



**PETER A. ALLARD SCHOOL OF LAW**

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**GRADUATE PROGRAM**

# THE MASTERS DEGREE (LLM)

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The LL.M. degree prepares graduates for opportunities in law teaching, legal research, policy development, public and governmental service, and the practice of law. The program attracts a large number of candidates with overseas common and civil law training, as well as those with LL.B. or J.D. degrees from Canada and the United States. It does not qualify a holder for entry to the Bar of British Columbia or any other certification for practice.

The program is of one year's duration, and combines course work with the preparation of a thesis of acceptable quality. Students are required to complete successfully 36 credits of work, of which 20 credits are allocated to the thesis, 12 credits to course work (usually comprising four one-term courses, seminars or directed research projects), and 4 credits to the required Master's Seminar.

The information contained here is intended for guidance only; these guidelines are not an authoritative document. In the event of conflict with formal UBC policies, procedures, and regulations, the formal documents govern. Policies and procedures are revised regularly, and while every effort is made to keep these guidelines up-to-date, please refer to the various sources available through the [Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies](#), including [Current Students](#) and [Policies & Procedures](#).

## **A. Admission**

For information on admissions, please consult Admission section under [Graduate Program Admission](#) on the [Peter A. Allard School of Law](#) website.

## **B. Faculty Supervisor and Second Reader**

All students are supervised through the stages of the LLM degree program by a faculty supervisor who is a full-time member of the Allard School of Law. The selection of a faculty supervisor begins in the admissions stage. No applicant will be admitted to the LLM program without a full-time faculty member agreeing to act as supervisor. Students will consult with their supervisors throughout the program of study.

A student's LLM thesis is graded by their faculty supervisor and a second reader. The second reader is chosen by the faculty supervisor in consultation with the student and is subject to the approval of the Graduate Committee. In most cases, the second reader will be a full-time member of the Law Faculty, but second readers from outside the Faculty may be appointed with the permission of the Graduate Committee. The second reader is often only involved at the grading stage, but may become involved earlier and act as a committee member to provide the student with substantive guidance.

## **C. Curriculum**

In order to complete the LLM degree, students must complete a minimum of 36 credits of study.

### **Required Elements**

1. Law 500: Current Legal Problems (4 credits).

This seminar introduces students to the main conceptual and methodological approaches to the study of law as well as to current trends in legal scholarship. The first term considers the main disciplinary approaches to the study of legal norms, institutions, and systems from both positive and normative perspectives. It also examines and evaluates several standard methodologies used to study law including comparative and interdisciplinary approaches. The main purposes of the first term are: to refine the research question through critical reflection; to develop a literature review; and, to match the selected project with an appropriate and justified methodological approach.

The second term provides students with an opportunity to workshop their research project in a collaborative and constructive forum. Students will receive substantive feedback on chapter or thesis drafts from the instructor as well as from fellow students.

Through seminar participation, students will become familiar with giving and receiving critical feedback—skills that are integral to graduate studies. Discussion will also further explore methodological choices, research and writing skills, and writing for publication.

Evaluation:

Assessment is on a pass/fail basis and will be based on seminar participation and presentations, a literature review, a thesis proposal, and work presented in the second term including comments on a colleague's thesis chapter.

## 2. Elective coursework (12 credits)

Students are required to complete an additional 12 credits of course work from the [upper-year JD or graduate course list](#). Courses operate either on a lecture basis or as seminars for smaller groups. The usual method of assessment in lecture courses is by single examination at the end of the course. Seminars are generally assessed by means of research papers.

Please note that as per the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies guidelines at: <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/managing-your-program/establishing-your-program-study/masters-students>: *"A maximum of 6 credits at the undergraduate level in courses numbered 300 to 499 ~~may~~ will be counted toward the requirements of a master's degree."*

Students are particularly encouraged to consider:

### **LAW 524D.001 Methodologies in Law and Policy (4 credits)**

Students who successfully complete this course will obtain the capacity to select and defend an appropriate methodology for a research proposal that explores an aspect of law, policy or legal regulation. In particular, students will understand when it may be useful to go beyond traditional "library based" legal research, compare the strengths and limitations of a variety of methodologies, and learn how to identify appropriate methodologies based on the desired outcomes of the research project.

Students may also enroll in directed research courses. All directed research courses require a supervising faculty member. Students should discuss the proposed topic of the directed research course in advance with the faculty member who will supervise the directed research project. Students should also consult with their thesis supervisors about directed research courses before applying to do one. Students in the LLM program are normally allowed to complete not more than 4 credits of the required 12 credits of course work as directed research. For additional instructions and to register for a directed research course, see the directed research course form on the graduate student [forms page](#).

A student may, with the permission of the Graduate Committee, select courses in other faculties of the University, but the major part of the program must be undertaken in the Faculty of Law. See the Course registration/change form (non-Law) on the [forms page](#).

Students in the LLM program are not able to enroll in 200-level courses, moots, clinical programs, or the following graduate-level courses in the Law Faculty: LAW 505, LAW 515, LAW 525, LAW 610, and LAW 611.

3. LAW 549 – LLM Thesis (20 credits)

Students must complete a thesis of satisfactory quality, prepared under the direction of a member of the Faculty of Law, on a subject of the student's choice. The thesis must be a substantial piece of research, written in English, and of publishable quality. The thesis should normally be completed within the period of residence. See the LLM thesis grading guidelines below for further guidance on the expectations for an LLM thesis.

An oral examination may be required, at the discretion of the Faculty of Law.

## D. Coursework Grading Standards

For master's students registered in the Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies, a standing of Fail (F) will be assigned to courses with grades that fall below 60%.

### Grading Scale

Percentage (%)	Letter Grade
90-100	A+
85-89	A
80-84	A-
76-79	B+
72-75	B
68-71	B-
64-67	C+
60-63	C
0-59	F (Fail)

A master's student may only count 6 credits of coursework with grades of 60-67% towards a master's program.

All grades above 90% must be reviewed and approved by the Graduate Committee.

### Supplemental Exams and Repeating Courses

A graduate student who fails a course may not take a supplemental exam. If a graduate student has to repeat a failed required course, then the student must obtain a minimum mark of 74%.

## **E. LLM Thesis Expectations**

All LLM theses must conform to the University requirements for formatting and presentation. The Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies provides extensive information on [Thesis Preparation](#). Please consult this material well in advance of your proposed submission date.

The LLM thesis grading guidelines, set out below, provide an indication of the expectations for an LLM thesis.

### **LLM Theses Grading Guidelines**

#### **A+ (90-100)**

In order to obtain the highest possible grade, the thesis must be capable of being described in ways that show it is the best possible work that we could expect from our LL.M. students, better than most theses, and a significant contribution to the literature in the field. There should be no doubt that it is publishable as is, and indeed it should be possible to say that the supervisory committee would be delighted to have it published as an example of graduate work at the Faculty of Law. (Ideally, opportunities for publication will have been pointed out to the candidate).

The thesis must be outstanding with respect to all the qualities which we assess in a thesis. These are:

- (1) Outstanding research showing ability to find all relevant primary and secondary sources. Normally to be outstanding, research would also have to include exploration of identifiable forms of inquiry, including, for instance, one or more of the following types of approach: interdisciplinary, law reform, and comparative.
- (2) Outstanding organisation, including ability to synthesize diverse material in a clearly-explained conceptual/theoretical framework.
- (3) Outstanding analysis, which enables the reader to achieve a sophisticated understanding of the issues and relevant authorities, including an understanding of relevant debates in the field, and including an understanding of the writer's own contribution to the existing analyses of the issues. Such outstanding analysis would include clearly-developed linkages between the information obtained via the research carried out and any theoretical structure developed or identified as relevant.
- (4) Outstanding expository style, which does not mean the style of a person for whom English is a first language, but a style in which information is given and ideas are expressed in a way that assists understanding.

#### **A (85-89)**

An A would typically be given where most but not all of the components of an A+ are present, and the thesis is still strong in all categories. Hence there could be outstanding organisation and analysis, but

the research might simply be a thorough amalgamation of all relevant primary and secondary sources. Such a thesis should still be a contribution to the literature in the field, and should be publishable as it is.

#### **A - (80-84)**

An A- would be appropriate where most of the components of research, organisation, analysis and literary style are strong to outstanding, but it is possible to identify a small, though not a serious, weakness. For instance, with respect to research, there might be some relevant sources left unexplored, there might be some weakness in organisation but there is generally a clearly-followed plan, a relevant issue might be missed in the analysis, or the style, while generally clear, might contain some obscure passages. A serious, though unsuccessful, attempt might have been made to link the information obtained and any theoretical structure. The thesis should be publishable with a little work.

#### **B+ (76-79)**

At this level, the thesis could still be described as good, but a serious weakness can be identified to keep it out of the A range. For instance, the research might not be quite thorough, with an important aspect left unexplored, there might be a substantial element of disorganisation, there might be a significant gap in the analysis, such as failure to identify the relevant legal principles relating to an identified issue. The thesis might still be publishable, but with quite a bit of work, or parts of it could be published without more.

#### **B (72-75)**

Here the thesis could be described as satisfactory rather than good. It should more than meet minimum standards, but it is possible to identify several serious weaknesses, rather than simply one at the B+ level. Thus there might be incomplete research accompanied by moderate disorganisation. There might be a mixture of both outstanding and unsatisfactory qualities. For instance, the research might be outstanding, but the thesis largely descriptive with little or no analysis. The thesis might or might not contain any contribution to the literature. For instance, there might be some interesting new insights, which are not placed in the context of existing primary and secondary sources.

#### **B - (70-71)**

A B- thesis with a grade of 70 or 71 is barely satisfactory. Since LL.M. students must maintain an average of 70%, such a mark indicates that the work meets our minimum standards. There must have been at least an attempt at thorough research, even though significant sources are missing. There must be evidence of at least some attempt to plan an organised analysis and to follow the plan. While analysis might not be sustained throughout, there must be at least one section of the thesis that demonstrates ability to engage in basic doctrinal analysis. The thesis must be readable in clear English. It might be the case that there are serious weaknesses in the thesis which are balanced by occasional outstanding qualities, such as an interesting original insight, which is not fully developed.

#### **B - (68-69)**

A B- thesis with a grade of 68 or 69 shows uncertainty that the student should receive an LL.M. Since a 70% average is required, the student will fail unless there are compensatory marks in the course work component of the degree. This means that the thesis does not meet our minimum standards in itself, but is borderline.

#### **C+ - F (0-67)**

Any grade in this range means that the student will not meet the requirements for the LL.M. and that the thesis is unsatisfactory. There are no redeeming features to put it in the B- range. That is, there has

been no serious research effort, the thesis is incoherent, the analysis is poor, involving little or no attempt to identify issues, apply legal or other sources, or state any opinions, the literary style is weak, involving, for instance, persistent weaknesses in grammar or spelling.

## **F. Residency Requirement and Time Limits**

### **Residency Requirement**

Students must normally maintain full-time continuous residence at the University for one academic year.

### **Time Limits**

Under general University regulations a student in the Masters program must complete the program within five years of initial registration. The Faculty of Law expects students to complete an LL.M. program well before the expiration of that final deadline.

## **G. Academic Honesty and Standards**

Academic honesty is essential to the continued functioning of the University of British Columbia as an institution of higher learning and research. All UBC students are expected to behave as honest and responsible members of an academic community. Breach of those expectations or failure to follow the appropriate policies, principles, rules, and guidelines of the University with respect to academic honesty may result in disciplinary action.

It is the student's obligation to inform himself or herself of the applicable standards for academic honesty. Students must be aware that standards at the University of British Columbia may be different from those in secondary schools or at other institutions. If a student is in any doubt as to the standard of academic honesty in a particular course or assignment, then the student must consult with the instructor as soon as possible, and in no case should a student submit an assignment if the student is not clear on the relevant standard of academic honesty. (From the UBC Calendar: [Academic Honesty and Standards](#).)

Plagiarism—representing the work of others as your own—is an academic offence that the Law Faculty and the University take very seriously. Be scrupulous to avoid presenting the work of others as your own. If you have any doubts about what constitutes an academic offence, including plagiarism, please review the University regulations and talk with the instructor.

Please review the UBC Calendar for more on [Academic Misconduct and Discipline](#).