

# JD/MELP Program Planning Guidelines

## I. REQUIRED COURSES AND DISTRIBUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

### A) Requirements for the MELP portion of the JD/MELP

- A minimum of 30 credits, including all required courses and distributional requirements.
- At least 21 credits must be taken as MELP-only credits; they can't be shared with the JD.
- 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.

### B) Required Courses

You must fulfill all of the following required courses. These requirements may be met by taking the course for MELP-only credit, sharing it with the JD, or by waiver.

- Administrative Law (fall or spring)
- Ecology or Ecology of Food & Agriculture (fall or summer)
- Environmental Law (fall or summer – spring sections are reserved for 1Ls and MELP-only)

### C) Distributional Requirements

You must take, transfer in, or waive at least one course fulfilling each of the two distributional requirements. The distributional requirements are Dispute Resolution and Ethics/Philosophy. The ELC makes available a list of courses which meet the distributional requirements.

### D) Using MELP Courses to Satisfy JD Requirements

If a course taken for MELP credit also satisfies a JD requirement, the Registrar will note that the JD requirement has been met. (For example, taking Mediation for MELP credit will fulfill the JD skills requirement.)

## II. CREDITS

### A) Number of Credits

The minimum number of credits for the MELP is 30; the maximum is 35 (without being charged additional tuition).

### B) Sharing Credits

You may elect to share credits between the MELP and JD degrees. You may share up to 9 JD credits with your MELP degree. You are required to take a minimum of 21 MELP-only credits.

The shared credit designation may be modified at any time up to the last day of classes for that particular semester. Grades for shared credits appear on both MELP and JD transcripts. Only share credits in the fall or spring semesters. Do not share summer classes (see "Tuition" section below).

You may take up to 26 unshared MELP credits without incurring additional tuition. For each course you take, you must indicate “JD”, “MELP,” or “shared” when you register. If you share a course that brings you beyond 9 shared credits, that course will appear on both transcripts, but you will still be required to take a minimum of 21 unshared MELP credits.

### **C) Minimum & Maximum Credits**

You must take a minimum of 6 MELP-only credits in each 12 month academic year (summer-fall-spring). You may take a maximum of 14 MELP-only credits in a 12 month academic year without incurring additional tuition costs.

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

### **A) Electives**

MELP credits not designated as required or distributional courses may be taken as electives. Closure policies for limited enrollment courses apply to both JD and MELP students. If a course is under-enrolled in any term, it may be cancelled.

### **B) 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.

### **C) MELP Internships**

Internships are an option to further develop your skills. They are not required. Students may arrange a MELP internship on their own or select from the many postings at the VLS Career Services Office. Internships may be local or worldwide. MELP internships are for MELP credit only.

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. See the MELP Internship Handbook (available online) for more details.

## IV. DEGREE PLANNING

### A) Planning to Complete the MELP Degree

Filling out a Program Plan form helps you plan to fulfill the degree requirements and earn the total number of credits you need to complete the MELP degree. It is also helpful to speak to your faculty advisor, to Anne Mansfield at the ELC, or to Abby Armstrong at the Office of Career Services as you plan out your degree.

Establish a tentative schedule of courses for the next two years, subject to modifications as your individual program progresses. Check all requirements of the JD degree to ensure that you fit in all JD degree requirements as well as MELP degree requirements. Consider which courses you want to share with your JD degree and which requirements you may be able to waive. You may share 9 JD/MELP credits OR transfer 6 credits from another graduate program, but not both!

Students commonly take courses during their first summer and do an internship during their second summer. See “The Seventh Semester” (below) for additional scheduling options. All internships are optional. Try to satisfy the ethics requirement during the first summer, as there aren’t many ethics classes in the fall and spring semesters.

### B) Waiving Degree Requirements

Email Anne Mansfield at the ELC to request a waiver of any degree requirements (i.e., Ecology). She will email the Registrar, with a copy to you, to confirm the waiver.

### C) Auditing

Students may audit one course each semester at no charge. Any additional audits will be charged at the current audit fee. Inquire at the Registrar’s Office to determine if space is available in the class you wish to audit. Students may not audit courses or seminars that have a wait list. If the Registrar determines that space is available, you will be given an Audit Form to obtain the professor’s permission to audit. This form should be returned to the Registrar’s Office once faculty approval has been obtained. Audited courses will appear on your transcript.

### D) Tuition

You are billed May 1st in each of the two MELP years. Each of your MELP tuition installments covers the Summer Session through the following spring semester. Students may take a maximum of 14 MELP-only credits in a 12 month academic year without incurring additional tuition costs. For further information, see the “Tuition and Fees” section in the Student Handbook, or contact the Business Office. Avoid taking courses in the summer for shared credit. You will be billed for additional tuition for any courses taken for shared credit in the summer. Shared credits are covered by your JD tuition and should be taken only during the fall and spring semesters. Please contact the Business Office if you plan to share any credits during the Summer Session.

### **E) Staying “On Track” for the MELP Degree**

It is the student’s responsibility to ensure fulfillment of all requirements of the degree. Check with the Registrar’s Office or use the “Degree Audit” function on Campus Web if you have questions regarding your degree status.

## **VI. SUMMER SESSION**

### **A) Registering for Summer Session:**

Online registration for Summer Session, as well as for the upcoming fall and spring semesters, takes place in April. The Registrar’s Office will email instructions about the online registration process. The maximum number of credits you can take in the summer is 11. Anything beyond that requires a waiver from the ELC Director or Associate Director. You must take a minimum of 3 MELP credits each summer to be eligible for Financial Aid.

### **B) Summer Session Add/Drop Period**

You have between the first and second meeting of the class to add or drop a course. If you miss the add/drop period and need to withdraw from a class, a tuition refund schedule is published in the Summer Session catalog and is also available from the Business Office.

### **C) Attendance**

You may not miss more than one class in a summer term. Please notify the Registrar’s Office immediately if you will need to miss more than one class.

## **VII. THE “SEVENTH SEMESTER” OPTION**

Under this option, you may take a leave of absence from the MELP program during your second summer, and complete the MELP requirements the semester after graduating from the JD program. Typically, during this “seventh” semester, students do an MELP internship. How it works: You complete your first year of law school and take a total of at least 12 MELP credits during the first summer and second year. During this time, if you satisfy all of the MELP course requirements, you have the option of completing the degree with a nine-credit internship. You then take a leave of absence from the MELP program for the second summer and third year. During your second summer you are free to earn income and gain legal experience. You finish the JD during your third year and set up an internship for MELP credit to commence in September of what is essentially the fourth year of the joint program. In May of your third year, you reinstate in the MELP program, thereby ensuring that the grace period for your student loans does not begin during the summer. After graduating with your JD, that summer can be spent preparing for and taking the bar exam. You are enrolled in the MELP program from August through December of the “4<sup>th</sup>” fall semester. You complete an MELP internship. In January, your student loan grace period begins to toll and the first loan payment is due in June, a full year after you have finished the JD program.