

ACADEMIC POLICY

Online Master of Legal Studies

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ACADEMIC POLICY

1.00 Academic Standards Policy Objectives

1.10 Objectives: The objectives to be achieved by the academic standards of the School of Law are as follows:

- A. Providing The Best Education: To provide the best possible legal education to each student, including, but not limited to, knowledge about the nature and sources of law, legal principles, legal methods, legal analysis and reasoning, legal writing and advocacy skills, factual knowledge in selected fields, and professional attitudes.
- B. Meeting Accreditation Standards: To meet all professional and appropriate accreditation standards in the field of legal education for purposes of academic credit and recognition in the fields of both law and education.
- C. Enhancing School's Reputation: To enhance the professional reputation of the School of Law as a producer of highly qualified graduates so that the degrees issued by the School of Law will be recognized and accepted as evidence of excellence and achievement by the public and profession.
- D. Encouraging Personal Integrity: To provide a climate of professionalism, personal integrity and responsibility of the highest order based upon academic excellence, industry, ingenuity, dependability, and honesty.

2.00 General Requirements

2.10 Approval by Dean or Academic Dean: All academic matters requiring the decision or approval of the Dean may, in the alternative, be decided or approved by the Academic Dean. Unless otherwise stated, any reference to the Dean means the Dean of the School of Law. All academic matters requiring the decision or approval of the Academic Dean may, in the alternative, be decided or approved by the Dean.

2.20 Requirement of Make-up Class: When a scheduled class does not meet or is dismissed early, the lost time must be made up.

3.00 Academic Enrollment

3.10 Academic Program and Calendar Year: There are three terms per calendar year. Each term is comprised of two eight-week sessions.

3.20 Definition of Enrollment Status: Students can complete the MLS degree on a full-time or part-time basis. Enrollment status is determined by the number of units enrolled during any given term. Full-time status requires 8 units of enrollment per term, and part-time status requires a minimum of 4 units per term.

3.30 Regular Class Attendance Requirement: Regular and punctual class attendance is required. All students are expected to attend all live sessions unless otherwise outlined in the course syllabus.

3.40 Attendance in Assessing Grades: Individual professors have the discretion to use attendance in assessing grades for the non-examination portion of the course grade. Any unexcused absences, at the discretion of the professor, could have an adverse impact on the course grade.

3.50 Enrollment Requirement: No student may attend classes or receive credit for any course for which such student is not enrolled.

3.60 Class Participation: Students must come to class prepared and ready to participate. Students must complete all asynchronous coursework prior to each live session. Class participation will make up a percentage of the overall course grade to be determined by the professor.

3.70 Withdrawal from a Class: Students may withdraw from any course only by completing the Registration Adjustment Add/Drop form. After the add/drop deadline, approval of the Academic Dean is required. A notation of "W" for withdrawal will appear on the transcript for any withdrawal after the add/drop deadline. The notation of "W" does not affect the student's grade point average. The add/drop period for each session is one week. In case of extenuating circumstances after the add/drop period, the Academic Dean may extend the period allowed for withdrawal without the notation of "W" appearing on the transcript.

Students who drop a class after a session is underway will ordinarily receive a tuition refund based on when the courses are dropped.

- 3.80 Time Limits on Completion: Students will have a 3-year (9-term) maximum to complete the degree. If additional time is needed, it must be approved by program administrators. Required military deployment does not count as time towards this 3-year requirement.
- 3.90 Leave of Absence and Withdrawal: Students must speak with their Student Support Advisor (SSA) about any leaves of absence from the program and must then speak with the Student Support Manager to complete a Leave of Absence (LOA) form for any term, including summer, in which the student does not wish to enroll. Students will work with the SSA to develop a re-engagement plan.

Students can only take two leaves of absence during the duration of their program.

Students wishing to withdraw must speak with their SSA and any other program administrators or faculty as deemed necessary by the SSA. Students must also complete a withdrawal form.

4.00 Program Curriculum & Requirements

- 4.10 General Requirements: The MLS degree is a 32-unit program that includes four major curricular components: Foundation Courses, Core Courses, Elective Courses, and Residency Courses. The charts below sets forth the different courses. The MLS will offer two tracks: the General Track and the Dispute Resolution Track. Students will generally complete the Foundation and Core classes first, but may enroll in electives while completing the required Core classes. Students will select either the General Track or the Dispute Resolution Track for their elective courses along the way. All students will complete both Residency courses. The curriculum will typically be completed by full-time students in 16 months, with four terms of eight units per term. Undergraduate coursework must be completed prior to the start of classes.
- 4.20 Official Transcripts: Final official transcripts showing degree conferral are required for all applicants and admitted students.

In special circumstances, when official transcripts showing degree conferral are not available at the time of application, conditional admittance may be

granted, but complete official transcripts must be received by the University prior to registration for the second term to continue in the program. Students in this category who do not provide final official transcripts prior to second-term registration will not be permitted to enroll in any subsequent term until their application file is complete. For all others, including those with a conferred degree at the time of application, final official transcripts are required prior to the first day of the program.

4.30 **Minimum Units Per Year:** Students are required to make satisfactory progress toward their degree each year. Students are expected to complete a minimum of 6 credits per year to maintain current status.

4.40 **Required Courses and Electives:**

REQUIRED COURSES FOR ALL STUDENTS (22 UNITS)

Foundation Courses (4 units) – required	
LAW 5001	Introduction to U.S. Law and Legal Systems (2)
LAW 5002	Legal Research and Writing (for non-lawyers) (2)

Core Courses (16 units) – required	
LAW 5117	Administrative Law and Regulatory Compliance (2)
LAW 5115	Civil Procedure and Litigation (2)
LAW 5114	Constitutional Law (Structure and Rights) (2)
LAW 5110	Contracts (2)
LAW 5116	Criminal Law and Procedure (2)
LAW 5112	Negotiation Theory and Practice (2)
LAW 5113	Property (2)
LAW 5111	Torts (2)

Residency (2 units) – required	
LAW 5201	Law in Practice (1)
LAW 5202	Law, the Legal System, and Society (1)

TRACK ONE ELECTIVES: GENERAL TRACK (10 UNITS)

General Legal Studies Electives (10 units) (DR Track Two Electives May Also Fulfill These Elective Units)	
LAW 5302	Business Organizations (2)
LAW 5304	Education Law (2)
LAW 5301	Health Law (2)

LAW 5305	Intellectual Property (2)
LAW 5303	Employment Law (2)

TRACK TWO ELECTIVES: DISPUTE RESOLUTION TRACK (10 UNITS)

Dispute Resolution Electives (10 units)	
LAW 5402	Arbitration Practice and Advocacy (2)
LAW 5406	Employment Disputes (2)
LAW 5403	Cross-Cultural Conflict and Dispute Resolution (2)
LAW 5401	Mediation Theory and Practice (2)
LAW 5405	Psychology of Conflict and Communication (2)

5.00 Tuition and Student Accounts

5.10 Financial Responsibility Agreement: Students must agree to the Financial Responsibility Agreement every term before enrollment in classes is allowed.

5.20 School's Security Interest in Student's Academic Record: A student may not be graduated, nor may such student receive any diploma, certificate, or transcript until all accounts, current or otherwise, have been satisfied in accordance with policies announced by the School of Law. Any diploma, certificate, or transcript, shall be retained by Pepperdine University as security for such obligations until they are satisfied. This security interest shall not be discharged in bankruptcy or other creditor arrangements. Release of any such security interest prior to, or subsequent to, any default by the debtor shall not be considered a binding precedent or modification of this policy.

6.00 Maintenance of Academic Standards

6.10 Minimum Grade Point Average Requirement for Graduation: Students are required to maintain grades evidencing a satisfactory level of competence at all times. No student may graduate with a cumulative grade point average of less than 2.67.

6.20 Academic Good Standing: A student with a cumulative average of 2.67 or above after completing 16 units of course study is in good academic standing.

6.30 Academic Dismissal and Academic Probation:

- A. Petition for Probation: Students whose cumulative grade point average is below 2.67 after completing 16 units of course study must petition the Academic Dean to be continued on academic probation. The Academic Dean may refer the petition to a faculty committee for final decision. The petition for probation must clearly and convincingly demonstrate that the student has the ability to do satisfactory course work, and that the student will achieve the required 2.67 average upon completing the next 16 units. The granting of academic probation to petitioning students shall be discretionary and is not a matter of right. There is no presumption that any petition will be granted.
- B. Academic Dismissal: A student will be dismissed from school if the student failed to successfully petition to be continued on academic probation under 6.30 (A).

7.00 Bases for Awarding Academic Credit:

7.10 Examination week: Examination week will typically be the 8th week of each session, subject to change by the professor. Professors will decide if it is necessary to hold a live session during the examination week.

7.20 Assignment of Letter Grades:

- A. Distinguishing Levels of Competence: The grade assigned to examinations, papers, and other indicia of learning progress are intended to facilitate meaningful evaluation of the relative degree to which the student has achieved the course objectives and to make a relative distinction between the levels of competence demonstrated by students.
- B. Discretion of the Professor: All grades assigned to examinations, papers and other indicia of learning progress shall rest within the sound discretion of the professor(s). All such grading will be done in accordance with the grading policies stated herein.
- C. Numerical Weight of Letter Grades: Letter grades shall be assigned the following numerical weights in the computation of grade point averages:

A+	4.33
A	4.00
A-	3.67
B+	3.33
B	3.00
B-	2.67
C+	2.33
C	2.00
C-	1.67
D+	1.33
D	1.00
D-	0.67
F	0.00

D. Medians: All courses must have a median grade of B+.

7.30 Modification of Grades: Grades recorded on the student's permanent record may not be modified except due to an arithmetical error or a specific, demonstrable grading error. In connection with a specific, demonstrable grading error, it is the policy of the school that a professor may not increase a grade based upon an overall reappraisal of the quality of the examination once the course grade has been assigned. No grade change will be made until a memorandum from the professor detailing the change, and the specific basis for the change, has been approved by the Dean. Such changes will be approved only in rare circumstances.

7.40 Procedure for Challenging Grades: The procedure for challenging a grade in a particular course is as follows:

A. Professor to Evaluate Student's Examination: It is the policy of the school that the person best able to evaluate the student's examination is the professor who taught the course. This policy is based upon the belief that evaluation is affected by participation in the course, by the course objectives, and by reference to the level of response of the class as a whole.

B. Student Challenge of Examination Grade: In the event that a student believes that the grade given on an examination is a grossly unfair assessment of the student's performance on the examination, the student shall first consult with the professor who assigned the grade unless the professor is unavailable.

- C. Review of Challenged Grade by Academic Standards Committee: If, after discussion with such professor, the student still believes the grade given on an examination is a grossly unfair assessment of the student's performance on the examination, the student may submit a timely petition to the Dean challenging that particular grade and stating fully the bases upon which relief is sought.

Such petitions will, unless impracticable, be referred to the Academic Standards Committee for evaluation and recommendation. If the professor in question is a member of the committee, the remaining members of the committee shall decide the issue. In those instances where referral to the Academic Standards Committee is impractical, the Chair of the Committee or the Dean may act upon the petition.

- D. Professor Submits Documentation to Committee: The reviewing party shall next contact the professor whose grade is being called into question and shall ask the professor to submit to the committee the examination in question along with an explanation of the grade given and any other information which may be pertinent to the committee's review.
- E. Recommendation of Remedy to Dean: The committee shall consider the petition of the student, the examination, and all relevant information supplied by the professor and shall determine whether there was a gross abuse of grading discretion. The committee shall report its findings to the Dean. Only upon a finding of gross abuse of grading discretion will the committee recommend to the Dean that the grade be changed.

- 7.50 Release and Review of Examination Grades: Inasmuch as grades are considered to be tentative until approved by the Academic Standards Committee and by the Dean, final examination and course grades will not be released by the professor, but will be made available at an appropriate time by the Records Office. Course grades will be submitted as soon as reasonably possible, but in no event later than two (2) weeks from the date the final examination was given to the class.
- 7.60 Student Work Product Rule: The standards of the University and the School of Law demand that each student be graded and credited only upon the basis of such student's own work product.

- A. **Presumption Against Collaboration:** It will be presumed that students are not allowed to collaborate on the preparation of work product (examinations, research papers, assigned problems, etc.) unless the professor specifically authorizes such collaboration.
- B. **Violations of this Section:** Any attempt by a student to obtain credit for any activity, examination answer, or other work product not actually performed by such student, or to a degree not reflective of the actual activity or performance of such student, whether or not such attempt is successful, will be subject to administrative discipline. Such discipline may include, *inter alia*, the forfeiture of all or part of any credit obtained by such cheating and such forfeiture may be cumulative with any other penalty imposed.
- C. **Prohibition on Submitting Papers for Credit Multiple Times:** Students may not submit their own work product for credit in more than one course. Credit will not be awarded for a student's own work product that has already been submitted to obtain academic credit in another course, either at Pepperdine School of Law or elsewhere.

7.70 **Disability:** Any student with a documented disability (physical, learning, or psychological) needing academic accommodations should contact the Office of Student Accessibility at (310) 506-6500 (Pepperdine Malibu Campus, Tyler Campus Center) as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential.

8.00 Transfer and Advanced Standing

8.10 **Limitation of Advanced Standing Credit:** The amount of advanced standing credit to be allowed will be determined by the Dean. Typically, up to 10 such credits will be accepted and no credit will be allowed for courses unless the student earned at least a C- in such course.

8.20 **No Transfers from the MLS Program to the JD Program:** MLS students cannot apply units from the MLS program to the Pepperdine JD Program.

9.00 Program Policy and Procedure

9.10 **Waiver of Policies:**

- A. Dean's Authority to Consider Waiver: In some cases, regulations and policies may work undue hardship. For good cause, certain regulations may be waived by the Dean, provided that the quality of the student's academic program is not impaired and that the waiver is consistent with the goals and objectives set forth in Section 1.00.
 - B. Requirements of Written Petition for Such Exception: In order to preserve an accurate record of the basis upon which such exceptions are granted, a petition must be submitted to the Dean requesting the waiver and outlining the reasons therefore.
 - C. Requirement That Exception to Policy Be in Writing: No exception to the policies stated in the Catalog of this statement shall be allowed unless approved in writing by the Dean and placed in the file of the student.
- 9.20 Prospective Application of Changes to Academic Programs or Policies: Any changes made to any academic program or policy will only be prospectively applied unless otherwise stated.