

**Master of Legal Studies (MLS) Program  
Student Handbook**

West Virginia University  
Eberly College of Arts & Sciences

John D. Rockefeller IV School  
of Policy & Politics  
Department of Public Administration

**Fall 2020 – Summer 2021**

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# Introduction to the Master of Legal Studies Program

## Brief History of the MLS Program

The Master of Legal Studies (MLS) Program was first established in 1999 as a program offered in the Charleston area. The MLS program was developed by an interdisciplinary group of faculty from the College of Law and the Eberly College of Arts & Sciences (Public Administration and Political Science programs) in response to an expressed interest from the Charleston area. The MLS program won the 2001 Award for Excellence awarded by the University Continuing Education Association – Region II. A specific reason given in making this award was that the program responded directly to professional and occupational needs identified in the area. The MLS program has always been housed within the Eberly College of Arts & Sciences. Originally, the program met in various locations, but most often at the University of Charleston campus in the West Virginia University Extended Learning Offices. In 2005, the program was approved to be converted to a web based, entirely online program of study. At that time, the program was relocated into the Department of Public Administration.

## Purpose & Mission

The Master of Legal Studies program is designed to build greater public understanding of law and the legal system, to provide graduates with the ability to apply knowledge and skill gained to performing their jobs more effectively and/or pursue further career opportunities, and to provide private and public sector organizations the benefit of enhanced expertise of their employees. The program is a graduate program of study designed for professionals practicing in areas such as human relations, criminal and juvenile justice, the court system (including magistrates and probation officers), journalism, social work, regulatory agencies, county and municipal government, business, and other professionals who work with – though not necessarily in – the legal system. It is neither a “pre-law” program, nor a paralegal program. Neither does it prepare graduates to practice law.

## Learning Outcomes

- Prepared to articulate and differentiate between the law, the courts, other legal institutions and legal actors and to define their impact on society;
- Identify sources of law;
- Develop research plans and conduct legal research;
- Prepare for and assist with civil and criminal litigation;
- Understand policymaking and rulemaking, develop and implement strategies and plans to affect policy making and rulemaking.

## Contact Information

### Faculty Graduate Program Coordinator

Cheryl Dennis, JD

[cheryl.dennis@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:cheryl.dennis@mail.wvu.edu)

304.293.8567

Professor Dennis serves as the academic advisor for MLS students and addresses issues related to curriculum and academic progress.

## Administrative Program Coordinator

Carla J. See, MA, MS

[carla.see@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:carla.see@mail.wvu.edu)

304.293.7977

Ms. See manages recruitment and admissions for the MLS program. She also deals with issues related to navigating eCampus and the University system.

## Email/Listserv

The Eberly College of Arts and Sciences Email Policy states that all correspondence between the department, faculty, staff and students will only be through @mix.wvu.edu or mail.wvu.edu. Students will need to use the @mix.wvu.edu system for registration, Degree Works, eCampus coursework, receiving correspondence through the Legal Studies Student listserv, etc.

The Department has a **Legal Studies Student listserv**. You will receive various emails with information on advising/registration, course schedules, program announcements, textbook listings and other notices as deemed necessary.

## Program Requirements

### Admission Requirements

1. Baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited college or university,
2. 3.0 GPA preferred, with a minimum of 2.75,
3. Scores from a graduate school aptitude test (GRE, LSAT, or GMAT). Visit the [MLS "How to Apply" web page](#) for exceptions to the test scores.

### Degree Requirements

**Credit Hours:** Students are required to complete a minimum of 30 credit hours in graduate coursework.

**Grade Point Average:** Students must earn a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.00 in coursework applied to the graduate program. Students must also earn a minimum grade of C in all required MLS courses. Students must earn a B or better in non-LEGS courses that contribute to the MLS degree program of study.

**Area of Emphasis:** The MLS program offers three areas of emphasis 1) Healthcare, 2) Justice Systems, and 3) Homeland Security. Students may either complete an Area of Emphasis or 9 credits of electives.

**Graduation Requirement:** Students must complete the curricular program of study and earn a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better.

**Benchmarks:** Students are expected consult with their faculty advisor at least once a semester with to review their progress in the program of study. More information is provided in the MLS Student Handbook.

**Degree Completion:** Full-time students usually complete the MLS degree in four semester. Part-time students usually complete the degree in five semesters.

## Curriculum Requirements

Minimum Cumulative GPA of 3.0 is required.

<b>DEGREE REQUIREMENTS</b>		
<b>30 TOTAL CREDIT HOURS</b>		
<b>15 CREDIT HOURS FROM BLOCK ONE</b>		
<b>BLOCK ONE</b>		
LEGS 610	Law and the Legal System	3
LEGS 620	Researching the Law	3
LEGS 660	Dispute Resolution	3
LEGS 700	Research Capstone	3
LEGS 760	Administrative Ethics	3
<b>6 CREDIT HOURS FROM BLOCK TWO</b>		
<b>BLOCK TWO</b>		
LEGS 640	Administrative Legal Process	3
LEGS 645	Judicial Legal Process	3
LEGS 650	Legislative Legal Process	3
	TOTAL REQUIRED CREDIT HOURS	21

<b>9 CREDIT HOURS FROM BLOCK THREE OR BLOCKS FOUR, FIVE OR SIX FOR AREA OF EMPHASIS</b>		
<b>BLOCK THREE</b>		
LEGS 691	Advanced Topics	3
LEGS 710	Family Law	3
LEGS 720	Media and the Law	3
LEGS 730	Employment Law	3
LEGS 740	Commerce Law	3
LEGS 750	Criminal Law and Procedure	3
LEGS 751	Punishment and Corrections	3
LEGS 752	Homeland Security	3
LEGS 753	Immigration and Border Security	3
LEGS 754	Military Justice	3
LEGS 770	Healthcare Law	3
LEGS 771	Long Term Care Regulation	3
LEGS 780	Constitutional Law	3
	TOTAL ELECTIVE HOURS	9
	TOTAL CREDIT HOURS	30

Students may elect to complete their elective hours by completing an area of emphasis. The three areas of emphasis offered by the program are Healthcare (**BLOCK FOUR**), Justice System, (**BLOCK FIVE**) or Homeland Security (**BLOCK SIX**). All areas of emphasis have one required elective and two choice electives of the lists of approved electives.

<b>BLOCK FOUR – HEALTHCARE AREA OF EMPHASIS OPTION</b>		
<b>REQUIRED HEALTHCARE ELECTIVE</b>		
LEGS 770	Healthcare Law	3
<b>TWO CHOICE ELECTIVES</b>		
LEGS 710	Family Law	3
LEGS 720	Media and the Law	3
LEGS 730	Employment Law	3
LEGS 771	Long Term Care Regulation	3
LEGS 780	Constitutional Law	3
	<b>TOTAL REQUIRED CREDIT HOURS</b>	<b>9</b>

<b>BLOCK FIVE – HOMELAND SECURITY AREA OF EMPHASIS OPTION</b>		
<b>REQUIRED HEALTHCARE ELECTIVE</b>		
LEGS 752	Homeland Security	3
<b>TWO CHOICE ELECTIVES</b>		
LEGS 720	Media and the Law	3
LEGS 730	Employment Law	3
LEGS 751	Punishment and Corrections	3
LEGS 752	Homeland Security	3
LEGS 753	Immigration and Border Security	3
LEGS 754	Military Justice	3
LEGS 780	Constitutional Law	3
LEGS 720	Media and the Law	3
	<b>TOTAL REQUIRED CREDIT HOURS</b>	<b>9</b>

<b>BLOCK SIX – JUSTICE SYSTEMS AREA OF EMPHASIS OPTION</b>		
<b>REQUIRED HEALTHCARE ELECTIVE</b>		
LEGS 750	Criminal Law and Procedure	3
<b>TWO CHOICE ELECTIVES</b>		
LEGS 720	Media and the Law	3
LEGS 730	Employment Law	3
LEGS 751	Punishment and Corrections	3
LEGS 752	Homeland Security	3
LEGS 753	Immigration and Border Security	3
LEGS 754	Military Justice	3
LEGS 780	Constitutional Law	3
LEGS 720	Media and the Law	3
	<b>TOTAL REQUIRED CREDIT HOURS</b>	<b>9</b>

### Plan of Study

All graduate students must have a plan of study, which is a formal agreement between the student and their program regarding the conditions the student must meet to earn the desired degree. The plan of study usually lists required courses and activities and describes the timeline for these requirements. The plan may also include

suggested or optional courses and activities. The plan of study should be in place no later than the end of the student's first semester.

Degree Works is the online advising and degree auditing tool at WVU. Your academic advisor will enter your plan of study into Degree Works. All students are responsible for monitoring their progress toward the degree using Degree Works.

### Time Limits for Program Completion

Master's degree students are permitted to continue in a program for a maximum of eight years following their term of admission to the program. Students who have been inactive for two or more years or who exceed eight years following their term of admission are required to apply for readmission to the University and their graduate program. [Click here](#) for additional details provided in the WVU Graduate Catalog.

### Application for Graduation

Graduation Requirement: Students must complete the curricular program of study and earn a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better.

There is a process to certify students for graduation. **During the first two weeks of the semester**, Carla will be sending out an email with instructions on how to apply for graduation. If you are planning to graduate during that semester, please make note of the email and follow the instructions carefully. After you have applied for graduation, Dr. Dennis will review your file to make sure you have everything you need to graduate. An email will be sent to you after the review. The Eberly College of Arts and Sciences Graduate Records Office will also review to see that all requirements have been met. WVU will check against any outstanding charges (parking tickets, library fines, etc.).

The steps you need to take to apply for graduation can be found at the [WVU Office of the Registrar](#).

Diplomas will be mailed in the weeks following the degree conferral. Students will receive an email to their MIX account when the diploma is shipped, if the student does not have any financial holds. Tracking numbers will not be available. If a diploma is being mailed to an address outside of the United States it takes an additional 4-6 weeks for delivery. For questions concerning your diploma, please contact the Office of University Registrar at 304.293.5355.

Detailed and updated information on the commencement program, lodging, accessibility services, etc. can be found at the [WVU Graduation](#) website.

## Advising and Evaluation

### Academic Advising

Professor Cheryl Dennis serves as the academic advisor for MLS students. Your "Welcome" letter will provide guidance to which courses to register for the first semester in the program. Each semester, thereafter, Professor Dennis will email the MLS Email Listserv with instructions for scheduling an advising appointment and course registration. MLS students are strongly encouraged to hold an advising meeting each semester.

### Course Registration

Students will receive an email with notices about pre-registration and how to make an appointment with their academic advisor. Pre-registration can enhance a student's registration process by 1) getting the regular or



elective class they need before it is closed and 2) making the payment process easier. Class listing information can be accessed via the STAR link in the WVU Portal.

### Transfer Credits

Any student who wishes to apply to have transfer credit applied toward the MLS program of study work must:

- 1) Submit a request via email to their MLS Adviser indicating the desire for a course to be reviewed.
- 2) The request must include the course name, number and school of origin.
- 3) A copy of the syllabus from the term the student took the course or in the event one cannot be located a link to the course's catalog description.

Courses are reviewed based on their applicability to the MLS program of study. Approved transfer credits are applied to one of the MLS elective course requirements. Transfer courses cannot be applied to a required MLS course requirement.

A previously completed course must not be older than 8 years at the time of the student's completion of their MLS plan of study. If a course is approved and the student does not complete the degree program before expiration of the 8-year time frame, the transferred course will no longer apply and will be removed.

The total number of transfer credit hours that may be transferred must not exceed 6 credit hours.

### Grading

Information on grades and graduate level courses can be found [here](#). Regarding repeated courses, the university policy, in the graduate catalog is that all attempts at a course must be counted. This can be found in the "repeated courses" section of the linked page.

### Evaluation Procedures

The Legal Studies faculty are committed to support all admitted students in their timely completion of the program. Students will receive a "good standing" letter from the MLS Faculty Program Coordinator annually. You will also be provided feedback through academic assignments and individual meetings as needed. Your academic advisor is available to discuss with you any areas in which you may be experiencing challenges and/or need additional support. If your academic advisor is not available, feel free to contact Chair of Department of Public Administration, Dr. Maja Holmes at [maja.holmes@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:maja.holmes@mail.wvu.edu).

### Leaves of Absence

Graduate students in good standing who wish to be away from their academic endeavors at WVU for one or more semesters but intend to return at a later date may request a leave of absence. Students should consult with their program or school/college concerning the required procedure to request a leave of absence. Some programs (such as some master's programs or part-time programs) may not require students to request a leave of absence in order to enroll sporadically and remain in good standing. Doctoral students admitted to candidacy who do not wish to enroll for one or more semesters must be granted a leave of absence in order to maintain

their candidacy. Leaves of absence are not required for summer terms unless otherwise specified by a student's program.

Requests for leaves of absence must be submitted in writing to a student's program director or department chair prior to the beginning of the semester for which the leave is desired. The program director or department chair (or an appropriate faculty committee or other administrator) determines whether or not to grant the leave of absence, the length of time granted, and any conditions the student must meet to return to the program following the leave of absence (including a date by which the student must inform the program that he or she plans to return). The student is informed in writing of the outcome of his or her request, and a copy of the outcome is retained in the student's records. Click [here](#) for the policy in the Graduate Catalog

Information concerning military deployments during a semester is available in the [Military Leave](#) section of the Undergraduate Catalog.

## Standards

### Course Netiquette

The basic premise is that the etiquette expected of students in the online environment is the same as that which we expect in a classroom. Common courtesy is the guiding rule of internet communications. Be prepared to communicate effectively when taking an online course. Following these simple netiquette rules in your online class or education environment will ensure your success:

- Never type in ALL CAPS, because it reads as if you ARE SHOUTING AT PEOPLE.
- Act as professionally, via your writing, as you would in a face to face classroom.
- Refrain from inappropriate language and derogatory or personal attacks.
- Do not dominate any discussion. Give other students the opportunity to join in the discussion.
- Disagree with ideas, but avoid challenges that may be interpreted as a personal attack.
- Check that you are replying to the specific person you intend, and not to the entire class.
- Never give your password to another person.
- Respect the virtual classroom. Never forward in-class communications or posts by others outside of this virtual space.
- Never spam your classmates.
- If you quote someone's previous post, only quote enough to make your point.
- Do not hesitate to ask for feedback.

### Original Work

The question sometimes arises whether a paper, book report, journal article or other work submitted for another class can be substituted for this class. The policy of the instructor and the Department of Public Administration is that papers, presentations, book reports and so forth should be original for each course and that the requirements submitted must be work prepared for this course. Of course, students may build on previous work and topics as long as substantially different effort and analysis are given. Students are encouraged to consult instructors early on any issues regarding original work.

### Academic Integrity Statement

The integrity of the classes offered by any academic institution solidifies the foundation of its mission and cannot be sacrificed to expediency, ignorance, or blatant fraud. Therefore, I will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of this course. For the detailed policy of West Virginia

University regarding the definitions of acts considered to fall under academic dishonesty and possible ensuing sanctions, please see the West Virginia University Academic Catalog at <http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/coursecredittermsclassification/#academicintegritytext>. Should you have any questions about possibly improper research citations or references, or any other activity that may be interpreted as an attempt at academic dishonesty, please see me before the assignment is due to discuss the matter.

You can review the rules, regulations, and procedures concerning student conduct and discipline for the main campus of West Virginia University, at <http://campuslife.wvu.edu/r/download/180235>.

### Inclusivity Statement

The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion.

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in your classes, please advise your instructors and make appropriate arrangements with [the Office of Accessibility Services](#).

### Incomplete Grade Policy

A grade of I (Incomplete) is a temporary grade assignment used when unforeseen, non-academic circumstances arise that prohibit students from completing the last course assignments or examinations at the end of the semester. The grade of Incomplete is typically assigned because of an excused absence from the final examination, or because assignments are unavoidably incomplete, as determined by the instructor. Generally, the student will have been active in the course up until the last day of the 13<sup>th</sup> week of classes and earned at least a D- to be eligible to request an incomplete. For the Incomplete Policy and Procedures section of the Graduate Catalog, click [here](#)

### Probation, Suspension, Dismissal

The Department of Public Administration follows the guidelines in the WVU Graduate Catalog for issues with probation, suspension and/or dismissal. Follow the [link](#) for detailed information.

### Financial Considerations

#### Tuition & Fees

Students enrolled in the online MLS program pay tuition and fees at the RESIDENT rate regardless of residency status. Information on tuition and fees for the Eberly College can be found [here](#).

#### Financial Aid

As a regular graduate student at WVU, MLS students are eligible to receive financial aid benefits if they meet the qualifications in this area. Contact the WVU Office of Financial Aid at 304.293.1988 or visit their [website](#).

## Other

### MyMountaineerCard (student ID)

WVU Online students who wish to obtain an official WVU Mountaineer Card can now submit a photo electronically and have their card mailed to them. **NOTE: This service is available for out-of-area students only who are taking online/off-campus courses.** Students that live in the Morgantown area are required to come by one of our Card Office locations to have their card made and picked up in-person. [MyMountaineerCard website](#). [Click here](#) to request a WVUID Card.

### Student Health Insurance

All domestic students enrolled in 6 or more credit hours and all international students enrolled in 1 or more credit hour will be automatically enrolled in the WVU Aetna Student Health Insurance Plan. Any student who is already covered by another health insurance plan that meets the waiver requirements may complete the insurance waiver application by the published deadline to opt out of the WVU-sponsored student health insurance plan. [Click here for Waiver criteria and waiver form](#)

### University Support Services

#### Library Resources for Online Students

[Click here](#) to access library resources and services for distance learning students and faculty

#### New Student Orientation Manual

[Click here](#) to access the WVU Online New Student Manual

#### Student Resources for Online Students

WVU Online offers several resources to ensure you have what you need to be successful in your WVU Online program. [Click here](#) for information related to: Accessibility Services, Consumer Complaint Process, Financial Aid, Libraries, Student Accounts, Student Family Resources, Systems (WVU Portal and eCampus), Well WVU, WVU Bookstore, WVUID, Request a WVUID Card.

## Helpful Hints for Master of Legal Studies Students

### Finding Your WVUID

**WVUID** is a unique, nine-character number (nnn-nnn-nnn) which is assigned to all members of the University community and will be the primary identifier for all faculty, staff, and students. To look up your WVUID using your Employee ID or Social Security Number, visit <https://login.wvu.edu/self-service> and select "Claim Account".

### How to find your Login Credentials

1. You will need your WVUID to find your login credentials
2. Go to: <https://loginwvu.edu/self-service>
3. Select "Claim Your Account"
4. Follow the instructions for obtaining your login credentials.

*\*Still having trouble? Call the Help Desk at 304-293-4444. Explain that you are a WVU Online student and have them guide you through your technical issue.*

### Password Information:

\*If you have never logged into MIX or STAR nor have you changed your default password, then your default password will consist of your 2 digit day of birth (ex.12/**31**/2001 = 31) and the last four digits of your WVU ID (ex.12345**6789** = 6789). (If you were a student prior to July of 2005, your PIN/Password, which if you have not changed it will be a default password that consists of your 2 digit day of birth (ex.12/**31**/2001 = 31) and the last four digits of your Social Security Number (ex.12345**6789** = 6789). Default password example will be 316789.

### Accessing the WVU Portal

**From the [www.wvu.edu](http://www.wvu.edu) homepage, scroll to Quick Links and select WVU Portal**

### Accessing your MIX (WVU email) account:

You can access your Mix email account from the WVU Portal.

### Accessing your STAR (Student Information System) account

1. From the WVU Portal:
2. Choose "STAR Access"

*\*You can view the courses you are currently registered for, your unofficial transcript of all courses taken, your account balance, your financial aid, and much more).*

### The Online Schedule of Courses

1. Go the WVU Portal and select "Schedule of Courses"
2. Select Term, Submit
3. Highlight "Legal Studies" as the Subject
4. Change Campus/Location to "Off Campus/Online"
5. Click "Class Search" at the bottom left of the page
6. The screen will populate with a list of Legal Studies courses offered for the selected term. Write down the 5-digit CRN highlighted in blue. You will use this CRN to register for your courses.

### Registering for Courses

1. From the WVU Portal, select STAR
2. Click on the "Student Services & Housing" link
3. Click on the "Registration" link
4. Click on "Add or Drop Classes"
5. Select a term
6. Enter the CRN number for each course in the "Add Classes Worksheet"
7. Click on "Submit Changes"
8. To review your schedule click on the "Student Services & Housing" tab at the top of the page
9. Click on the "Registration" link
10. Click on "Concise Student Schedule"
11. If you have selected courses that have variable credits or multiple grading modes available, (i.e. pass/fail, audit) you can make changes by choosing the "Change Class Options" link
12. Remember once you have completed registration, close your browser to protect your privacy

## Paying Your Student Account

You can pay your account via WVU Portal

1. Log into <http://portal.wvu.edu>.
2. Click "**View Details**" in the "**Student Accounts**" box to the right.
3. Click "**Electronic Bill By Term/Make Payment**" and select a term.

## Requesting an Official WVU Transcript

Current Students can view their unofficial transcripts and order official transcripts within STAR after logging in [WVU Portal](#). *\*Please note that it is always good to check that your grade has been posted before requesting an official transcript.*

## MLS Student Guide Signature Sheet

I have read and understand the Master of Legal Studies program Student Handbook. I agree to abide by the requirements outlined in this document as well as the University requirements governing these degrees.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I pledge to adhere to the University and program guidelines governing academic and professional standards as found in the following documents:

WVU Campus Student Code of Conduct

<https://studentconduct.wvu.edu/campus-student-code>

Academic and Professional Standards

<http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/enrollmentandregistration/#text>

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_