

# **Vermont Law School/Northeastern University School of Law Dual JD/MELP Degree Program Planning Guidelines**

## **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

Through a combination of transfer credits and an environmental law co-op work placement that provides internship credit, Northeastern University School of Law (Northeastern) and Vermont Law School (VLS) will allow students who meet degree requirements at both schools to receive a dual degree of Juris Doctor (JD) and Master of Environmental Law and Policy (MELP) within the three year term of the JD degree.

Students should review VLS and Northeastern student handbooks and individual program guidelines for a full and more detailed description of JD and MELP requirements.

## **I. REQUIRED COURSES AND DISTRIBUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS – JD and MELP**

### **A) Requirements of the MELP Degree**

- A minimum of 30 credits, including all required courses and all Distributional Requirements.
- At least 21 credits must be taken as MELP credits, not transferred from your JD program at Northeastern.
- Minimum cumulative GPA for courses taken at VLS of 2.20 for completion of the MELP degree.

### **B) Required Courses for the MELP Degree**

You must complete all of the following **required courses**:

- Administrative Law or Administrative Procedure & the Environment;
- Ecology
- Environmental Law
- Environmental Research & Writing I & II (waived for students with a law degree or concurrently pursuing a law degree)

These requirements may be met by taking the course at VLS for MELP credit, taking it at Northeastern for transfer credit, or by waiver.

### **C) Distributional Requirements for the MELP Degree**

You must take, transfer in, or waive at least one course fulfilling each of the five Distributional Requirements:

- Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)
- Ethics/Philosophy
- Policy
- Regulatory
- Resource Management/Planning

The Environmental Law Center (ELC) at VLS has a list of courses which meet the various Distributional Requirements. You must take at least four courses to satisfy the five Distributional Requirements. (One course may satisfy two Distributional Requirements).

### **D) Requirements of the JD Degree**

- Successful completion of a minimum of 103 quarter credit hours
- No more than 12 credits may be transferred from the MELP program at VLS
- Four cooperative work quarters in a legal setting
- Public Interest requirement
- Upper-level Writing Requirement

#### **E) Required Courses for the JD Degree**

- The first year consists of a required curriculum.
- A Professional Responsibility course is required in the upper level.

### **II. CREDITS – JD and MELP**

#### **A) Minimum & Maximum Credits for the MELP Degree:**

The minimum number of credits is 30, of which 21 must be MELP credits from VLS (i.e., not transferred from Northeastern). The maximum recommended number of credits in a Summer Session is twelve. Anything beyond that requires a waiver from the ELC Director.

#### **B) Transfer Credits for MELP Degree:**

You may transfer up to 9 credits from Northeastern to apply to the MELP degree. The courses shared must be substantive environmental courses with the exception of Administrative Law and ADR courses.

#### **C) Credits for JD Degree:**

The minimum number of credits is 103.

#### **D) Transfer Credits for JD Degree:**

You may transfer up to 12 credits from VLS to apply to the JD degree. The courses shared must be approved by Northeastern in advance. Please see Bettye Freeman (b.freeman@neu.edu), Assistant Dean of Students, to arrange for transfer credit.

### **III. ELECTIVES, CO-OP WORK QUARTERS, INTERNSHIPS, INDEPENDENT RESEARCH PROJECTS**

#### **A) Electives for MELP Degree:**

MELP credits not designated as meeting your Required or Distributional courses may be taken as electives. Elective courses may be selected from those courses remaining in any of the five Distributional categories or from the list of Electives.

#### **B) MELP Internships and Co-op Work Quarters:**

You may use one of your Northeastern co-op experiences as an MELP internship. Note that you will need to follow both Northeastern co-op and VLS Internship guidelines and application deadlines (see Northeastern Co-op Handbook for co-op requirements).

Before beginning an internship, you must fill out a VLS **Internship Registration** form and file it with the VLS Registrar's Office, and submit a **contract**, executed by you, your on-site sponsor, and your faculty sponsor, to Jennifer Miller at the ELC (jmiller@vermontlaw.edu). You must also have the co-op placement approved by the Northeastern University School of Law Co-op Office. Contact Jerry Slater, Co-op Director for Administration (g.slater@neu.edu).

To receive internship credit, you will need a faculty sponsor from VLS. You are encouraged to seek a faculty sponsor with expertise in the area of your internship. Summer Adjuncts may act as faculty sponsors, with prior permission of the Director of MELP Internships, Laurie Beyranevand. If you encounter difficulties finding an

appropriate faculty sponsor, please contact Jennifer Miller at the ELC.

Students may arrange a co-op/MELP internship working with employers through the Northeastern co-op office as well as using the resources of the many postings at the VLS Career Services Office. Internships may be local or worldwide. To be eligible for MELP credit, at least 70% of the internship must contain environmental substance.

Interns may not receive wages or salary for work done for academic credit. There are no exceptions to this rule! Interns may be provided a stipend by the employer which is not to exceed expenses associated with the internship. If your on-site sponsor offers you a stipend, contact the ELC for a form specifying the amount and basis for the stipend. Students on co-op may also be eligible for Northeastern's co-op stipend awards. See Co-op Handbook for description of process and deadlines for application for co-op stipends.

In order to complete degree requirements in three years, students will have to arrange that one co-op work quarter qualifies for MELP Internship credit. Otherwise, internships are not required for the MELP.

Dual Degree students' MELP internships may be designed for up to 9 credits. Students may complete more than one MELP internship as long as the total MELP internship credits do not exceed 9 credits. An internship must be completed in one quarter or semester; it cannot last for two quarters or semesters.

Review the MELP Internship Guidelines for more information. There are volumes of information on internships in the VLS Career Services Office. Also, check the VLS Academic Regulations for more details on MELP internships.

Note that in addition to one co-op work experience that may give MELP internship credit, all Northeastern JD candidates complete a total of four co-op work experiences for work in legal settings tailored to meet their career interests.

#### **C) Independent Research Project (IRP) for MELP:**

In addition to the listed courses and seminars, individual faculty members at VLS may be willing to work with a student in pursuit of independent research topics. MELP independent research is limited to a total of 6 credits, on a grade basis. Independent Research Projects generally may not be used to satisfy a Distributional Requirement. (See Academic Regulations, §II.A.3.) To register for an Independent Research Project, you must write up a **contract** and file it with the VLS Registrar.

### **IV. ACADEMIC PLANNING**

#### **A) Planning for your dual degree:**

During the MELP registration process, work with Anne Mansfield ([amansfield@vermontlaw.edu](mailto:amansfield@vermontlaw.edu)), the Associate Director of the ELC, to fill out your **Program Plan** and establish a tentative schedule of courses, subject to modifications as your individual program progresses. Professor Lee Breckenridge ([l.breckenridge@neu.edu](mailto:l.breckenridge@neu.edu)) is the Northeastern faculty advisor for the program and you should consult with her early in the process to review your plan. Make sure that you fit in all degree requirements for both institutions. Consider what, if any, courses you want to **transfer or waive**. You will most likely waive or transfer Administrative Law for the MELP program, taking it at Northeastern.

**B) Keeping “On Track”:**

It is the student’s responsibility to ensure fulfillment of all requirements for the degree. Check with the VLS Assistant Registrar, Marilyn Labadie ([mlabadie@vermontlaw.edu](mailto:mlabadie@vermontlaw.edu)) or with the Northeastern Assistant Dean of Students, Bettye Freeman ([b.freeman@neu.edu](mailto:b.freeman@neu.edu)) if you have questions regarding your degree status. To assist you in confirming your VLS degree status, the Registrar will notify you of the MELP degree requirements you have not yet met. Students must take care to ensure that credits are eligible for transfer, that sufficient credits are being taken towards the JD degree and to coordinate the “joint” Co-op/Internship to ensure credit for both degrees.

**C) Completing the Degree:**

All dual degree candidates will take a full first year program at Northeastern. Following that, the typical dual degree progression would be to take academic quarters at Northeastern during the second year (summer and winter) and take 11-12 MELP credits at VLS during the second summer, including Ecology and an Alternative Dispute Resolution class (unless you have comparable coursework that will allow you to waive those requirements). Students will take the third year winter academic quarter at Northeastern.

During the two upper level years, students will transfer 9 JD credits from Northeastern and take 9-10 MELP credits. The additional MELP credits are made up of some combination of an MELP internship/co-op work placement, an Independent Research Project, and/or additional summer classes at VLS. Students in a three year program will generally use one of the two third year co-op quarters for MELP internship credit.

You may do an Independent Research Project with a VLS faculty sponsor during any academic quarter. You have 5 years from the semester in which you matriculated at VLS to complete the MELP.

**V. REGISTRATION AND BILLING:****A) Summer Session Add/Drop Period VLS:**

You have between the first and second meeting of the class to add or drop a class. Add/drop forms are available at the ELC. If you miss the add/drop period and need to withdraw from a class, see the Summer Session catalog for tuition refund information.

**B) Auditing at VLS:**

Students may audit one course per summer semester. Audited courses will be noted on your transcript.

**C) Tuition and Fees:**

Students are billed the appropriate tuition and fees for the academic sessions when in attendance at each school.

For the VLS MELP program, students are billed in two bulk installments – the first installment is billed at the start of your first summer; the second is billed once you pass 14 credits. You will be charged a graduation fee and a student administration fee the first summer. For further information, contact either the VLS Business Office or the Financial Aid Office.

For the Northeastern JD, students are billed prior to the beginning of each academic quarter. For further information, contact the Northeastern Financial Aid Office