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 course focuses on the skills and values of the profession. Taught by faculty members with extensive practice experience who meet weekly 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

More than 100 courses are available to upper-level students, covering a broad range of practice areas from environmental law to the law of Indian gaming. Many are seminars, simulation courses, or clinics. For curriculum guides to Business and Commercial Law; Civil Litigation; Constitutional Law; Criminal Law; Elder Law; Environmental 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, see the Academics (http://www.law.ku.edu/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 experienced attorneys representing clients in matters such as income maintenance, access to health care, housing, social security, Medicare/Medicaid, and consumer protection.
• The Field Placement Program provides students an opportunity to perform legal work under the supervision of a practicing attorney at pre-approved governmental agencies and public international organizations.
• Students in the Judicial Field Placement Program serve as interns for state and federal trial judges in Kansas City, Topeka, and Lawrence.
• Students in the Legal Aid Clinic represent indigent citizens of Douglas County in areas including domestic relations, landlord-tenant disputes, and other civil actions. They also serve as public defenders in municipal and juvenile court.
• In the Medical-Legal Partnership Field Placement Program, the School of Law collaborates with two separate health systems — the University of Kansas Health Systems (including the University of Kansas Hospital) and Lawrence Memorial Hospital. Cases may include health law, family law, housing law, elder law, public benefits law, disability law, and immigration law. Student 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 (http://www.law.ku.edu/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.
3. A summer program in Peking, China, in collaboration with the UMKC China Consortium and Peking University School of Law.

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 Anglo-American 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 among numerous other ABA-approved summer study abroad programs.
Accelerated Program

The School of Law offers a summer program (http://www.law.ku.edu/summerstart/) 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 2 academic years and 3 contiguous summer sessions. About one-third of the students in each year’s entering class begin their studies in the summer.

The summer program consists of 2 consecutive 5-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, 5 days a week.

A first-year student takes 2 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 2 courses each session. Enrollment in more than 10 hours must be approved by the associate dean for academic affairs.

Certificates

Certificate Programs

The law school offers 7 certificate programs (http://www.law.ku.edu/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. Tax Law
7. 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 Academics (http://www.law.ku.edu/areas) section of the law school’s website. During their first year of law school, students should notify the associate dean for academic affairs of their intention to meet certificate requirements.

Advocacy Skills Certificate Program

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 Program

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. Courses available to students include Business Associations, Commercial Law, Bankruptcy, Securities Regulation, Taxation of Business Enterprises, and Real Estate Finance.

Environmental and Natural Resources Law Certificate Program

Since the inception of modern environmental and natural resources law in the late 1960s and 1970s, the field has become increasingly important, both in its own right and as a result of the frequency with which environmental and natural resources law issues intrude into other, more traditional fields of practice such as real estate, insurance, and corporate law. The Environmental and Natural Resources Law Certificate introduces students to the basics of this constantly changing area of practice so that they become competent to address environmental and natural resources law issues in whatever contexts they arise.

International Trade and Finance Certificate Program

Legal practice is global in character. As part of its International and Comparative Law Program, the law school provides students an opportunity to undertake special preparation for such practice — and in particular to study the business nature of that practice — by earning a Certificate in International Trade and Finance.

Media, Law, and Technology Certificate Program

Private enterprise and governmental institutions increasingly depend on, and are affected by, communications media. As a result, legal representation in both the private and public sectors is enhanced by an understanding of media influence on the development and administration of law and public policy. The Media, Law, and Technology Certificate focuses on legislative challenges, judicial decision-making, and administrative policy in an era increasingly shaped by information technologies, global networks, and the media. The program’s requirements include participation in 2 of these 3 courses: Public Policy Practicum, Legislative Field Placement, Media Law Project.

Tax Law Certificate Program

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 Internal Revenue Service-sponsored Voluntary Income Tax Assistance program or a similar nonprofit tax assistance program.

Tribal Lawyer Certificate Program

Effectively representing Indian nations and tribes requires an understanding of the extremely complicated body of federal, state, and tribal law that affects every aspect of indigenous societies. The Tribal Lawyer Certificate program ensures that law students who plan careers representing indigenous nations have the skills necessary to appreciate and strengthen the unique nature of tribal legal systems and
governments. Among the program’s requirements is an internship with a tribal legal department or a private or public interest law firm specializing in Indian law or participation in the Tribal Judicial Support Clinic.

Joint Degree Programs

The law school offers 12 joint degree programs:

1. Business
2. East Asian Languages and Cultures
3. Economics
4. Health Services Administration
5. Indigenous Studies
6. Journalism
7. Philosophy
8. Political Science
9. Public Administration
10. Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies
11. Social Welfare
12. Urban Planning

These programs permit a student to receive a master’s degree and a Juris Doctor degree in less time than it would take if the programs were pursued separately. In all cases, a student must be admitted separately to the law school and the other school or department. In the case of the joint law and business program, an applicant must take the Graduate Management Admission Test as well as the Law School Admission Test. The Juris Doctor is awarded concurrently after completion of the joint degree program requirements for each of the joint degree programs. For more information on the joint degree programs and the requirements for each program, see the Academics section of the law school’s website.

J.D. Degree Requirements

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.

“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.