Juris Doctor Program

Law Programs

The First-Year Curriculum

First-year students take courses that ensure they are well grounded in the subject matter that lies at the heart of the Anglo-American legal tradition and that provide a foundation for upper-level classes and for the practice of law. Two aspects of the first-year curriculum — the lawyering course and the small-section program — contribute immeasurably to the process of learning the law at KU.

The Lawyering Skills course focuses on the skills and values of the profession. Taught by faculty members with extensive practice experience who meet with students in both a traditional classroom setting and small groups, the course introduces students to the tools all lawyers use and helps bring students to an understanding of the legal system and legal institutions, case law and statutes, legal research and writing, and advocacy.

All first-year students take one of their other required courses in a small section of approximately 20-25 students. These classes provide an informal learning atmosphere and encourage in-depth discussions and critical analysis.

Upper-Level Courses

A wide variety of courses are available to upper-level students, covering a broad range of practice areas from environmental law to international trade law. Many are seminars, simulation courses, or clinics. For curriculum guides to Business and Commercial Law; Civil Litigation; Constitutional Law; Criminal Law; Environmental, Energy and Natural Resources Law; General Practice; Intellectual Property Law; International and Comparative Law; Litigation; Media, Law, and Technology; Public Law; Tax Law; and Tribal Law, visit the Areas of Study (https://law.ku.edu/academics/areas/) section of the law school’s website.

Within the context of their particular interests and career goals, the law school strongly encourages students to consider certain principles when selecting upper-class courses.

- First, students should develop core knowledge and essential skills during the second year by taking menu-required courses to lay the foundations for taking advanced courses in the third year.
- Second, given the importance of statutory law and regulatory systems to the modern legal system, students should take courses that focus on complex codes (including statutes, treaties or regulations) and familiarize them with administrative and regulatory systems, also preferably during the second year.
- Third, to provide perspective on the legal system and to be prepared to practice in the modern global environment, before graduation students should take at least one class that concerns a legal system other than the federal or state system in the United States.

To implement these principles, the law school encourages students to talk individually with their faculty advisors about particular courses.

Clinics and Field Placements

The KU law school was a pioneer in clinical legal education and today offers many clinics and field placements that expose students to the tasks and challenges faced by lawyers in practice. All law students have a chance to participate in at least one of the school’s experiential learning opportunities. Acting under faculty supervision, students learn substantive law, develop legal skills and learn professional values in actual practice settings.

- The Criminal Prosecution Field Placement Program gives students an opportunity to work with prosecutors in Kansas state district attorneys’ offices as well as the office of the U.S. Attorney. They participate in nearly all phases of the criminal process, including trial work.
- In the Elder Law Field Placement Program, students work under the supervision of attorneys from Kansas Legal Services. Students assist seniors with a variety of legal issues, including income maintenance, access to health care, housing and consumer protection.
- The Field Placement Program provides students an opportunity to perform legal work under the supervision of a practicing attorney at approved governmental agencies, as well as nonprofit legal services organizations and nonprofit public national and international organizations.
- Students in the Judicial Field Placement Program serve as interns for state and federal trial judges. Under the supervision of a judge, law clerk or staff attorney, interns perform research, draft documents and observe courtroom proceedings to expand their knowledge of how our court systems operate.
- Students in the Legal Aid Clinic represent low-income clients under the careful guidance and thoughtful teaching of supervising attorneys. The clinic’s caseload is divided into four general areas: a criminal practice for juveniles charged with crimes in Douglas County District Court; a criminal practice for adults charged with crimes and municipal violations in Lawrence Municipal Court; a civil practice to provide legal assistance for individuals seeking name and gender marker changes through the Douglas County District Court; and a civil practice that may focus on school discipline, mental health, race and educational equity, and other emerging matters.
- In the Medical-Legal Partnership Field Placement Program, the School of Law collaborates with two separate health systems — The University of Kansas Health System at KU Medical Center in Kansas City, and LMH Health in Lawrence. Cases may include health law, family law, housing law, elder law, public benefits law, disability law, and immigration law. Students enroll through the Field Placement Program.
- In the Paul E. Wilson Project for Innocence and Post-Conviction Remedies, students counsel and represent state and federal prisoners in appellate and post-conviction litigation in state and federal courts.
- In the Tribal Judicial Support Clinic, students provide research assistance in an array of projects ranging from tribal code development to drafting memoranda and orders.

International Study

The law school sponsors several study abroad (https://law.ku.edu/academics/global-programs/study-abroad/) programs for its students. They include:

1. A summer program in Limerick and Dublin, Ireland, in collaboration with the University of Limerick; and
2. A summer program in Istanbul, Turkey, in collaboration with Bahcesehir University.
All have been approved by the American Bar Association. In addition, KU history and law faculty members collaborate to sponsor a summer program in Cambridge, England, focusing on legal history. This program is open to undergraduates and to entering law students before they begin their studies in the fall term of their first year. KU law students also may choose from numerous other ABA-approved summer study abroad programs.

**Accelerated Program**

The School of Law offers a summer program ([https://law.ku.edu/admissions/summer-start/](https://law.ku.edu/admissions/summer-start/)) that is fully integrated with the curriculum of the fall and spring semesters. First-year students may begin their studies in either the summer session or the fall semester. Students beginning law studies in the summer session may, but are not required to, complete their law degrees in 27 months by being enrolled continuously in two academic years and three contiguous summer sessions. About 20-25 students in each year's entering class begin their studies in the summer.

The summer program consists of two consecutive, five-week sessions that begin in mid-May and conclude at the end of July. Each course offered during the summer meets approximately 80 minutes a day, five days a week.

A first-year student takes two required first-year courses in each session. At the end of the second session, the student has accumulated 8 of the 90 hours required for graduation.

In addition to first-year courses, several upper-level courses usually are offered in the summer. There are opportunities to participate in Legal Aid Clinic, Project for Innocence and Post-Conviction Remedies, Field Placement Program, and Judicial Field Placement Program during both summer sessions. Almost all summer session courses (including the clinics) carry 2 to 2.5 credit hours a session. Upper-level students may take two courses each session. Enrollment in more than 10 hours must be approved by the associate dean for academic and student affairs.

**Certificates**

**Certificate Programs**

The law school offers eight certificate programs ([https://law.ku.edu/academics/certificates/](https://law.ku.edu/academics/certificates/)):

1. Advocacy Skills
2. Business and Commercial Law
3. Environmental and Natural Resources Law
4. International Trade and Finance
5. Media, Law, and Technology
6. Social Justice
7. Tax Law
8. Tribal Lawyer

Each allows students to focus on an area of law and develop expertise in it. The requirements for each program are in the Certificates ([https://law.ku.edu/academics/certificates/](https://law.ku.edu/academics/certificates/)) section of the law school’s website. During their first year of law school, students should notify the associate dean for academic and student affairs of their intention to meet certificate requirements.

**Advocacy Skills Certificate**

Effective advocacy requires a solid grounding in all aspects of litigation — planning the lawsuit, pretrial practices and procedures, trial advocacy, and post-trial matters — and in alternative forms of dispute resolution. This certificate program provides the means for students to develop basic knowledge and skills in effective advocacy.

**Business and Commercial Law Certificate**

The certificate program in business and commercial law is a response to the longstanding demand for attorneys with expertise in the field. Completion of the certificate requirements allows a student to develop the knowledge and skills needed to begin a successful career as a business lawyer. A student who obtains the certificate receives a solid grounding in the basic principles of business and commercial law and is familiar with many of the transactions that business and commercial lawyers commonly encounter in practice.

**Environment, Energy and Natural Resources Law Certificate**

The Environment, Energy and Natural Resources Law Certificate exposes students to the basics of a constantly changing area of practice. At the end of the program, students can address environmental and natural resources law issues wherever they arise.

**International Trade and Finance Certificate**

The International Trade and Finance Certificate permits KU Law students to specialize their studies in the areas of international trade, international business and international finance, and to obtain a certificate reflecting that specialization.

**Media, Law, and Technology Certificate**

The Media, Law and Technology Certificate focuses on legislative challenges, judicial decision-making and administrative policy in an era increasingly shaped by information technology, global networks and the media. The certificate program gives students an opportunity to advance their knowledge and skill in the diverse legal subjects that are of concern in media law practice. Through the certificate program, students also have an opportunity to study how both traditional and new media affect the relationship between law and society. The program’s requirements include completion of the First Amendment Advocacy simulation course or an approved alternate.

**Social Justice Certificate**

Social justice lawyers give voice in the legal system to underrepresented clients and causes. The Social Justice Certificate is ideal for students interested in societal inequality and power differentials, particularly as these relate to class and economics, identity and rights, and the political process. The certificate program allows students to deepen their knowledge and expand expertise in areas that intersect with social justice and prepares students for a career that aligns with their values. Hands-on work is an important component of the certificate program.

**Tax Law Certificate**

Demand for attorneys with expertise in the tax field continues to grow. Completion of the tax law certificate requirements allows students to develop the practical and technical skills needed to build successful careers. Certification also assures employers that the student not only has a mastery of basic principles of individual and entity taxation but also is familiar with many of the intricacies of tax law and practice. One of the program’s requirements is a minimum of 20 hours of participation in an
The degree Juris Doctor (J.D.) is conferred on candidates who have

- Completed a minimum of 90 credit hours;
- Achieved a minimum cumulative grade-point average of 2.0 (C);
- Taken and completed all required courses;
- Satisfied the "in residence" requirement;
- Satisfied the writing-intensive course requirements;
- Satisfied the experiential course requirements; and
- Completed all requirements within 5 years of initial enrollment (see Withdrawal and Readmission Following Withdrawal (http://catalog.ku.edu/law/#regulationstext) in the Regulations section of the law school's website).

Credit-Hour Requirement
Each student must complete a minimum of 90 credit hours. Course work in areas other than law is subject to the limitation described under Course Work Outside the School of Law, below.

Grade-Point Average Requirement
During the semester in which the student attains 90 credit hours, he or she must have achieved a minimum cumulative grade-point average of 2.0 (C) in all law school work. Grades for courses taken in areas other than law are not computed in the School of Law cumulative grade-point average.

Required Courses
To qualify for the J.D. degree, a student must have completed satisfactorily the following:

- All first-year courses listed below
- Professional Responsibility

Professional Responsibility must be completed by the time the student finishes 60 hours of law school credit.

Upper-level required courses should be taken in the second year of law school. Waiting to take these courses until the third year may cause class conflicts between these required courses and courses traditionally taken by third-year law students.

First-Year Courses

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<th>Title</th>
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<td>LAW 804</td>
<td>Civil Procedure</td>
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<tr>
<td>LAW 809</td>
<td>Contracts</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Criminal Law</td>
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<td>LAW 806</td>
<td>Introduction to Constitutional Law</td>
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<td>LAW 820</td>
<td>Lawyering Skills I</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Lawyering Skills II</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Property</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAW 831</td>
<td>Torts I</td>
<td>2-4</td>
</tr>
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“In Residence” Requirement
The 90 credit hours required for the J.D. degree must be earned during a course of study in residence at the School of Law extending over a period of not less than 24 months. For more details, see Maximum and Minimum Load in the Regulations section.
Upper-Level Writing-Intensive Course Requirements

Each student must satisfy the Professional Writing-Intensive course requirement by successfully completing at least 2 professional writing courses that require students to submit a written work product directed to the lawyer’s professional role. Such writing includes, but is not limited to, document drafting, written advocacy, correspondence, memoranda, judicial and quasi-judicial opinions, legislation, regulations, and policy analyses.

Each student must satisfy the third required writing course by either taking a third professional writing-intensive course, or by meeting the Scholarly Writing-Intensive course requirement by successfully completing a course that satisfies the Scholarly requirement.

All written work must be of at least C quality.

Experiential Skills Requirements

Each student must satisfy the experiential course requirement by successfully completing courses totaling at least 6 credit hours from a list of courses identified by the Academic Committee as experiential.

To satisfy the experiential skills requirement, the student must obtain a grade of C or better in graded courses and a grade of CR in courses graded Credit/No Credit.

The law school website includes a list of all of the courses that satisfy the experiential skills requirement (http://law.ku.edu/requiredcourses/).

Course Work Outside the School of Law

A student who is not enrolled in a joint degree program may take up to 6 hours of graduate-level courses outside the School of Law for credit toward a law degree, provided the associate dean for academic affairs approves the course work in advance as relevant to the student’s education as a lawyer. A student seeking credit toward a law degree for more than 6 hours of courses outside the School of Law must petition the academic affairs committee for approval. In such instances, the entire group of courses from outside the School of Law must be relevant to the student’s education as a lawyer. A student must receive a grade of B or better to receive J.D. credit for any such graduate-level nonlaw courses. However, grades for such courses are not computed in the School of Law cumulative grade-point average.

A student in good standing may, with the advance approval of the associate dean for academic affairs, take law courses at another law school accredited by the American Bar Association. If the student successfully completes such courses, not more than 30 credit hours will be transferred and counted toward the 90 credit hours required for the J.D. Time spent at another institution will count as study in residence for the purpose of the “in residence” requirement, but grades in courses taken at the other institution will not be computed in the KU law school cumulative grade-point average.

A student at another law school accredited by the American Bar Association may apply for admission with advanced standing. If admitted, such a student may transfer not more than 30 credit hours of law course work completed successfully at the other law school toward the 90 credit hours required for the J.D. degree. Grades for course work completed at the other law school are not computed in the KU law school cumulative grade-point average.

For purposes of the two preceding paragraphs, a grade of C (or equivalent) or better is necessary in each course for which transfer credit is sought. In no event may a student count more than 30 credit hours earned at other law schools toward the 90 hours required for the J.D. degree.