

Master of Environmental Law and Policy (MELP) Program Planning Guidelines

(for students starting in Fall 2009 and later)

I. REQUIRED COURSES AND DISTRIBUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

A) Requirements of the MELP Degree

- A minimum of 30 credits, including all required courses and 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.

- Introduction to Legal Studies
- Natural Resources Law
- Environmental Writing and Advocacy
- Environmental Law
- Ecology *or* Ecology of Food and Agriculture

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 Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) and Ethics/Philosophy. The ELC makes available a list of courses which meet the distributional requirements.

II. CREDITS

A) Number of Credits

The minimum number of credits required to earn the MELP is 30; the maximum is 36. You will be charged additional tuition for credits beyond 36.

B) Transfer Credits

You may transfer in up to 6 credits from another law school or accredited graduate program. The course(s) transferred must be substantive environmental courses. Courses completed more than 5 years prior to matriculation will not transfer. Grades for transfer credits must be "C" or better. The transferred grade is reflected on the VLS transcript but is not used in computing the GPA.

III. ELECTIVES, INTERNSHIPS, INDEPENDENT RESEARCH PROJECTS

A) Electives

MELP courses not designated as required or meeting a distributional requirement may be taken as electives. Under limited circumstances, non-environmental courses may be taken for MELP credit as electives, with prior permission from the ELC Director or designee.

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 a 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.

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. MELP internships must be sponsored by a VLS faculty member.

The MELP Internship Handbook and a sample internship contract are available on-line.

IV. ACADEMIC PLANNING

During the registration process (which takes place during MELP orientation), establish a tentative schedule of courses you plan to take for your MELP degree, subject to later modifications as your individual program planning requires. Consider what, if any, courses you want to transfer or waive. You may transfer 6 credits from another graduate program or law school.

It is your responsibility to ensure fulfillment of all degree requirements. 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 each semester of the MELP degree requirements you have not yet met.

V. REGISTRATION AND TUITION BILLING

A) **Withdrawing from a Course**

During the Add/Drop period in the fall and spring semesters, students may drop a course with no enrollment limit during the first ten days of the semester. Limited enrollment courses and seminars must be dropped during the first five days. Courses may not be added after the sixth class day without the written permission of the professor. Add/Drop forms are available in the lobby of Abbott House, near the Registrar's office. After the Add/Drop period, you may withdraw from any course which is not required and/or has a limited enrollment. This withdrawal will be reflected on your transcript as "WD." You may not withdraw from a required course or limited enrollment course unless you obtain permission from the Committee on Standards. See the Registrar regarding petitioning the Committee on Standards.

B) **Auditing**

Students may audit one course each semester at no charge. Any additional audits will be charged at the current audit rate. 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.

C) **MELP Tuition**

You are billed in three installments. Each installment covers a fall, spring, or summer semester, and is due in August, November and May. For further information, contact the Business Office.

VI. SUMMER SESSION

A) **Registering for Summer Session**

You have until May 1st to register. You may take a maximum of eleven credits. Anything beyond that requires a waiver from the ELC Director or Associate Director. You must take a minimum of 3 credits in the summer to be eligible for Financial Aid.

B) **Summer 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.