

# Vermont Law School/University of South Dakota JD/MELP Program Planning Guidelines

## I. REQUIRED COURSES AND DISTRIBUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

### A) Requirements of the MELP Degree

- A minimum of 30 credits, including all required courses and all Distributional Requirements.
- At least 24 credits must be taken as MELP credits, meaning they cannot be transferred in.
- Minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.2 for successful completion of the degree.
- Students have up to 5 years from the date of matriculation to complete the MELP.
- Students may start the MELP in the fall or summer semesters, but not in the spring.

### B) Required Courses

You must fulfill all of the following required courses. These requirements may be met by taking the course, transferring in credits, or by waiver.

- Administrative Law
- Ecology
- Environmental Law

### C) Distributional Requirements:

You must take, transfer in, or waive at least one course fulfilling each of the Distributional Requirements. The Distributional Requirements are:

- Dispute Resolution
- Ethics/Philosophy

For a more detailed description of the Distributional Requirements, see Appendix. The ELC makes available a list of courses which meet the various Distributional Requirements.

## II. CREDITS

### A) Minimum & Maximum Credits:

The minimum number of credits is 30, of which 21 must be MELP-only credits (i.e., not shared with the JD). The maximum recommended number of credits in a Summer Session is eleven. Anything beyond that requires a waiver from the ELC Director. You must take a minimum of three MELP credits each summer to be eligible for Financial Aid.

### B) Sharing Credits:

You may take up to 9 credits at your home law school and share those credits with the MELP

degree. The courses shared must be substantive environmental courses with the exception of Administrative Law and dispute resolution courses.

### III. ELECTIVES, INTERNSHIPS, INDEPENDENT RESEARCH PROJECTS

#### A) Electives

MELP credits not designated as required or distributional may be taken as electives.

#### B) Limited Enrollment Courses

Closure policies for limited enrollment courses apply to all students. If a course is under-enrolled in any term, it may be cancelled.

#### C) Independent Research Project (IRP)

In addition to the listed courses and seminars, individual faculty members may be willing to work with a student in pursuit of independent research topics. MELP independent research is limited to a total of 6 credits, on a grade basis. To register for an Independent Research Project, you must provide the Registrar's office with a completed IRP contract.

#### D) MELP Internships

Internships are an option to further develop your skills. They are not required. Students may arrange an MELP internship on their own or select from the many postings at the VLS Career Services Office. Internships may be local or worldwide. Internships may be designed for a minimum of 2 credits and a maximum of 9 credits. Students may do more than one MELP internship as long as the total number of MELP internship credits for all semesters does not exceed 9 credits. 45 hours of internship work equals one credit. An internship must be completed in one semester; it cannot last for two semesters.

Interns may not receive wages or salary for work done for academic credit. However, interns may be provided a stipend which is not to exceed expenses associated with the internship. Before beginning an internship, you must submit a contract executed by you, your on-site sponsor, and your faculty sponsor, and fill out the internship registration form in the MELP Internship Handbook. MELP internships must be sponsored by a VLS faculty member. Summer Adjuncts may act as faculty sponsors, with prior permission of the Director of MELP Internships. See the MELP Internship Handbook (available at the ELC and at [www.vermontlaw.edu/elc](http://www.vermontlaw.edu/elc)) for more details.

### IV. ACADEMIC PLANNING AND COMPLETING THE DEGREE

#### A) Academic Planning

During the registration process work with Anne Mansfield, the Associate Director of the ELC, to establish a tentative schedule of courses, subject to modifications as your individual program progresses. Make sure that you fit in all degree requirements. Consider what, if any, courses you

want to transfer or waive. You will most likely waive or transfer Administrative Law, as it is probably offered at your home law school. You may also waive Environmental Research & Writing if you have or are concurrently pursuing a JD degree.

It is the student's responsibility to ensure fulfillment of all requirements for the degree. Check with the Registrar if you have questions regarding your degree status. To assist you in confirming your degree status, the Registrar will notify you of the MELP degree requirements you have not yet met.

### **B) Completing the Degree**

The typical Dual Degree progression is to take 11-12 MELP credits at VLS during the first summer, including Ecology, unless you have comparable coursework that will allow you to waive Ecology. During the next two years, you should take 9 shared JD/MELP credits at your home law school and 9-10 more MELP credits. The additional MELP credits are made up of some combination of an MELP internship, an Independent Research Project, and/or additional summer classes at VLS. You may do an Independent Research Project with a VLS faculty sponsor during the summer or academic year.

### **Completing the degree the fall after graduating law school:**

For purposes of financial aid, you are considered a full-time student during any academic semester in which you take 6 or more credits. Some loan programs have a provision which allows for a 6-month grace period after completing the degree in the fall semester. Contact the Financial Aid Office to find out more about this option.

## **V. REGISTRATION AND BILLING:**

### **A) Summer Session Add/Drop Period:**

You have between the first and second meeting of the class to add or drop a class. Add/drop forms are available at the ELC. If you miss the add/drop period and need to withdraw from a class, see the Summer Session catalog for tuition refund information.

### **B) Auditing:**

Students may audit one course per summer semester. Audited courses will be noted on your transcript.

### **C) Tuition Billing:**

You are billed in two bulk installments – the first installment is billed at the start of your first summer, the second is billed once you pass 14 credits. For further information, contact either the Business Office or the Financial Aid Office.

## APPENDIX

### Explanation of the MELP Distributional Requirements

The purpose of this requirement is to expose students to both the substantive content of environmental law and the processes by which policy is formed and implemented.

**Dispute Resolution** - This requirement teaches the theory and practice of various techniques to reach agreement on environmental issues, such as conventional negotiation and arbitration, and more specialized techniques such as mini-trials, and multi-party mediation of policy disputes. Simulation exercises are used to provide a hands-on feel for how these processes actually work.

**Ethics/Philosophy** - In broad terms this requirement considers the relationship of people to nature, and covers such topics as environmental justice, intergenerational equity, the "rights" of nature and other living organisms, and respect for indigenous cultures.

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