

Master of Legal Studies

The University of Chicago Law School began offering a new degree, a Master of Legal Studies (MLS), starting in the academic year 2015-2016. This one-year degree program is designed for PhD students who wish to improve their knowledge of law.

Objectives

The program is designed to provide legal training, and a degree in law, to PhD candidates doing research on issues related to law, without the cost and time of a full three-year law degree. The goal is to help PhD candidates better understand the legal issues relevant to their research and to improve their research through interdisciplinary training.

Graduates of the MLS program may become academics in their home field, as they would without the degree. It is our hope that legal training will improve the quality of their doctoral work, and thus help with job prospects. It is also possible that MLS graduates may be able to become legal academics, since they would be more credibly connected to law than people without legal training. Their work would be more likely to address important legal topics, and they would better be able to teach law students because they would have had exposure to the law school classroom. These advantages, we hope, will enable MLS graduates to land top-tier academic jobs.

Program of Study

MLS students will spend a year at the Law School after having finished PhD coursework in their home discipline, but before, or while, writing their dissertation. During the year, students will take a mixture of basic legal courses including some first year courses, such as Torts, Contracts, and Property, and advanced courses related to their fields of research. Each MLS student will be assigned a law professor advisor and will work out their curriculum with the advisor. All JD courses will be open to the MLS students on the same basis as for JD students. The degree requires 27 credits of completed coursework.

Requirements for Admittance

1. The program is open to PhD students from all disciplines and applicants are welcome from the University of Chicago as well as other schools.
2. Students must have finished their core PhD coursework prior to beginning the program.
3. Ideally students will be preparing to propose a dissertation topic and would like to work on a law-related issue.
4. Students may also be in the middle of writing their dissertation and find that legal training will help them pursue their research.

The program will involve a small number of students, likely between one and three per year, depending upon the number and strength of applicants.

Costs

Students will receive free law school tuition and fees. In addition, students will receive competitive living stipends.

Application Process

Interested students may apply through the Law School website at www.law.uchicago.edu/prospective/mls-program.

Contact Information

For questions, please contact the faculty director of the MLS program, Professor David Weisbach, at d-weisbach@uchicago.edu.