Joint Degree Information

Law and Urban and Regional Planning
Jessup Hall (above) houses the Graduate Program in Urban and Regional Planning. The Boyd Law Building (below) houses the College of Law.

Photos provided by University Communication and Marketing Photography /University of Iowa.
One of the more popular combined degree programs at Iowa is the joint Law (J.D.) with Urban and Regional Planning (M.A. or M.S.). Joint Law-Planning degree graduates typically obtain employment as city managers, city attorneys, city planners or planning administrators. They also practice at law firms or advocacy organizations as land use, housing, transportation or environmental law specialists.

The J.D. degree requires 84 credit hours, typically completed in three years; the M.A. or M.S. requires 50 credit hours, typically completed in two years. The law program may apply up to 12 hours of planning courses toward the J.D. requirement, and Planning will apply 15 hours of law courses toward the M.A. or M.S. requirement. Therefore, joint program students typically complete both degree requirements in four years. Taking classes over a summer term may be required to meet this target. A total of 107 hours of graduate work is required for the joint degree, including a minimum of 35 hours in planning and 72 hours of law.

Joint degree students with Law will be assessed tuition at the College of Law rate except for any semester or summer session in which the student is not enrolled for any Law credits and none of the credits being earned that semester or term will be applied toward the student’s JD degree. All joint degree students pursuing a J.D. degree will be assessed at least 6 semesters of Law school tuition.
Sample Four Year Plan of Study\(^1\)

**Semester 1: 15 hours**

- LAW:8026 Intro to Law & Legal Reasoning (1 hr.)
- LAW:8017 Contracts and Sales Transactions (4 hr.)
- LAW:8032 Legal Analysis, Writing and Research I (2 hr.)
- LAW:8037 Property (4 hr.)
- LAW:8046 Torts (4 hr.)

**Semester 2: 15 hours**

- LAW:8006 Civil Procedure (4 hr.)
- LAW:8010 Constitutional Law I (3 hr.)
- LAW:8022 Criminal Law (3 hr.)
- LAW:8033 Legal Analysis, Writing and Research II (2 hr.)
- One three-hour Law elective (3 hr.)

**Summer 1**

- Law internship/employment (optional and recommended; typically without credit)

**Semester 3: 14 hours**

- URP:6200 Analytic Methods in Planning I (3 hr.) (core course)
- URP:6202 Land Use Planning: Law and Practice (4 hr.) (core course)
- URP:6203 History and Theories of Planning (3 hr.) (core course)
- URP:6205 Economics for Urban Planners (3 hr.) (core course)
- URP:6208 Program Seminar in Planning Practice (1 hr.) (core course)

**Semester 4: 13 hours**

- URP:6201 Analytic Methods in Planning II (3 hr.) (core course)
- Three hours of Planning electives (3-4 hr.)
- Six hours of Law electives (6 hr.)

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\(^1\)This plan does not include summer law classes and begins with law courses first. Those who take summer classes may take fewer hours during the fall/spring semesters. Students have the option of starting in the planning program the first year, followed by law. Students should be aware that none of the planning semester hours earned before matriculating at the law school may be applied toward the J.D. degree. Likewise, no law credits taken before matriculating in the planning program may be applied toward the masters degree in planning.
Summer 2: 2 hours
URP:6335 Planning Internship (2 hr.)

Semester 5: 15 hours
URP:6209 Field Problems in Planning I (3 hr.) (core course)
URP:6290 Economic Impact Assessment (3 hr.)
URP:6258 Modeling Dynamic Systems (3 hr.) (core course)
Six hours Law electives² (6 hr.)

Semester 6: 10 or 15 hours
URP:6210 Field Problems in Planning II (3 hr.) (core course)
Four or Six hours Planning electives (depending on whether planning internship was done)
Three or Six hours Law electives (depending on whether planning internship was done)

Summer 3
Internship/employment (typically no credit)

Semester 7: 12 or 14 hours
12 or 14 hours Law electives (depending on Law electives taken in Semester 6)

Semester 8: 12 or 14 hours
12 or 14 hours Law electives (depending on Law electives taken in Semester 6)

Totals: 72 credit hours (Law)  
35 credit hours* (Planning) (see footnote 1)

*1 Law course (3 hr.) must relate to area of concentration in Planning. This course will be included in the 15 credits of law counted towards the M.S. and towards the 12 credit hours needed to complete a concentration.

²Beyond satisfying the credit-hour requirement, second and third year law students have the following requirements for graduation: students must (1) take Constitutional Law II and one legal ethics course and one skills course and (2) earn four upper class writing units. Also, the planning program strongly recommends joint degree students take the Property II (91:136) law course.
Having the planning degree distinguishes me from other young attorneys in my firm, who do not have interest or experience in many land use and municipal law issues. When there are zoning or land use law related projects, many times I get pulled in to help because I have an initial familiarity with the terms and concepts involved in these land use matters. While I am still new to the practice of law and do not have much experience, I at least have the interest to take on the project. My planning degree has created an opportunity to focus on an area of law that I find interesting and challenging.—Liz Perry (’04 JD, MA), Associate, Quarles & Brady, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

The field work, courses, talented students, and dedicated faculty form a comprehensive program in law and urban planning. I left the program prepared for a career in public service. I am very grateful for the education I received both in the law and planning programs. I recommend both individually and as a joint program.—Dan Persky (’03, JD, MS), Counsel, Active Transportation Alliance, Chicago, Illinois
The law portions of the joint program provided me with the theoretical background while the URP segment provided the practical knowledge to hit the ground running as a young real estate attorney. My joint degree education has helped me help my clients achieve their goals in the most efficient manner possible as it enabled me to understand the municipal point of view and guide my clients accordingly.—

Michel Ayer (‘07 JD, MS), Associate, Quarles & Brady, Phoenix, Arizona

My planning background has been very helpful in one of my preferred areas of practice—Brownfields redevelopment projects. I would recommend the joint program for people who know that they want to practice in a field of law where the experience will be relevant. I knew that I wanted to do environmental law, and pursuing the joint degree program provided me with a unique opportunity to develop a skill set that distinguished me from my peers, and gave me a solid background in relevant subjects such as zoning, land use planning, and the local administrative process.—

Sarah Slack (‘05, JD, MS), Associate, Foley & Lardner, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
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