

Doctor of Juridical Science, SJD

The Doctor of Juridical Science (SJD) program is intended for students who wish to conduct original and advanced legal research in law under faculty supervision.

Requirements

The Doctor of Juridical Science program includes five requirements for earning the SJD degree.

Year of Residency

Doctor of Juridical Science students must spend at least one academic year (two semesters) in residence in the SJD program at the College of Law.

Students must complete 18 s.h. of credit during their first year of residency; students who have not earned an LLM degree complete 24 s.h. They must enroll in the SJD tutorial (5 s.h. each semester; 10 s.h. total) to conduct research and writing under the supervision of their SJD dissertation committee. The work in the SJD tutorial focuses on formulating a detailed dissertation proposal, beginning research for and writing of portions of the dissertation, and completing one or more chapters.

Students are expected to write a dissertation of publishable quality making 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.

The balance of the required 18 s.h. will be earned through research and writing related to a student's dissertation, supervised by the student's SJD chair. However, at the discretion of a student's SJD committee, some of the semester hours may be allocated to courses or seminars that the committee feels a student needs to strengthen their ability to write a successful dissertation.

Admission to SJD Candidacy

Admission to candidacy is a formal step that must be achieved before a student has the right to continue in the SJD program to complete a dissertation and is determined by the student's committee on the basis of the work done during the student's year of residency in the program.

As part of the assessment process, the SJD committee holds an oral examination toward the end of a student's year of residency that focuses on the work the candidate has completed on the dissertation, the candidate's general knowledge and understanding in relation to the subject matter of the dissertation, and the candidate's further plans for completion of the dissertation. If the committee is not able to admit the student to SJD 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 necessary standard within that time.

Presentation of Dissertation Work

Each student is required to make at least one substantive presentation of dissertation work at a meeting of the SJD

tutorial to a specially constituted group of faculty, or in a public meeting, as arranged with the student's SJD committee.

Completion of the Dissertation

Students admitted to SJD candidacy continue to enroll in 1 s.h. of dissertation credit, which provides access to university resources, including the Law Library. However, students admitted to SJD candidacy are free to complete their dissertations wherever they wish. In any event, they must continue to coordinate with their committee and continue to register each fall and spring semester as an SJD candidate in the college.

Oral Defense of the Dissertation

Before a student's SJD committee decides whether to approve the student's completed dissertation, the student must successfully defend the dissertation in an oral defense led by the committee. A student must complete the dissertation and have it approved by the committee within five calendar years from the date of admission to SJD candidacy.

Admission

To be admitted to the SJD program, students typically first complete the LLM degree at the University of Iowa or a similar master's-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 United States LLM programs. In appropriate circumstances, the admissions committee will consider applications from excellent students without an English-language master's-level degree who wish to proceed directly to work on their SJD degree. All applicants must show strong evidence of scholarly research and writing abilities.

For more information, visit the SJD application process website.