

JURIS DOCTOR/MASTER OF LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN STUDIES (MALACS) JOINT DEGREE

Joint-degree programs between LACC and the FIU College of Law and LACC allows students to pursue a Juris Doctor (JD) and a MALACS degree. Students pursuing a joint-degree must meet the entrance requirements for both the MALACS degree and the JD or the IMBA degree. Fifteen approved credits from the College of Law may be counted towards the MALACS degree and will constitute a MALACS concentration in International and Comparative Law. Nine approved credits from the MALACS program will be counted towards the law school requirements. All additional JD or MALACS degree requirements must be met. Additional information on the joint-degree programs is available upon request from the LACC's Academic Programs staff.

Frequently Asked Questions: JD/MALACS

How long does it take to complete the joint JD/MALACS degree program?

In the joint degree program, a student can obtain both degrees in significantly less time than it would take to obtain both degrees if pursued consecutively. A student may earn both degrees in approximately four years as opposed to six.

When does the MALACS program start?

Most students begin the MALACS program in the fall at the beginning of the academic year. However, students may also be admitted for the spring semester, as well as the summer. The spring semester begins in January, and the summer term begins in May.

When does the JD program start?

The JD starts in the fall at the beginning of the academic year.

Do the academic calendars of the degrees differ?

Yes. The MALACS program follows the academic calendar of two semesters per year, plus summer. While students may attend classes in the summer, course options are limited. The semester for law school is approximately two weeks longer. For example, the 2011-2012 academic year the law school began a week earlier in the fall and ended a week later in the winter; the law school spring may begin later than the MALACS program and will end nearly two weeks later. Additionally, summer courses for the law school are scheduled for the full duration of the summer, as opposed to the MALACS "Summer A" and "Summer B" options.

How do I apply for the joint degree program?

Applicants to the joint degree program must meet the entrance requirements established by each individual program. Candidates must indicate on the application their intention to pursue the joint degree option. Students deciding to pursue the joint degree option after having been admitted to one program must indicate this intention on their second application.

I have taken the LSAT. Do I have to take the GRE (or vice versa) in addition to comply with both program application requirements?

Yes, you must be admitted to both programs separately before applying to become a joint degree student.

Can I take both degrees at the same time?

First year law students must be enrolled full-time in the College of Law; so if a student is admitted to the joint JD/MALACS degree program, he/she cannot take any MALACS classes until the summer following the completion of the 1st year. Students must complete their first year of law school before applying to the joint program. However, law students must apply to the joint degree program during or prior to the semester in which they are expected to complete 63 credit hours in the JD program. MALACS students must apply during or prior to the semester in which they are expected to complete 15 credit hours in that program. Additionally, joint degree students must register for a course or courses in their second degree during or prior to the second half of their first degree program.

Do I graduate from one program and then go into the next program?

No. Applications for a joint degree will not be accepted from candidates who have completed either degree. You cannot be awarded either degree until you have successfully completed all the requirements of both programs. Students who are unable to complete the second degree must at least satisfy all first degree program requirements to graduate.

How many credits can I transfer between the JD and MALACS?

Fifteen (15) credit hours from the law school curriculum will count toward the MALACS degree. Specifically, Eight (8) credit hours from the required Legal Skills and Values courses and 7 credit hours of courses selected from the designated international and comparative law curriculum may be transferred and applied to satisfy the MALACS depth or focus area. Nine (9) credit hours from the MALACS degree may be applied to satisfy the law school credit requirements, provided that the student completes the MALACS courses with a grade point average of 3.0 or higher.

What are the basic requirements for transferring courses from the MALACS into the JD program?

Courses for JD credit may be selected from any of the MALACS approved courses that have a focus on law, provided that they also satisfy the Law School curriculum. The student must obtain at least a B in each course. Students may not be enrolled in more than sixteen (16) credits per semester.

Are joint degree students required to write and defend a thesis for completion of the MALACS degree?

No. However, if the joint degree candidate chooses the thesis exit option for the MALACS degree, the thesis must address a Latin American or Caribbean legal issue and the thesis committee must be chaired by a faculty member from the College of Law. The other two committee members may be selected from the list of LACC associated faculty. Candidates selecting a different exit option must follow the procedures outlined in the exit option guidelines available in the MALACS office or online.

Can I work or have an assistantship while enrolled in the JD/MALACS joint degree program?

Given the intensity of the program, first year law school students cannot have a job other than possible assistantship opportunities available through LACC. Upon completion of the first year of the JD, students are allowed to work, but no more than twenty hours per week.

What is an assistantship and the associated benefits?

An assistantship is a merit-based part-time employment opportunity made available to a student who is enrolled full-time in a graduate level program. An assistantship provides a student with an in-state tuition status and covers approximately 80% of the tuition. Additionally, it provides a small stipend each semester and the option of health insurance. The 80% tuition waiver only applies to credits taken in LACC; the tuition waiver cannot be applied to courses taken in the Law School.

What other sources of financial aid are available?

Many students rely on some form of financial aid or scholarships to support the costs of a legal education. In conjunction with the University Financial Aid Office, the College of Law is committed to helping students obtain the funds needed to meet the associated costs. Students are encouraged to take a proactive approach toward financing law school and arrange an appointment with an Admissions and Financial Aid advisor. Contact Alma Miró, Director of Admissions and Financial Aid, FIU College of Law at 305-348-8006 for further information. Visit the Law Admissions website or email lawadmit@fiu.edu for more information.