

DOCTOR OF JURIDICAL SCIENCE (SJD)
DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA COLLEGE OF LAW

The S.J.D. program at the University of Iowa College of Law is intended for students who wish to conduct original and advanced legal research under faculty supervision. S.J.D. students are expected to write a dissertation of publishable quality that makes a significant and original contribution to legal scholarship. The dissertation should be a book-length manuscript or a series of related articles of equivalent intellectual ambition and scope.

Admission to the S.J.D. program will be granted only if a tenured member of the faculty of the College of Law is available and agrees to serve as the chair of the student's dissertation committee (the "S.J.D. chair"). The S.J.D. chair and other members of the dissertation committee supervise and evaluate the student's research and writing on the dissertation topic. S.J.D. candidates are responsible for maintaining contact with the S.J.D. chair and other members of the dissertation committee throughout the S.J.D. program with respect to the progress of their work.

In order to be admitted to the S.J.D. program, students typically first complete the LL.M. degree at Iowa or a similar masters-level degree at another law school, either in the United States or at an English-language law school with academic standards equivalent to those of highly-ranked U.S. LL.M. programs. In appropriate circumstances, however, the admissions committee will consider applications from excellent students without an English-language master's-level degree who wish to proceed directly to the S.J.D.

Once a student is admitted to the S.J.D. program, there are five requirements for earning the S.J.D. degree:

- (1) The Year of Residency: The S.J.D. student must spend at least one academic year (two semesters) in residence at the College of Law in the S.J.D. program. The course of study in that year differs depending on whether the student already has an LL.M. or equivalent master's-level degree.

(a) Students who already have an LL.M. or equivalent master's-level degree. During the year of residency, the student must complete 18 semester hours of credit. The student must enroll in the S.J.D. tutorial for five credits (Honors/Pass/Fail) each semester (in other words, 10 credits during the year) to conduct research and writing under the supervision of his or her S.J.D. dissertation committee ("S.J.D. committee"). The work in the S.J.D. tutorial will focus on formulating a detailed dissertation proposal, beginning research for and writing portions of the proposed dissertation, and completing one or more chapters of the dissertation. The balance of the 18 required credits will be earned on a Honors/Pass/Fail basis through research and writing relating to the student's dissertation, supervised by the student's S.J.D. chair. However, at the discretion of the student's S.J.D. committee, some of those credits may be allocated to courses or seminars that the committee thinks the student needs to take to strengthen his or her ability to write a successful dissertation, and those courses

shall be taken on a graded basis if they are graded for the other students taking those courses. S.J.D. students who have not earned an LL.M. or J.D. degree or equivalent in a U.S. law school but whose dissertation work may include U.S. law may be required to take the College's orientation course for foreign-trained lawyers. The S.J.D. student's work in these Honors/Pass/Fail courses shall be awarded Honors for all 18 credits if the work is judged by the student's S.J.D. committee to be of a quality and quantity sufficient to justify promotion to S.J.D. Candidacy (see (2) below). If it is not of sufficient quality and quantity for promotion but the student's S.J.D. committee judges it to be of sufficient quality and quantity to justify the award of graduate credit, the student shall receive a Pass for all 18 credits. If the student's S.J.D. committee does not find that the work meets that standard, the student shall receive a failing grade on all 18 credits.

(b) Students who do not already have an LL.M. or equivalent master's-level degree. During the year of residency, the student must complete 24 semester hours of credit. Eighteen of these semester hours will be the same as for an S.J.D. student under paragraph (1)(a). Two additional credits will be for completion of the orientation course to the U.S. legal system for foreign-trained lawyers unless the student has already earned a J.D. degree from a U.S. law school. The student must also enroll in the LL.M. Seminar, a research and writing course during which the student will write a research paper qualifying for at least two credits (four credits if a native speaker of English or the holder of a J.D. degree from a U.S. law school) on a topic distinct from the topic of the S.J.D. thesis. The student will take such additional S.J.D. research and writing credits with the student's S.J.D. chair as necessary to bring the student's total number of registered credits for each semester to 12. The S.J.D. tutorial and independent research and writing credits shall all be graded on the same Honors/Pass/Fail basis as described above in (1)(a). Any other coursework taken for credit shall be subject to the normal rules of the College of Law with respect to grading.

- (2) Admission to S.J.D. Candidacy: Admission to S.J.D. candidacy is a formal step that must be achieved before the student has the right to continue in the S.J.D. program to complete a dissertation. The decision about admission to S.J.D. candidacy will be made by the student's S.J.D. committee on the basis of the work done during the student's year of residency at Iowa in the S.J.D. program. In order to admit the student to S.J.D. candidacy, the committee must determine that the student's work on the dissertation topic during the semesters of residency is of sufficiently high quality that it is reasonable to believe that the student will be able to complete a publishable dissertation on the topic. As part of the assessment process, the S.J.D. committee will hold an oral examination of the candidate. The oral examination will normally be held toward the end of the student's year of residency at the College and will focus on the work that the candidate has completed on the dissertation by that time, the candidate's general knowledge and understanding relating to the subject matter of the dissertation, and the candidate's further plans for completing the dissertation. If the committee is not able to admit the student to S.J.D. candidacy at the conclusion of the first year of residency, the committee may give

an extension of up to one calendar year if it finds a sufficient basis to believe that the student likely will be able to satisfy the foregoing standard within that time. As part of that extension of time for further assessment, the committee may require the student to submit additional writing and/or to participate in a second oral examination.

- (3) Presentation of Dissertation Work: Each S.J.D. student is required to make at least one substantive presentation of his or her dissertation work at a meeting of the S.J.D. tutorial, to a specially constituted group of faculty, or in a public meeting, as arranged with the student's S.J.D. committee.
- (4) Completion of the Dissertation: Students admitted to S.J.D. candidacy are encouraged to apply for permission to continue their research and writing in the College's Law Library if they can continue to stay in Iowa City, and such applications will normally be granted. However, students admitted to S.J.D. candidacy are free to complete the dissertation wherever they wish. In any event, they must continue to coordinate with their S.J.D. committee and continue to register each spring and fall semester as an S.J.D. candidate in the College. Within five calendar years from the date of admission to S.J.D. candidacy, the student must complete the dissertation and have it approved by the S.J.D. committee. In order to approve the dissertation, the committee must determine that the dissertation is of publishable quality. If the committee believes that the work needs revisions or additions to bring it to the requisite level of quality, the committee may give the student an extension of time and the student must meet the deadlines set by the committee for the revisions.
- (5) Oral Defense of the Dissertation: Before the student's S.J.D. committee decides whether to approve the student's completed dissertation for award of the S.J.D. degree, the student must successfully defend the dissertation in an oral defense led by the student's S.J.D. committee. Except in rare and highly compelling circumstances, the defense will be conducted in person in Iowa City.

Date: 28 December 2015