphasis Offered:**

• Healthcare (p. 3)
• Homeland Security (p. 4)
• Justice System (p. 4)

**Healthcare Area of Emphasis**

**Required Course**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
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<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEGS 770</td>
<td>Healthcare Law</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
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<td>Legal Issues for Adults in Care</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEGS 780</td>
<td>Constitutional Law</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Hours**

9
Homeland Security Area of Emphasis

Required Course
LEGS 752  Homeland Security  3

Select two of the following:  6
LEGS 720  Media and the Law
LEGS 730  Employment Law
LEGS 750  Criminal Law and Procedure
LEGS 751  Punishment and Corrections
LEGS 753  Immigration and Border Security
LEGS 754  Military Justice
LEGS 780  Constitutional Law

Others approved by Master of Legal Studies Advisor

Total Hours  9

Justice System Area of Emphasis

Required Course
LEGS 750  Criminal Law and Procedure  3

Select two of the following:  6
LEGS 720  Media and the Law
LEGS 730  Employment Law
LEGS 751  Punishment and Corrections
LEGS 752  Homeland Security
LEGS 753  Immigration and Border Security
LEGS 754  Military Justice
LEGS 780  Constitutional Law

Others approved by Master of Legal Studies Advisor

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.

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 Chair of the Department 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 Master of Legal Studies program is a professional program preparing people for careers in public service. Adherence to professional standards and ethics are expected of students.

More information is provided in the M.L.S. 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.

COURSES

LEGS 610. Law and the Legal System. 3 Hours.
Introduction to the law and its functions, the structure of the U.S. legal system, and the actors in the legal system.

LEGS 620. Researching the Law. 3 Hours.
Provides experience in locating and interpreting primary and secondary legal authority; federal and state constitutions; agency rules and regulations.

LEGS 640. Administrative Legal Process. 3 Hours.
Explores the role of administrative agencies in making law.

LEGS 645. Judicial Legal Process. 3 Hours.
Introduction to the structure of the U.S. judicial system. Focuses on how beliefs and social conditions influenced the development of the United States Constitution, the institution of judicial review, and judicial participation in governing.

LEGS 650. The Legislative Process. 3 Hours.
Examines how legislation develops and implications of recent legislative reform enactments and proposals.

LEGS 660. Dispute Resolution. 3 Hours.
Theoretical and practical examination of dispute resolution processes and assessment of the appropriateness of dispute resolution for particular legal disputes.

LEGS 691. Advanced Topics. 1-6 Hours.
PR: Consent. Investigation of advanced topics not covered in regularly scheduled courses.

LEGS 692. Directed Study. 1-6 Hours.
Directed study, reading, and/or research.

LEGS 693. Special Topics. 1-6 Hours.
A study of contemporary topics selected from recent developments in the field.

LEGS 695. Independent Study. 1-9 Hours.
Faculty supervised study of topics not available through regular course offerings.

LEGS 697. Research. 1-9 Hours.
PR: Consent. Research activities leading to a thesis, problem report, research paper or equivalent scholarly project, or a dissertation. (Grading may be S/U.)

LEGS 699. Graduate Colloquium. 1-6 Hours.
PR: Consent. For graduate students not seeking coursework credit but who wish to meet residency requirements, use of the University's facilities, and participate in its academic and cultural programs. Note: Graduate students who are not actively involved in coursework or research are entitled, through enrollment in their department's 699/799 Graduate Colloquium to consult with graduate faculty, participate in both formal and informal academic activities sponsored by their program, and retain all of the rights and privileges of duly enrolled students. Grading is P/F; colloquium credit may not be counted against credit requirements for masters programs. Registration for one credit of 699/799 graduate colloquium satisfies the University requirement of registration in the semester in which graduation occurs.

LEGS 700. Research Capstone. 3 Hours.
Research activities leading to a scholarly project applying and extending knowledge gained across the master of legal studies program coursework.

LEGS 720. Media and the Law. 3 Hours.
Survey of mass media and the law, implications of existing law, and proposed changes.

LEGS 730. Employment Law. 3 Hours.
Explores law related to workers compensation, disability insurance, affirmative action/equal opportunity policies, workplace, workplace discrimination and related federal and state statutes.

LEGS 731. State, Corporate, and Organizational Fraud. 3 Hours.
PR: MLS major or consent. Typologies of fraud and white-collar crime in occupational, governmental, corporate, financial, technical, and professional fields. Examination of compliance in healthcare settings from providers to suppliers; governmental agencies relating to homeland security including computer-cyber crime, and; prosecution via the criminal justice system and civil systems.

LEGS 750. Criminal Law and Procedure. 3 Hours.
Covers investigative stages of search and seizure, interrogation, and identification. Familiarizes students with prosecutorial stages and evidentiary issues.
LEGS 751. Punishment and Corrections. 3 Hours.
Introduction to certain bodies of law in the areas of punishment and corrections, including statutory codes, common law doctrines, and executive agency rules. Focuses on the application of rules that govern those who enforce our system of punishment.

LEGS 752. Homeland Security. 3 Hours.
Introduction to current public management policies and issues relevant to security of the United States. Provides both traditional students and current practitioners with a broad, up-to-date, multidisciplinary overview of homeland security as a contemporary subject of intense interest and inquiry, and as an emerging academic discipline.

LEGS 753. Immigration and Border Security. 3 Hours.
This course provides knowledge of the history of immigration to the United States, the current state of affairs and the legal implications of the legal system.

LEGS 754. Military Justice. 3 Hours.
Survey and analysis of U.S. Military Justice practice as experienced by Judge Advocates and civilian practitioners. Emphasizes unique issues that arise in the military context.

LEGS 760. Administrative Ethics. 3 Hours.
Analysis of ethical issues in the law and the administrative decision making process.

LEGS 770. Healthcare Law. 3 Hours.
Examines law and health care regulations related to provision of healthcare and issues related to liability.

LEGS 771. Legal Issues for Adults in Care. 3 Hours.
PR: MLS major or consent. Overview of all areas of the law which concern adult care such as living facilities, insurance, estate planning, probate, age discrimination, durable powers of attorney, right-to-die issues, trusts, disability planning, long-term care, guardianship, Social Security, and elder abuse.

LEGS 780. Constitutional Law. 3 Hours.
Examines the concept of constitutionalism, the relationships between the branches of government and between national and state governments, and the role of the Constitution in protecting individual liberties.