

Master of Laws in Comparative Law Academic Assessment Plan 2013-14

**Levin College of Law
Pedro A. Malavet
malavet@law.ufl.edu**

Office of the Provost

*University of
Florida*

*Institutional
Assessment*

*Continuous Quality
Enhancement*

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Academic Assessment Plan for Master of Laws in Comparative Law

Levin College of Law

A. Mission

The LL.M. in Comparative Law Program is dedicated to educating persons having completed degrees in law at Universities and Law Schools outside the United States by providing them an understanding of the legal system of the United States of America and the English common law system from which it evolved. The program also educates J.D. graduates of ABA-Accredited law schools in the U.S. Commonwealth of Puerto Rico who wish to study law in an English-dominant environment.

The College of Law's mission is to achieve excellence in educating legal professionals, advancing legal scholarship, serving the public, and fostering justice in an international and cross-cultural context. We strive to provide students with a well-rounded education about the laws and legal system of the United States. Our curriculum is designed to teach students about the law, legal system and legal professionalism in the United States, and to help them develop the skills necessary to use that knowledge in practice, including the skills to work with people from diverse backgrounds.

The LL.M. program mission aligns with the College's mission by bringing a global and cross-cultural dimension to College of Law classes and community, thereby helping students to learn to work with people from diverse backgrounds.

The LL.M. program and College of Law missions align directly with the university's threefold mission, in their emphasis on teaching (educating global professionals), research and scholarship (advancing legal scholarship with a comparative and cross-cultural perspective) and service (serving the public and fostering justice in our country and abroad). Preparing legal professionals to serve their clients, the justice system and the public in and outside of the United States helps to serve the university's aspiration to "advance by strengthening the human condition and improving the quality of life".

B. Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Measures

SLO Type	Student Learning Outcome	Assessment Method	Degree Delivery
Knowledge	Students identify, explain, describe, and apply the fundamental rules, policies and issues relevant to U.S. law.	Through written examinations and required writing in the two required courses, ninety percent of students will demonstrate a thorough understanding and comprehension of the fundamental rules, policies and issues relevant to U.S. law.	Campus
Skills	Students conduct and apply legal research and scholarship.	Through a substantial written research project evaluated by law faculty members, ninety percent of students will demonstrate the ability to conduct, apply and communicate legal research and scholarship.	Campus
Professional Behavior	Students identify the ethical rules and professional responsibilities applicable to U.S. lawyers.	Ninety percent of students will demonstrate satisfactory awareness and comprehension of such rules and responsibilities through their attendance at, and participation in, structured presentations on such rules and responsibilities, organized and evaluated by law faculty members.	Campus

C. Research

The LL.M. in Comparative Law Program is not a research degree and does not require its students to produce a graduate thesis. However, all our students are required to produce a substantial research paper, similar to the paper demanded of J.D. students.

All LL.M. candidates must produce —under close faculty supervision— a major, written, finished product that shows evidence of original systematic scholarship based on individual research. Typically, students satisfy this requirement in a seminar course, however the requirement may also be met through the completion of an approved advanced course, an independent study and advanced writing requirement course, or through a note accepted for publication in a co-curricular law school journal as certified by the faculty advisor for the journal. The general standard for fulfillment of the advanced writing requirement is a paper or papers that are cumulatively at least 25 pages of double-spaced, 12-point text or the equivalent. However, the supervising faculty member will set the standard for the paper.

The project is designed to give each student an opportunity to conduct a self-initiated critical analysis of a particular area of law. In researching the topic, the student will gain additional familiarity with the wealth of research materials available to them. In writing the paper and having it constructively criticized by a supervising faculty member, the student will receive valuable advice regarding research techniques, writing style, topic development and analytical skills.

As with all LL.M. projects and courses, each student must earn an appropriate minimum grade from the supervising faculty member in order to earn credit. The paper must also be approved by the Program Director. Upon graduation, a copy of each paper will be kept on file in the LL.M. in Comparative Law office.

Although publication is not required, students may wish to submit the paper for publication by a law review or journal.

D. Assessment Timeline

Program: Master of Laws in Comparative Law

College: Levin College of Law

Assessment	Assessment 1	Assessment 2
SLOs		
Knowledge		
Students identify, explain, describe, and apply fundamental rules, policies and issues relevant to U.S. law	In-class and take home written examinations in Introduction to U.S. Legal System	Evaluation by Director at the end of each academic term
Skills		
Conduct legal research and perform legal writing in Introduction to US Legal Research/Writing/English	Written project in Introduction to US Legal Research/Writing/English	Evaluation by Director at the end of each academic term
Conduct and apply legal research and scholarship	Assessment of research and writing in draft paper	Final paper assessment by Instructor and program Director
Professional Behavior		
Awareness of U.S. legal ethical rules	Evaluation at the end of each academic term of basic LL.M. course by Director	
Awareness of student professionalism in U.S. law studies	Regular class attendance, preparation for, and active participation in classes and in program obligations assessed by Director at end of term	

E. Assessment Cycle

Assessment Cycle for:

Program: Master of Laws in Comparative Law College: Levin College of Law

Analysis and Interpretation: July-May

Program Modifications: Completed by November 15

Dissemination: Completed by May 15

SLOs	Year	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16
Knowledge							
Introduction to U.S. Legal System				X	X	X	X
Skills							
Introduction to US Legal Research/Writing/English				X	X	X	X
Conduct and apply legal research and scholarship				X	X	X	X
Professional Behavior							
Awareness of U.S. legal ethical rules				X	X	X	X
Awareness of student professionalism in U.S. law studies				X	X	X	X

F. Measurement Tools

Knowledge. The assessment of knowledge for students in the LL.M. program includes a combination of the traditional assessment methods used at the College of Law with specialized assessment methods tailored to the LL.M. students as required by their pedagogical needs and their status as graduate students. The specialized mandatory LL.M. courses include four credits of Introduction to the Law and Legal System of the United States, taught over three terms, and two credits of Legal Research and Writing, taught during the summer term.

Skills. Each student must produce a substantial research paper by working with a supervising faculty member and with the program director. Students must select and develop a topic with faculty assistance and approval. The final paper is assessed using the rubric attached as Appendix A. In the Legal Writing course, students complete regular exercises requiring research and writing skills and discuss them individually with the instructor.

Professional Behavior. Professional behavior starts with student professionalism. The U.S. law student is expected to be in class regularly and to arrive at each lecture having read the pertinent material and prepared to comment knowledgeably on it upon request by the instructor. The students' attendance and satisfaction of class-participation requirements are regularly monitored by the director. The students are also expected to develop their knowledge about the ethical rules applicable to U.S. legal professionals in general, and to become aware of the ethical challenges posed by the highly-specialized nature of U.S. law practice. These are assessed through participation in and successful completion of the one-year, four-credit Introduction to U.S. law program taught by the director and through observations and exit discussions between the director and the enrolled students at the end of the program.

G. Assessment Oversight

Name	Department Affiliation	Email Address	Phone Number
Pedro A. Malavet	Levin College of Law	malavet@law.ufl.edu	(352) 273-0974
Alyson C. Flournoy	Levin College of Law	flournoy@law.ufl.edu	(352) 273-0610

**Appendix A: Rubric for Assessment of Completion of Substantial Research Paper
(SLO #2 -- Skills: Conduct and Apply Legal Research and Scholarship)**

Each LL.M. student is required to complete a substantial research paper as described above.

Criteria	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Proposed Table of Contents and Bibliography	Table of contents shows a project requiring a substantial research effort that can realistically be produced in one semester. Bibliography shows grasp of subject and availability of suitable research resources.	Table of contents and bibliography show a project that is over- or under-ambitious reflecting inadequate understanding of subject or of what a substantial research project entails.
First Draft	Reflects self-initiated critical analysis of a particular area of law. Shows familiarity with the wealth of research materials available to the student. Shows proper research techniques, writing style, topic development and analytical skills.	Fails to show familiarity with research materials available to student, proper research techniques or writing, topic development or analysis are inadequate.
Second Draft (required only if first draft is deemed unsatisfactory)	Shortcomings of first draft have been fixed.	Shortcomings of first draft have not been addressed or new deficiencies have been introduced in new sections.
Final Paper	A major, written, finished product that shows evidence of original systematic scholarship based on individual research. Must show critical thinking. Requires a final grade of at least a "B". A = Outstanding A- = Very Good B+ = Good B = Satisfactory	Fails to demonstrate original systematic scholarship based on individual research, or critical thinking. Any final grade less than a "B" on the university scale.

Figure 1. University of Florida Graduate/Professional Program Assessment Plan Review Rubric

Related resources are found at <http://www.aa.assessment.edu>

Program:		Year:			
Component	Criterion	Rating			Comments
		Met	Partially Met	Not Met	
Mission Statement	Mission statement is articulated clearly.				
	The program mission clearly supports the College and University missions, and includes specific statements describing how it supports these missions.				
Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and Assessment Measures	SLOs are stated clearly.				
	SLOs focus on demonstration of student learning.				
	SLOs are measurable.				
	Measurements are appropriate for the SLO.				
Research	Research expectations for the program are clear, concise, and appropriate for the discipline.				
Assessment Map	The Assessment Map indicates the times in the program where the SLOs are assessed and measured.				
	The Assessment Map identifies the assessments used for each SLO.				
Assessment Cycle	The assessment cycle is clear.				
	All student learning outcomes are measured.				
	Data is collected at least once in the cycle.				
	The cycle includes a date or time period for data analysis and interpretation.				
	The cycle includes a date for planning improvement actions based on the data analysis.				
	The cycle includes a date for dissemination of results to the appropriate stakeholders.				

University of Florida Graduate/Professional Program Assessment Plan Review Rubric, continued

Component	Criterion	Rating			Comments
		Met	Partially Met	Not Met	
Measurement Tools	Measurement tools are described clearly and concisely.				
	Measurements are appropriate for the SLOs.				
	Methods and procedures reflect an appropriate balance of direct and indirect methods.				
	The report presents examples of at least one measurement tool.				
Assessment Oversight	Appropriate personnel (coordinator, committee, etc.) charged with assessment responsibilities are identified				