



**ROBERT H. MCKINNEY
SCHOOL OF LAW**

INDIANA UNIVERSITY
Indianapolis

April 14, 2014

Dr. Nasser Paydar
Executive Vice Chancellor & Chief Academic Officer
Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis
Office of Academic Affairs
355 Lansing Street, AO126
Indianapolis, IN 46202

Re: Proposal to Make Thesis Optional in All Master of Laws Tracks

Dear Dean Paydar –

I am pleased to forward for your review and approval a curriculum proposal approved by the Law School Faculty to make the thesis requirement optional in all of our Master of Laws (LL.M) tracks.

The LL.M. degree was originally approved by the University in the configuration that we call the American Law for Foreign Lawyers (ALFL) track, without a thesis requirement. When ideas for the adoption of LL.M. studies in areas of specialization emerged, it was decided that it would be more efficient to proceed by branching the original degree into separate tracks, rather than creating entirely new LL.M. degrees. All of the non-ALFL tracks are, in essence, packages of courses coordinated according to specialized legal subject matter content so as to offer area-specific expertise. Each track has a set of required courses, and students are encouraged to take a number of electives outside of their areas of specialized study during their year of study.

As the enclosed proposal details, at present, Master of Laws students in the Health Law Policy & Bioethics, International and Comparative Law, International Human Rights, and Intellectual Property Law tracks of the law schools Master of Laws degree must complete a thesis under the supervision of a faculty member. There is no such requirement for students in the ALFL track.

Our Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and the directors of each of the non-ALFL tracks, together with our Academic Affairs Committee, have worked carefully to develop this proposal so that it best meets the needs of our students, our school, and the marketplace. The Law Faculty approved it by a supermajority vote in favor on March 12, 2014. As a result, students will be able to select the

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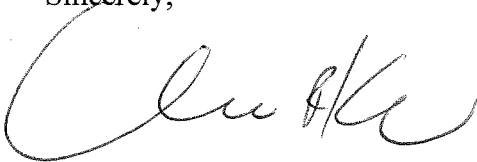
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courses and experiences within their areas of specialization that are best suited to their career plans. For example, students who plan to pursue careers in legal academia will be counseled and encouraged to write a thesis within the subject area. Students who intend to pursue professional careers within the individual areas will be encouraged to take representative selection of courses which offers best exposure for a future practitioner. The proposal does not make any new demands on our resources, and we will be able to offer required courses to graduate students using existing faculty and within existing budgetary resources.

We look forward to working with you as you review this proposal, and would be happy to respond to any questions or requests that may arise among members of the Academic Policies and Procedures Committee or the Graduate Affairs Committee in the course of their consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew R. Klein', with a large, sweeping initial 'A'.

Andrew R. Klein
Dean and Paul E. Beam Professor of Law

cc: Melissa Lavitt, PhD., Senior Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

Memo To: Academic Affairs Committee; Law School Faculty
From: Profs. Bravo, Emmert, Magliocca, Quigley, Terry, Wilson
Re: Proposal to Make Thesis Optional in all LL.M. Tracks
Date: March 3, 2014

APPROVED: ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, MARCH 4, 2014
FACULTY, MARCH 12, 2014

At present, LL.M. students in the Health Law Policy & Bioethics, International and Comparative Law, International Human Rights, and Intellectual Property Law tracks must complete a thesis under the supervision of a faculty member. There is no such requirement for students in the American Law for Foreign Lawyers (ALFL) track. The Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and the LL.M. Track Directors propose that the thesis requirement be replaced with an option to write a thesis in all LL.M. tracks.

History and Background: The LL.M. degree was originally approved by the University in the configuration that we call the ALFL track, without a thesis requirement. When ideas for the adoption of LL.M. studies in areas of specialization emerged, it was decided that it would be more efficient to proceed by branching the original degree into separate tracks, rather than creating entirely new LL.M. degrees. All of the non-ALFL tracks are in essence packages of courses coordinated according to specialized legal subject matter content. Each track has a set of required courses, and students are encouraged to take a number of electives (if available) during their year of study. Adherence to a particular track allows a candidate to obtain the maximum depth and breadth of exposure within the general curriculum offered by the law school in courses having the specialized content desired by the student.

As a result of the decision to offer several tracks rather than separate specialized LL.M. degrees, the law school currently confers a single degree, the Master of Laws. It does not confer a Master of Laws in any particular area of specialization.

The non-ALFL tracks were established at different times in the 2003-04 academic year. In that year, the proposal for the International and Comparative Law track obtained the approval of the Graduate Affairs Committee at IUPUI with an optional thesis as part of the track design. The other three tracks were proposed to and approved by that body with a thesis required. All four of the non-ALFL tracks, however, have in practice required a thesis for conferral of the degree since their inception.

Internal Foundation of the Proposal: Experience with the supervision of thesis-writing candidates has revealed the following problems:

1. A significant number of our LL.M. candidates do not aspire to academic or other careers in which the production of a scholarly research project figures as a significant part of their preparation. Most of them are much more interested in and oriented toward enhancing their employment prospects in their chosen area of practice.

2. Many of our LL.M. candidates have found 22-24 credit hours of required course work in two semesters to be of sufficient rigor that they have had difficulty organizing, focusing, and conducting their thesis research and writing activities within the one-year time frame for the degree. For international students, this often necessitates a request for a visa extension, which (even if granted) can impose hardship on students who are away from home, family, and jobs for a more extended period.
3. Some LL.M. candidates who have returned to their home countries without completing the thesis (because of financial, visa, or other pressures), have been unable to complete the thesis offshore, thus failing to achieve the degree despite otherwise good grades.
4. Most LL.M. candidates, particularly those who are assimilating to living in the United States for the first time, focus on their course work during the first semester and delay work on the thesis until the second semester. The time pressure encountered by some of these students has produced hurried efforts, and the quality of the theses in some cases has been compromised.
5. The vast majority of our LL.M. students are coming from countries where English is their second or third language. Language difficulties make it especially difficult to complete their course work and write a quality thesis in the time allowed.
6. As students realize that they are not going to be able to complete a thesis during their time here, students in thesis tracks often petition to transfer to the ALFL track. In the current cohort (Fall 2013 and Spring 2014 enrolled students), only nine of thirty-two LL.M. students are currently in thesis tracks. Additional transfer requests from that group would not be surprising.
7. We have reason to believe that our law school will attract more students to the LL.M. program if it did not have a mandatory thesis in the specialized tracks. Our LL.M. track structure, along with the Centers to which they are linked, are attractive to potential LL.M. candidates (mostly practicing attorneys) who have already developed expertise in a particular field and would like exposure to additional course work and experience in that field. We believe there are a substantial number of students, particularly those coming from abroad, who would like to specialize in a particular program of study but do not wish to undertake a major research and writing project at the same time. While the ALFL track is currently an option for many of these students, we believe that more would be attracted to the specialized tracks if a thesis was not required. In addition, that the specialized tracks would better fulfil such students' educational goals.

External Foundation for Proposal: The writing of a thesis is optional at many law schools, including top 40 law schools. (Research into the thesis requirements of LL.M programs of our regional competitors and the programs at top 40 law schools is attached as Appendix A.)

Conclusions: Taking into consideration the problems related above, the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and the LL.M. Track Directors conclude that the value of a thesis requirement is outweighed by the problems that the requirement has presented for a significant portion of the candidates who pursue an LL.M. degree.

Proposal: Accordingly, we propose that the thesis requirement be dropped and an *option* to write a thesis be substituted for that requirement in all LL.M. tracks. Exercise of the option would be available to qualified students upon approval of the track director and a faculty member who is willing to supervise the writing. Candidates who are currently enrolled in the LL.M. program would also be permitted to exercise the thesis option. In addition, LL.M. students can continue to enroll in seminar courses which require the writing of a seminar paper. LL.M. students whose home countries or academic aspirations require the completion of a thesis will continue to be encouraged to do so.

University Approval: If the law faculty approves the proposal, the Graduate Affairs Committee at IUPUI would be apprised of the change and would likely consider the change as an “informational item” on their agenda. (When the School of Dentistry eliminated the thesis requirement for its Masters program, the Graduate Affairs Committee handled the matter in this way; the Chair of the Committee informs us that our request would likely be treated in the same way.)

Additional Information:

1. In April 2008, the faculty was presented with a similar proposal to make the thesis optional. After some discussion the proposal was tabled.