

ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF LAW

**MASTER OF LEGAL
STUDIES* (M.L.S.) &
CERTIFICATE
STUDENT
HANDBOOK**

Academic Year 2025 – 2026

St. Mary's University, as a Catholic Marianist University, fosters the formation of people in faith and educates leaders for the common good through community, integrated liberal arts and professional education, and academic excellence.

Shannon D. Pustka Sevier, M.A.T., J.D., M.P.A.
Assistant Dean of
Graduate Law Programs &
Adjunct Professor of Law

*Known as the Master of Jurisprudence (M.Jur.) program from 2015 – 2025.

THIS HANDBOOK IS NOT A CONTRACT.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE HANDBOOK ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE
AT ANY TIME, INCLUDING DURING THE ACADEMIC YEAR.

THE J.D. AND M.L.S. STUDENT HANDBOOKS
AND IMPORTANT CHANGES TO THE TEXT OF THE HANDBOOKS
ARE AVAILABLE ON GATEWAY.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | | |
|-------------|--|-----------|
| I. | INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| II. | TRUTHFULNESS AND DISCLOSURE PREREQUISITE TO ADMISSION AND GRADUATION..... | 2 |
| III. | ACADEMIC CONDUCT, POLICIES AND SANCTIONS..... | 2 |
| IV. | ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE | 3 |
| V. | MASTERS OF LEGAL STUDIES DEGREE GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS | 4 |
| A. | Credit Hours and GPA Requirements | 4 |
| B. | M.L.S. Three-Year Limitation..... | 4 |
| C. | Graduation/Commencement Application..... | 4 |
| D. | Pass/Fail Hours Limitation | 5 |
| E. | Independent Study | 6 |
| 1. | Maximum Independent-Study Hours | 6 |
| 2. | Significant Writing Requirement..... | 7 |
| 3. | Faculty Sponsorship | 7 |
| F. | Full-Time Status and Part-Time Status | 8 |
| 1. | Minimum and Maximum Credit Hours per Semester for Full-Time Status | 8 |
| 2. | Part-Time Status..... | 8 |
| G. | Required Courses for the M.L.S. | 8 |
| H. | Available M.L.S. Concentrations | 9 |
| I. | Available Certificates..... | 10 |
| J. | Auditing and Withdrawing..... | 11 |
| J. | Applicant Deferral Policy | 12 |
| K. | Applicant Leave of Absence Policy | 13 |
| VI. | GRADES AND GRADING..... | 13 |
| A. | The Letter Grading Scale..... | 14 |
| B. | Anonymous and Non-Anonymous Grading Policy | 14 |
| 1. | Anonymous Grading..... | 14 |
| 2. | Non-Anonymous Grading..... | 15 |
| C. | Median Grades | 15 |
| 1. | General Rule | 15 |
| 2. | Multiple Sections of the Same Course..... | 16 |
| D. | Grades of Incomplete | 16 |
| E. | Class Attendance..... | 16 |
| 1. | Withdrawal for Excessive Absences..... | 16 |
| 2. | Online Course Withdrawal for Excessive Absences | 17 |
| F. | Grade-Point Averaging..... | 17 |

| | | |
|--------------|--|-----------|
| G. | Distinguished Academic Achievement | 17 |
| H. | Appeal of Grades | 18 |
| VI. | STUDY ABROAD..... | 18 |
| VII. | PROGRAM STATUS | 19 |
| A. | Transfer Course Grades and Credit | 19 |
| B. | J.D. Candidates Transferring into the M.L.S. Program..... | 20 |
| C. | Students Excluded from the St. Mary's J.D. Program..... | 20 |
| D. | Pathway Programs..... | 21 |
| E. | Visiting Student Status | 21 |
| F. | Transfer to Another Program..... | 22 |
| G. | Non-Degree Seeking Status | 22 |
| H. | Application for Degree Seeking Status | 22 |
| VIII. | RETAKEING COURSES..... | 23 |
| IX. | See Section III.K. of the St. Mary's University School of Law Handbook for J.D. Students. EXAMINATIONS..... | 23 |
| A. | Examinations, Papers, and Evaluations of Skills..... | 23 |
| B. | Examinations Continued | 24 |
| X. | ACADEMIC ISSUES..... | 24 |
| A. | Academic Support Resources..... | 24 |
| B. | Academic Exclusion..... | 24 |
| C. | Academic Support and Advising | 25 |
| D. | Graduation – Early Walk | 25 |
| XI. | TUITION AND FEES | 26 |
| XII. | REGISTERED STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS POLICIES..... | 26 |
| XIII. | MISCELLANEOUS..... | 26 |
| XIV. | PROHIBITED CONDUCT | 26 |

I. INTRODUCTION

By publishing the *Master of Legal Studies Student Handbook*, St. Mary's University School of Law attempts to bring together from various sources rules, policies, and procedures of interest to enrolled Master of Legal Studies (M.L.S.) and Certificate students. Some of the statements included in the Handbook may change during the academic year. Other rules, policies, or procedures may be added in the future as required. Important changes will be posted on GATEWAY and published in the *Witan*, the law school's internal newsletter.

To the extent that the *Student Handbook* addresses rules, policies, and procedures within the law school, it is authoritative. It is not, however, the exclusive source of guidance. Students wishing for additional information regarding a particular matter not addressed in the *Handbook* should inquire at the Office of the Assistant Dean for Graduate Law Programs. Students are also bound by the University Code of Student Conduct.¹

All M.L.S. and certificate students are subject to the rules, policies, and procedures contained herein and by the rules of the J.D. student handbook on any issue for which the M.L.S. and Certificate Handbook is silent or includes external references. For portions of the J.D. student handbook that have been incorporated by reference, the provisions should be read to apply to M.L.S. and Certificate students. However, these provisions should not be interpreted as transferring or transitioning a student enrolled in the M.L.S. or Certificate program into the J.D. program. Faculty members must comply with the stated academic standards for evaluation of students. It is the responsibility of students and faculty members affected by these rules, policies, and procedures to become familiar with them and to adhere to them closely.

Students from other St. Mary's University programs (UG and GR) are responsible for following the School of Law *Academic Calendar* and are subject to the *Master of Legal Studies Student Handbook* in relation to the courses they take through the M.L.S. program at the School of Law.

Because certain rights, privileges, and remedies, and the ways in which these may be exercised or forfeited, are included in the Handbook, students are directed to read carefully the materials contained herein. The Handbook is available on the StMU website and in the online orientation modules. With regard to any provision of the Handbook, fair notice to the student is conclusively presumed from its

¹ <https://www.stmarytx.edu/policies/student-development/code-of-student-conduct/>.

publication and, except where expressly noted to the contrary, no further notice is required.

II. TRUTHFULNESS AND DISCLOSURE PREREQUISITE TO ADMISSION AND GRADUATION

The School of Law's admission of an applicant to any program at St. Mary's School of Law is contingent upon the truthfulness of information contained in the application materials submitted by the applicant and/or persons on the applicant's behalf, including letters of recommendation; correcting any misinformation provided to the School of Law; and disclosure of information required by the rules or regulations of St. Mary's University. Students also have a duty to disclose new incidents and events relating to their character and fitness to study law and participate in the St. Mary's community that occur subsequent to their application or admission. Students are required to update the law school immediately upon occurrence of any new incident.

Non-exhaustive examples of items that trigger disclosure can include: previous or current academic integrity issues (including being aware of another student's violations of academic integrity), previous or current interactions with the civil or criminal justice systems (even if you believe that such incident has been "expunged" or "removed from your record"), previous or current inaccurate submission of information or credentials.

Per the attestation made on every application to the Master of Legal Studies program, if the information provided in a student's application is found to be false or incomplete that student may be dismissed from St. Mary's University School of Law and/or any degree they earn may be revoked.

III. ACADEMIC CONDUCT, POLICIES AND SANCTIONS

For full text of University Policy See ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT Sec. of University Policy²

Any student found to have committed acts of dishonesty is subject to disciplinary sanctions. The dean of the appropriate school (e.g., the dean of the School of Law) is currently the person(s) designated by the president and academic vice president to administer the academic code. Acts of dishonesty include but are not limited to:

- Cheating, plagiarism, fabrication or any other forms of academic misconduct.
- Furnishing false information to any StMU official, faculty member, administrator or other StMU employee.
- Forgery, alteration or misuse of any StMU document, record or ID.

² St. Mary's University Policy Library – ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT
<https://www.stmarytx.edu/policies/academic-affairs/academic-misconduct/>

- Violation of Federal Copyright Law, i.e., photocopying without authorization, etc.
- Misuse of academic computing time and equipment.
- Definition as delineated in the undergraduate and graduate catalogs under the Heading of “Academic Honesty.”

The following sanctions may be imposed upon any student found to have violated academic conduct:

- Assignment Redo: A faculty member may require a student to redo a class/laboratory assignment.
- Failing Assignment Grade: A faculty member may record the grade of F (failure) for a particular test, examination or class/laboratory assignment that involves dishonesty.
- Failing Course Grade: A faculty member may record the grade of F (failure) for a final course grade.
- Academic Suspension: The student is separated from the university for a specified minimum period of time; upon the satisfaction of specific conditions the student is eligible to return. This sanction may be enforced with a trespass action as necessary.
- Academic Expulsion: The student is permanently separated from the university. The student is barred from being on campus and the student's presence at any university-sponsored activity or event is prohibited. This action may be enforced with a trespass action as necessary. (This sanction will be noted as an Academic Expulsion on the student's official academic transcript.)

IV. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Law students may not employ generative AI tools or services (i.e., LexisNexis, Westlaw, ChatGPT, CLAUDE) including, but not limited to, language models, essay generators, or any other type of AI-enabled content creation tools, for course assignments, examinations, or any other academic work, unless explicitly authorized in writing by the course professor. This includes both direct usage of AI output in submitted work, and using AI tools to inform or guide the creation of student work.

Unauthorized use of AI to generate coursework violates the Law School's Academic Integrity policy. Law school course assignments and assessments are designed to evaluate your analytical thinking, knowledge of legal principles, and ability to communicate effectively in writing. While artificial intelligence (AI) tools hold promise to augment legal work,

reliance on AI to complete assessments or assignments undermines their purpose as tools for **candid self-assessment**.

Intellectual honesty is vital to an academic community and for the fair evaluation of your work. All work submitted in this program must be your own, completed in accordance with the University's academic regulations. You may not engage in unauthorized collaboration or make use of AI composition software.

Violation of this policy will be considered a breach of academic honesty and will be dealt with according to our existing academic integrity procedures. This applies across all coursework and examinations unless otherwise stated in writing by the professor.

V. MASTERS OF LEGAL STUDIES DEGREE GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

A. Credit Hours and GPA Requirements

A candidate for the degree of Master of Legal Studies must earn a minimum of thirty (30) credit hours in order to graduate. The candidate is eligible to graduate if the candidate's cumulative grade point average is 2.0 or better. Special and/or additional requirements on credit hours may apply to students in joint or dual degree programs.

B. M.L.S. Three-Year Limitation

The thirty (30) credit hours must be earned within a three-year period that begins with matriculation. The three-year limitation is strictly enforced, but a student may appeal to the Assistant Dean for Graduate Law Programs for an extension, and in exceptional circumstances, such appeal may be granted. A student who leaves the program prior to completion, and who wishes to re-join the program after the 3-year window must re-apply, and any credits earned will be subject to the limitations in Section III. I. regarding transfer grades. Students seeking only a Certificate are generally bound by these same timelines.

C. Graduation/Commencement Application

M.L.S. and Certificate candidates who qualify for graduation must apply on GATEWAY by the following dates to ensure timely certification by the School of Law:

September 1 for December completion/participation in the combined University commencement ceremony

February 1 for May completion/participation in the law school's commencement ceremony

June 1 for August completion (no ceremony)

An M.L.S. candidate may petition to walk early at the December or May ceremony if they will lack no more than four (4) credit hours to fulfill their thirty (30) credit hour requirement. Petition forms can be obtained from Gateway and submitted for approval by the Assistant Dean of Graduate Law Programs by the graduation application deadline listed above.

Students who withdraw from a class or fail to obtain a passing grade in a class during their final semester must submit the early walk petition within forty-eight (48) hours from the time the grade is posted or after class withdrawal.

Pure Certificate students do not participate in the law school's commencement ceremony.

D. Pass/Fail Hours Limitation

A student may not count toward graduation more than three (3) pass/fail hours earned at St. Mary's School of Law. Any graded course in which a student receives a pass (e.g., in the case of a successful grade appeal) will not be counted in determining the three (3) hours maximum limit of pass/fail credit hours. Ungraded credit hours accepted for students who transfer into the M.L.S. Program (*see* Section III.H.) are subject to the same limitations that apply to the home campus. Ungraded transient hours (*see* Section III.G.) are subject to the same limitations that apply to hours taken on the home campus.

A student may not elect to take a course as pass/fail unless the faculty as a whole has expressly approved such an election or the Assistant Dean for Graduate Law Programs and the course's teaching faculty member have approved such an election. Such an election should be made prior to the first meeting of class. Independent study credit may be earned on a pass/fail basis only with the approval of the supervising faculty member. A course designated as pass/fail may not be taken for a grade.

In extraordinary situations, the Office for Academic Affairs may authorize pass/fail grades, rather than letter grades.

There is no provision for pass/fail hours in the Certificate framework. Requests for such will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Assistant Dean for Graduate Law Programs in consultation with the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.

E. Independent Study

A student may arrange a one-, two-, or three-credit independent study.

1. Maximum Independent-Study Hours

An M.L.S. student may count no more than three (3) hours of independent study toward the thirty (30) credit hours required for graduation by completing a research paper and/or such other work as the supervising faculty member may require.

There are two types of independent study opportunities:

- Non-internship independent study: involves the production of an independent scholarly paper under the direction of a faculty member (the paper may or may not also qualify for the upper-level writing requirement). Non-internship independent studies should not be viewed as a substitute for a scheduled class and should only be utilized when a class in the topic area is not available or exigent circumstances are present.
- Internship independent study: involves an external internship that is supervised by a faculty member.

All students pursuing an independent study must maintain timesheets recording time spent on their project and submit timesheets to the supervising faculty member on a bi-weekly basis. The Assistant Dean of Graduate Law Programs in consultation with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs may deny credit for the independent study if timesheets are requested and not provided.

The Attendance Requirement is met through the bi-weekly timesheets and prompt correspondence according to the supervising faculty's required schedule. If students do not comply with the

Attendance Requirement they may be administratively withdrawn from the independent study.

Because there is a presumption of self-directed study only candidates in good academic standing will be considered for independent study. Exceptions require the permission of the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.

There is no provision for independent-study hours in the Certificate framework. Requests for such will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Assistant Dean for Graduate Law Programs in consultation with the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.

2. Significant Writing Requirement

Not all independent study projects require completion of a substantial research paper, but significant written work is required.

3. Faculty Sponsorship

Faculty eligible to supervise an independent study include professors of law, associate professors of law, assistant professors of law and service professors of law. Visiting professors, and adjunct faculty members may not supervise independent studies unless in conjunction with an aforementioned tenure-track professor. Faculty titles are listed on the faculty pages of the website). The sponsoring professor and the student must agree about the length of the research paper or of the other written work, whether the paper will be graded or evaluated only on a pass/fail basis, whether any work in addition to the paper is required, and what semester the student will enroll for the independent study.

No faculty member is obliged to supervise an independent study and no faculty member may supervise more than three (3) hours of independent study during the fall or spring semester or during a single summer session. The Assistant Dean for Graduate Law Programs may allow supervision of more than three (3) hours in extenuating circumstances.

A student and the supervising faculty member must agree at the time of enrollment whether the independent study will be graded or pass/fail. The designation of the course as graded or ungraded may

be changed at any time during the semester, but not after the final paper or other written project has been submitted to the faculty member for evaluation.

A student wishing to arrange an independent study should obtain the appropriate form from GATEWAY (under “Law” → “Forms, Schedules, Calendars”), take it to the sponsoring faculty member for his or her signature and, if necessary, the signature of the Associate Dean, and return the form to the Director of Graduate Law Programs during the registration process.

Independent studies for three (3) credit hours require prior request and approval from the Assistant Dean for Graduate Law Programs.

F. Full-Time Status and Part-Time Status

1. Minimum and Maximum Credit Hours per Semester for Full-Time Status

Full-time enrollment requires at least ten (10) credit hours in a semester or three (3) credit hours in a summer session. A student must obtain the written approval of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs to enroll for more than seventeen (17) credit hours during a semester or for more than six (6) credit hours during a summer session or ten (10) credit hours during the summer term (which includes both summer sessions). International students maintaining visa status must obtain the approval of the Assistant Dean for Graduate Law Programs to enroll in fewer than the minimum number of credit hours to maintain full-time status. Please contact the Office of International Student and Scholar Services for further information.

2. Part-Time Status

A student who wishes to take a part-time course of study will have up to three (3) years to complete the M.L.S. degree or Certificate.

G. Required Courses for the M.L.S.

1. Fundamentals of the American Legal System (2 credit hours)
2. Legal Research and Writing (2 credit hours)

3. Two of the following first-year J.D. courses that are determined by the Director of Graduate Law Programs or Assistant Dean of Graduate Law Programs to be most closely related to the track chosen by the candidate (3-4 credit hours):
 - a. Federal Civil Procedure
 - b. Contracts
 - c. Criminal Law
 - d. Property
 - e. Torts
 - f. Constitutional Law

H. Available M.L.S. Concentrations

The faculty has approved a number of M.L.S. concentrations. A student who wishes to obtain an M.L.S. concentration must complete coursework in the chosen concentration. The requirements of each approved concentration are posted on the St. Mary's School of Law website. Below are the concentrations approved by the St. Mary's School of Law faculty.

1. Business and Entrepreneurship Law (online)
2. Business Risk and Intelligence (online)
3. Commercial Law (online)
4. Compliance, Business Law and Risk (online)
5. Criminal Justice (online)
6. Cyber and Data Security Law (online)
7. Education Law (online)
8. Employment and Human Resource Law (online)
9. Environmental Law
10. Health Care Law (online)
11. Health Care Compliance Law (online)
12. International & Comparative Law
13. Military & National Security Law
14. Natural Resources Law
15. Special Education Advocacy (online)
16. Tax Law
17. Territorial Law (online)

An M.L.S. student may choose one of the proposed concentrations or design his or her own track. Though no designation of such concentration or track will be reflected on the diploma, candidates may find it useful to focus their

studies in areas most related to their chosen profession. The remaining hours needed to complete the 30 credits required for the M.L.S. degree may be earned by taking any electives approved by the Assistant Dean of Graduate Law Programs. If a student does not plan to focus on a particular area of concentration, then he or she can take any elective courses to complete the degree.

I. Available Certificates

The faculty has approved a number of Certificates. A student who wishes to obtain a Certificate must complete coursework in the chosen program. The requirements of each approved Certificate are posted on the St. Mary's School of Law website. Below are the Certificates approved by the St. Mary's School of Law faculty.

1. Compliance, Business Law & Risk
2. Health Care Compliance
3. General Legal Studies

The following concentrations of study are available under the General Legal Studies Certificate:

1. Administrative Law
2. Business & Entrepreneurship Law
3. Cyber Law & Data Security
4. Health Law
5. International & Comparative Law
6. Education Law
7. Employment & Human Resource Law
8. Legal Studies
9. Oil & Gas Law
10. Procurement Law
11. Special Education Advocacy
12. Tax Law
13. Territorial Law
14. Trauma Informed Advocacy

A Certificate student may choose one of the proposed Certificates or design his or her own track via the General Legal Studies option.

J. Auditing and Withdrawing

An M.L.S. student may withdraw from a course up to the end of the fifth (5th) week of a fall or spring semester and up to the end of the second (2nd) week of a summer course.

Student-initiated withdrawals from a course will not be accepted after the deadlines above absent written approval by the Assistant Dean for Graduate Law Programs based upon a showing of compelling need. A compelling need does not include failure to complete work or predictions of a poor grade in the course. Documentation may be required to support the showing of a compelling need. The Assistant Dean will consider past academic performance and prior course withdrawals when deciding this issue.

If a student withdraws from a course, the course will appear on the student's transcript with a "W" in lieu of a grade. A student does not obtain a tuition refund or credit by withdrawing from courses after the refund period.

A student who withdraws from all courses while in good standing and with the permission of the Assistant Dean for Graduate Law Programs may return to the M.L.S. Program, but must request a Leave of Absence at the time they withdraw, otherwise they will have withdrawn from the program. Students may request 1-2 semesters of Leave. Students who are granted a Leave of Absence must satisfy the requirements for graduation within three years after matriculation unless they have been granted a program extension.

Consistent with St. Mary's University policy, a student may not withdraw from the School of Law if any disciplinary or investigative processes have been initiated.

By written request, a student may change any pure elective course taken for credit to an audited course up to the end of the fifth (5th) week of a fall or spring semester and up to the end of the second (2nd) week of a summer course. Requests to audit after the fifth (5th) week of a fall or spring semester or the second (2nd) week of a summer course will not be accepted absent written approval by the Assistant Dean of Graduate Law Programs based upon a showing of compelling need, as set forth in the paragraph above. A student may not change a course to audit or withdraw if, before

the request is filed, he or she has exceeded the limit for absences as proscribed by the Attendance Policy.

A student who audits a course has the right to attend, but will not be required to take the final examination. The hours assigned to an audited course will not be earned toward graduation, but an audited course will be included on the student's transcript with a "U" designation in lieu of a grade. A student does not obtain a tuition refund or credit by changing a course to audit. A student who violated the attendance policy and thus was administratively excluded from the course, who was not informed of this administrative exclusion, cannot use the failure to communicate such exclusion to drop the course once a grade of W for that student has been recorded. A student cannot rely on administrative withdrawal, which is a punitive measure imposed on unprofessional conduct, to academically withdraw from a class. While a professor may exercise the option to recommend a student for administrative withdrawal, students that remain in a course and take no action will be graded on the coursework submitted.

A voluntary withdrawal after the time period allowed for course withdrawal must be communicated to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. The Associate Dean of Academic Affairs has discretion as to whether the administrative withdrawal for failure to properly attend class should be enforced, on a case-by-case basis. This requirement does not apply to the International Programs (i.e., study abroad). The International Programs will adopt their own withdrawal policy.

J. Applicant Deferral Policy

Upon the completion of all application materials, it is expected that an accepted student will matriculate in the semester indicated on the application form. However, if an applicant is accepted into the program, they may request a deferral to start at a later date for up to one year. For instance, an applicant that has been accepted into the Master of Legal Studies Program and indicates a start date in the fall, may request to start instead in the spring or the subsequent fall. The deferral decision is at the discretion of the Assistant Dean Graduate Law Programs.

Should an applicant seek to defer beyond one year, the applicant must re-apply. If the applicant's file is still in the possession of the Program, and is still current, the applicant may simply request that the materials still on file be considered. However, the mere fact that the applicant has been admitted before does not mean that the applicant will be re-admitted. The re-

application will be considered in light of the strength of the applicant relative to other applicants, the available space in the program, and the likelihood that the re-applicant will actually matriculate.

K. Applicant Leave of Absence Policy

Matriculated students are expected to work continuously toward their degree, in the fall and spring. Should a matriculated student, who is in good standing, require a leave of absence, the student may apply to the Assistant Dean for Graduate Law Programs for such a leave. The request should document the reasons a leave of absence is requested, the anticipated time required under the leave of absence, and any supporting documentation that may assist the Assistant Dean of Graduate Law Program in the decision-making process.

Should a leave of absence be granted, the student's file shall be suspended until such time as the student returns. Generally, a leave of absence should be no more than one year. In extraordinary circumstances, a student may request a longer leave of absence, but under no circumstances shall a leave of absence last longer than two years.

Should a student who has been granted a leave of absence fail to return to the program at the expiration of the leave of absence, the student shall be deemed to have voluntarily withdrawn from the program. Thereafter, to continue the student's studies, the student must re-apply to the Program. If the student's file is still in the possession of the Program, and is still current, the student may simply request that the materials still on file be considered. However, the mere fact that the student has been admitted before does not mean that the student will be re-admitted. The student's re-application will be considered in light of the strength of the application relative to other applicants, the available space in the program, and the likelihood that the student will actually continue his or her studies.

VI. GRADES AND GRADING

Because evaluation through grading has a significant effect on students, many of the rules are designed to protect students from unfairness. On the other hand, it is widely agreed that professors must have the freedom to exercise independent judgment in making difficult decisions relating to teaching and testing. The rules here reflect a balance between professorial discretion and the urge to restrict that discretion on behalf of students.

The deadline for submission of grades by faculty members is dependent on the semester. For the fall semester, grades are due by 5:00 p.m. three (3) business days after the University reopens after the Christmas break. For the spring semester, graduating grades are due by 5:00 p.m. the Tuesday before graduation, while all other grades are due three (3) weeks after the last exam for that term. For summer sessions, all grades are due three (3) weeks after the last exam for that term.

Students from other St. Mary's University programs (UG and GR) will be graded on the M.L.S. curve and are subject to the School of Law letter grading scale in any School of Law classes.

A. The Letter Grading Scale

"Graded courses" are evaluated according to a ten-level system using letter grades. The letter grades are assigned numerical values on a four-point scale for the purpose of calculating grade point averages. The letter-grading system and its numerical scale are:

| | |
|-----------|-----------|
| A = 4.00 | C+ = 2.33 |
| A- = 3.67 | C = 2.00 |
| B+ = 3.33 | C- = 1.67 |
| B = 3.00 | D = 1.00 |
| B- = 2.67 | F = 0.00 |

If a student receives a grade of D or higher, the credit hours assigned to the course are earned. The only failing grade is F, and receipt of this grade causes a student to lose the credit hours otherwise available for the course. Even though no hours are earned, a failing grade is used in calculating the student's grade point average and is included in the student's transcript.

B. Anonymous and Non-Anonymous Grading Policy

1. Anonymous Grading

Each student is given a four-digit number every semester, including each summer session. The four-digit examination number is available to students on Gateway. The examination number

normally should be the only student identification placed on examination responses.³

For spring semester exams, a student should not indicate he or she intends to graduate. That information is already provided to professors through their Instructor Grade Reports (IGRs).

2. Non-Anonymous Grading

Students in online courses do not require exam pins and are not graded anonymously. Students are required to establish their identity and to use a webcam while taking midterm and final exams.

C. Median Grades

The law faculty has adopted the rules described below that circumscribe the grading discretion of a professor in a course in which there are M.L.S. and Certificate students. These rules do not apply to a graded independent study and the faculty member is free to assign the letter grade earned by the student.

1. General Rule

M.L.S. and Certificate students must be graded as a separate cohort from other students. If there are more than twelve (12) M.L.S. and Certificate students in a course, they are to be graded with a B median grade. If there are 12 or fewer M.L.S. and Certificate students in a course, no mandatory median grade shall apply. In evaluating the M.L.S. or Certificate students' exam performance, the grading professor is to bear in mind that the students are not enrolled in, nor will they have completed, the full first-year J.D. curriculum.

Grades of M.L.S. students enrolled in a course or seminar are not included in computing the median grade or compliance with percentage limitations for J.D. students as outlined in Section IV.D.

³ The anonymous grading policy broadly applies to written evaluation instruments, including papers, midterms, quizzes, finals, and other documents that count toward a student's grade. There are some exceptions to the anonymous grading policy, such as the evaluation of skills in a trial advocacy course, a required special oral presentation in a classroom course, and a research paper written under close faculty supervision as part of a registered independent study or seminar. Professors should resolve doubts about the applicability of the anonymous grading policy in favor of anonymity.

of the St. Mary's University School of Law Student Handbook for JD students.

2. Multiple Sections of the Same Course

A professor who teaches two sections of a course and uses the same examination for both may combine the final grades of both sections to satisfy the applicable required median. In other words, the two sections may constitute a single course for application of the following rules, or the professor may choose to treat the two sections as individual courses.

D. Grades of Incomplete

At the request of a professor, a grade of "I" or "Incomplete" may be entered temporarily for a student who for some *legitimate and compelling reason* has not completed the course requirements (e.g., an exam postponed due to illness or other good excuse). *The work not finished on time must be completed within 60 days of the last day of the examination period in which the course was offered.* In the event that a student does not complete all course requirements within the time required, the "I" or "Incomplete" automatically will be converted to an F and the student will receive no credit for the course. The *faculty member* who requested the "Incomplete" may petition the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs for an additional, specific period in which the student may complete the course requirements, but such an extension will not be granted except in *compelling circumstances*.

E. Class Attendance

See Section III.F.1.-2. of the St. Mary's University School of Law Handbook for J.D. Students.

1. Withdrawal for Excessive Absences

A student who misses one-third (1/3) or more of the number of scheduled classes in any course in which the candidate is enrolled may result in administrative withdrawal from the class subject to the discretion of the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. However, if the person teaching the course believes the M.L.S. candidate has good cause for some or all of those absences, the teacher of the course

may request an exception from this rule from the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, who shall have the sole discretion to determine if good cause exists. The Assistant Dean for Graduate Law Programs will make quarterly student-attendance checks (every three weeks of instruction) with faculty teaching in the program.

2. Online Course Withdrawal for Excessive Absences

For all online courses attendance will be conducted through online quizzes which will be available after each online video/audio lecture. Students must correctly answer at least 75% of the questions (there will be between 4-5) to get credit for attendance. Students will have two attempts to reach this score. The quizzes will only be available the week of the assigned materials. Students must “attend” 90% of the quizzes or they may be administratively dropped from the course subject to the discretion of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. However, if the person teaching the course believes the M.L.S. candidate has good cause for some or all of those absences, the teacher of the course may request an exception from this rule from the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, who shall have the sole discretion to determine if good cause exists.

F. Grade-Point Averaging

See Section III.G. of the St. Mary's University School of Law Handbook for J.D. Students.

G. Distinguished Academic Achievement

Upon graduation, M.L.S. students with a cumulative grade point average of:

- 3.8 or higher are graduated Summa cum laude,
- 3.5 or higher are graduated Magna cum laude,
- 3.3 or higher are graduated Cum laude.

The appropriate designation is included on a student's diploma and is announced during the graduation ceremony.

There are no designations on Certificates.

H. Appeal of Grades

See Section III.I. of the St. Mary's University School of Law Handbook for J.D. Students.

VI. STUDY ABROAD

Eligibility: Graduate law students in good academic standing who have completed all required core courses are eligible to participate in study abroad programs approved by the law school.

Application and Approval: Interested students must meet with the Assistant Dean of Graduate Law Programs to discuss study abroad eligibility and determine if a particular program meets the student's academic and professional goals. The Assistant Dean will confirm the student is in good standing and has met eligibility requirements. Students must complete a study abroad application and obtain approval from the Assistant Dean before registering for any study abroad program.

Academic Credit: Academic credit will be granted for courses taken abroad provided the student receives a passing grade and the courses are approved in advance as sufficiently rigorous by the Assistant Dean. Grades received will be factored into the student's GPA at the law school.

Funding and Financial Aid: Students are responsible for tuition and fees associated with the study abroad program. Students may apply for available scholarships and financial aid by contacting the financial aid office.

Code of Conduct: All policies and rules in the *Master of Legal Studies Student Handbook* remain in effect while students are abroad. Students are expected to remain in good disciplinary standing throughout the duration of the study abroad program.

International Travel Requirements: Students are responsible for obtaining all required travel documents, visas, immunizations, and insurance prior to departure.

Housing and Transportation: Students are responsible for arranging their own housing and transportation related to the study abroad program. The university cannot guarantee any special accommodations while abroad.

VII. PROGRAM STATUS

A. Transfer Course Grades and Credit

Course credit earned while attending a J.D. program at St. Mary's University School of Law or another law school, or other graduate program prior to matriculating into the M.L.S. program that did not result in a degree or resulted in earned hours in excess of said degree requirements, may be considered for transfer to the M.L.S. degree at St. Mary's University School of Law if a grade of C or higher was earned (course descriptions and syllabi are required).

The quality points and hours are not used in calculating the student's cumulative grade-point average, only earned hours will transfer. If approved, the transfer credit is listed on the student's transcript with the grade of "CR" (credit).

Course credit earned at other law schools after a student has matriculated into the M.L.S. program are subject to prior approval by the Assistant Dean of Graduate Law Programs (course descriptions and syllabi are required for review). A grade of C or higher is required for consideration and students must be in Good Standing prior to approval. A maximum of 6 hours total of transfer credit are allowed from host institutions.

Semesters spent at host institutions are included in the total amount of time allowed to complete the degree.

St. Mary's will not accept transient hours earned in a course that the student has already taken at St. Mary's.

Pure Certificate students must earn all of their credit hours from St. Mary's School of Law.

B. J.D. Candidates Transferring into the M.L.S. Program

Current J.D. students who wish to change their academic program from J.D. to M.L.S. may apply with the approval of the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. Candidates must submit an "Acknowledgement of M.L.S. Non-Transferability form. All previously earned J.D. credits with a grade of C or higher would be considered for transfer up to 15 hours to the M.L.S. program if admitted.

The transfer of credits is at the discretion of the Director/ Assistant Dean of Graduate Law Programs. In such cases an M.L.S. transcript would be created and all transferred credits will be reflected as a "pass" or "P". The candidate's J.D. transcript will still exist and reflect the grades actually earned.

A successful transfer will withdraw the candidate from the J.D. program and should that candidate wish to pursue a J.D. in the future, they must re-apply. In addition, should the candidate pursue a J.D. at St. Mary's School of Law in the future, none of the credits previously earned under the initial J.D. program may be used.

Credit will generally not be given for courses completed over three years prior to the transfer application or which are not appropriately related to the study of law or the concentration being sought.

Transfer from the J.D. program into a certificate program. Pure certificate students must earn all of their credit hours from St. Mary's School of Law from the point of matriculating into the certificate program.

C. Students Excluded from the St. Mary's J.D. Program

Students who have been excluded from a J.D. program may apply to the M.L.S. program. A strong presumption against acceptance exists, but in extraordinary circumstances a student may be permitted to matriculate in to the M.L.S. program. A previously excluded student must submit an M.L.S. application form and supporting materials, as well as a reference from a law professor (full, associate or assistant professor) who both taught the student and can speak to the student's suitability for the program. The student must also submit a letter explaining their academic performance and why the student feels that they would be suitable for the M.L.S. program. Upon review of these materials, and after consideration of the

student's LSAT score and academic performance, both in law school and at previous institutions, the Assistant Dean for Graduate Law Programs may admit the student into the M.L.S. program.

Regarding grades earned in courses that are counted toward the M.L.S. degree, *see* Section III.I.

D. Pathway Programs

St. Mary's University schools, through internal collaborations, create opportunities for students to study across disciplines, with the opportunity to earn a certificate from the School of Law while earning their undergraduate or graduate degree. These internal dual credential and pathway programs include:

- Master of Business Administration-P/Certificate in Compliance, Business Law and Risk
- Master of Business Administration-P/Certificate in Health Care Compliance
- Master of Public Health
- Bachelor of Science in Public Health/Certificate in Health Care Compliance
- Bachelor of Science in Public Health – Generalist Concentration
- Bachelor of Arts in Business and the Law
- Master of Public Health/M.L.S. Dual Degree UTHSC - Houston

E. Visiting Student Status

Students regularly enrolled at another law school (home institution) in a graduate law (LL.M. / M.L.S.) program may apply for Visiting Student Status at St. Mary's University School of Law (host institution) by completing the Visiting Student Application for the appropriate graduate law program and by submitting all of the necessary documents.

A Letter of Good Standing from the home university on letterhead and signed by the Academic Dean or their designee is required. No student may become a visiting student at the School of Law if the student is on Academic Probation or under academic supervision. A student is considered in good standing for visiting purposes if he/she has made arrangements for the

settlement of his/her account at the home institution and has a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.600.

The Visiting Student Application is only for the current term applied for. Students must submit a new application each semester they plan to attend (for instance every summer). Students must also submit either a new updated transcript or letter of good standing from their home institution each semester.

Financial Aid eligibility and Satisfactory Academic Progress are determined by the home institution. No financial aid will be granted to Visiting Students by St. Mary's University, the host institution.

International students seeking concurrent enrollment must have permission from the campus holding their SEVIS record to participate as a concurrent student and to remain in status.

F. Transfer to Another Program

The credit hours earned by a student at St. Mary's University may be transferred to another school so long as and to the extent the transferee school will accept them. Whether a student can transfer to another school depends solely on the rules of that school. Because a transfer student will become the potential graduate of the transferee school, that school will apply its own admission requirements.

G. Non-Degree Seeking Status

Non-degree enrollment status is designed for students who wish to take courses but do not plan to pursue a degree. Non-degree students do not qualify for financial aid. Non-degree students are part-time students and are expected to enroll in no more than seven credits per term.

Applicants must submit their transcripts, a letter of recommendation and a completed signed application with a Character and Fitness attestation.

H. Application for Degree Seeking Status

None of the masters-level credits taken as a Visiting on Non-degree Seeking student may be applied towards the J.D., LL.M., M.L.S. or certificate programs except as outlined below.

Non-degree seeking and Visiting students may apply to the M.L.S. or Certificate program, however these students will be treated as traditional M.L.S. or Certificate applicants and will receive no specialized treatment or advantage. Students may be eligible to transfer up to 6 hours of credit into the M.L.S. program on a case-by-case basis.

VIII. RETAKING COURSES

IX. *See Section III.K. of the St. Mary's University School of Law Handbook for J.D. Students.* EXAMINATIONS

A. Examinations, Papers, and Evaluations of Skills

In many courses, student performance is evaluated through the use of a single final examination scheduled during a period set aside for this purpose at the end of each semester or summer session. In some courses, however, a professor may provide students with the option of writing a paper in lieu of taking a final examination, or may require a paper or other projects in addition to the final examination. The professor may choose to evaluate students through tests but may give both a mid-term and a final examination, or several tests, in lieu of or in addition to a final examination.

As a general practice, individual final examinations last the same number of hours as are assigned as credit hours to the course. In a two-credit hour course, for example, the professor ordinarily will allow two hours in which to complete the final examination. However, some professors give three-hour exams in two-credit courses, and others may give two-hour exams in three-credit courses. The faculty has not established a rule to control the time required by a professor for the taking of his or her examination. A student should contact the professor to determine the duration of the examination in a course.

Seminars are among the exceptions to the general practice. In a seminar, the professor assigns grades by evaluating a research paper prepared during the semester.

In administering exams to M.L.S. and Certificate students, professors may use the same exam that is being used to evaluate the J.D. students; however, if the same exam is used, the professor may, in his or her discretion, allocate

additional time for the student to complete the exam. This should be no more than time and a half. Thus, if a J.D. student is given 2 hours to complete the exam, an M.L.S. or Certificate student taking the same exam may, at the discretion of the professor, have up to 3 hours to complete the exam. Alternatively, the professor may administer a different exam to the M.L.S. and Certificate students than is administered to the J.D. students with a completion time that the professor deems sufficient, subject to the above general convention that final examinations typically last the same number of hours as are assigned as credit hours to the course. In either event, the M.L.S. and Certificate students are to be graded subject to the standards set forth above in Section III. Professors also allowed to weight the questions differently for M.L.S. and Certificate students than a J.D. student. For example, the essays may be worth 2/3 for the J.D. students and multiple choice 1/3, but the professor could weigh the same essay as 1/4 for the M.L.S. and Certificate students and 3/4 for the multiple choice.

M.L.S. and Certificate students who are not native English speakers are entitled to time and a half for exams with prior request and approval from the Assistant Dean for Graduate Law Programs in consultation with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.

B. Examinations Continued

See Section IV.B.-E. of the St. Mary's University School of Law Handbook for J.D. Students.

X. ACADEMIC ISSUES

A. Academic Support Resources

A student who is experiencing academic difficulties should seek assistance before troubles become overwhelming. Students may contact faculty members or the Assistant for graduate Law Programs for advice or for a referral to someone who can provide assistance. The Law Success Program have aided students in overcoming test-taking deficiencies and anxieties. The Law School's Offices of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs will also work closely with students experiencing academic difficulties.

B. Academic Exclusion

If a student's grade-point average for the first semester, comprising at least 10-credit hours (4-credit hours for a pure Certificate student), is less than a

2.0, the student will be academically excluded from law school and will be given a full refund of all tuition and fees paid for the current semester in which he or she may have enrolled before notice of exclusion. Any student whose grade-point average is less than 2.0 after the first semester, but who has taken less than 10-credit hours may be excluded at the discretion of the Assistant Dean for Graduate Law Programs in consultation with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.

Although an appeal of academic exclusion is allowed a strong presumption exists against altering the effect of the faculty's grading decisions.

A student wishing to appeal exclusion must file a written statement with the Assistant Dean for Graduate Law Programs within fourteen (14) days after the date of the exclusion letter sent to that student. The Assistant Dean may, for good cause, grant an extension of time. The appeal of academic exclusion shall be determined by the Dean of the Law School. The Dean, at the Dean's discretion, may consult with the Assistant Dean for Law Student Affairs and the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in making these decisions. Upon a showing of compelling circumstances, a student who is academically excluded may be given one additional probationary semester in order to bring his or her cumulative grade-point average up to the minimum level for continued enrollment. The Dean of the Law School may allow a student an additional semester, but must make a written report of such a decision to the law faculty. The Dean of the Law School may decide to begin the additional semester immediately after the academic exclusion of a student or after a period not to exceed one year from the date of exclusion. All decisions by the Dean of the Law School on these matters are final and non-appealable.

C. Academic Support and Advising

At all times during enrollment at St. Mary's, M.L.S. and Certificate students with a cumulative grade point average below 2.5 may be required to participate in academic advising and other programs or services offered by the Office of Law Success as determined by the Assistant Dean for Graduate Law Programs. M.L.S. students at or above a 2.5 may also be required to participate in academic advising at the discretion of the Assistant Dean for Graduate Law Programs.

D. Graduation – Early Walk

An M.L.S. candidate may petition to walk early at graduation if he or she lacks no more than one class (not to exceed three (3) credit hours) to fulfill

his or her thirty (30) hour credit requirement. Petition forms should be obtained from the Director of Student Records and submitted for approval by the Assistant Dean of Graduate Law Programs no less than thirty (30) days before the date of graduation. Students who fail to obtain a passing grade in a class their final semester must submit the petition within forty-eight (48) hours from time the grade was posted.

Pure Certificate students do not participate in the Master of Legal Studies Commencement.

XI. TUITION AND FEES

See Section VI.A.-E. of the St. Mary's University School of Law Handbook for J.D. Students.

XII. REGISTERED STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS POLICIES

See Section VIII.A.-C. of the St. Mary's University School of Law Handbook for J.D. Students.

XIII. MISCELLANEOUS

See Section IX.A.-H. of the St. Mary's University School of Law Handbook for J.D. Students.

XIV. PROHIBITED CONDUCT

See Section X.A.-C. of the St. Mary's University School of Law Handbook for J.D. Students.

See Section X.A.-C. of the St. Mary's University School of Law Handbook for J.D. Students.