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FREQUENTLY  
ASKED QUESTIONS  
FOR APPLICANTS

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INTERNATIONAL AND FOREIGN GRADUATE PROGRAMS

## 1. Why should I get an LL.M. degree?

Only you can answer this one. Law School is an intellectual, financial and emotional commitment, and should be entered into with 100% effort.

Many of our alumni tell us that the LL.M. degree opened doors for them, either in their countries of origin or in the United States. In our increasingly global world, understanding legal systems that are different from your own is more essential than ever. The LL.M. in Comparative Law is intended to do just that.

## 2. Why the University of Miami?

The Faculty: In 2005 *Hispanic Business Magazine* ranked the University of Miami School of Law the best law school in the United States for Hispanic students based upon its strong international business curriculum with a particular focus on Latin America. The University of Miami School of Law has been ranked 15<sup>th</sup> for the overall academic and professional quality of the faculty. Professor Keith Rosenn, Chair of the LL.M. programs in Comparative Law and Inter-American Law, is world-recognized for his scholarship on Latin American law. Dean Dennis Lynch was a Fulbright Scholar in economics in Venezuela and is extremely committed to the globalization of the law school. Our faculty also includes the Co-Editor in Chief of the *American Journal of International Law*, a former tenured member of the London School of Economics and Political Science, a current member of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, and a visiting professor from the University of Florence. The faculty includes experts in environmental law, internet law, international human rights, international business transactions, and maritime law. In addition, the Law School draws upon the practicing bar in Miami for many adjunct and visiting faculty with specialized practice backgrounds.

The Curriculum: The University of Miami integrates the foreign LL.M. students into the Law School and permits them to take courses offered to J.D. students. Although a few

introductory courses are offered exclusively to foreign law students, in general you will have a wonderful opportunity to learn alongside American law students in your classes adding another dimension to your legal education in the United States. The University of Miami is exceptional in its commitment to bilingual and bicultural education, and is currently offering four basic law courses in Spanish.

The Law Library: The Law School is proud to have an outstanding law library and one that is especially strong in international, foreign and comparative law materials. The foreign and comparative collection has extensive English, European Union and Latin American materials, including what is generally regarded as the best collection of materials on the Caribbean anywhere. Our international law librarian, Edgardo Rotman, who has law degrees both from Argentina and the United States, serves as a resource to all of our foreign students.

The City of Miami: Miami is a dynamic, multilingual center of international trade and finance. Its cosmopolitan culture has made it the gateway to Latin America and the Caribbean. Miami is currently a major hub for international trade, as the largest container seaport for Latin America, the largest cruise-ship port in the world, and the second largest U.S. airport for international travel. Miami's cosmopolitan culture and diverse legal practice complement the Law School's substantial offerings in all areas of international law and business.

## 3. Does the Law School offer any programs shorter than the LL.M.?

No, the Law School does not offer any programs shorter than the LL.M. The Office of Continuing Legal Education (<http://www.law.miami.edu/cle>) does offer some short seminars on particular areas of law, though they are generally at a more advanced level. We are contemplating other course offerings in both English and Spanish, but they are not available at this time.

#### 4. Which LL.M. program should I choose?

Most of our foreign students choose the LL.M. in Comparative Law. This program is specifically designed for the foreign law graduate. During the program, only two courses are required: *An Introduction to U.S. Law* and *Legal Research and Writing*. These courses are intended to give you a foundation in American common law doctrine as well as the approach to written analysis in such a system.

All of your other courses are electives. We often recommend Comparative Trial Litigation, in which the foreign students prepare, try and critique four complete American-style cases before real trial judges and live juries. This class provides you with a unique understanding of the American legal system, and is also lots of fun.

Your other courses are taken with J.D. students and can focus on any area of law depending on your interests, including Corporate Law, Taxation, Computer and Internet Law, Alternative Dispute Resolution, Entertainment and Sports Law, Environmental Law, Labor and Employment Law, Ocean and Coastal Law, or International Law.

The University of Miami also offers six other LL.M. degrees: Ocean and Coastal Law, International Law, Inter-American Law, Estate Planning, Taxation, and Real Property. Most of the students in these LL.M. programs are already American lawyers. From time to time a foreign student will choose to apply directly to one of these programs. Please note that the course requirements for these LL.M. programs may include a written thesis and will presume basic knowledge of American law. **Foreign students should demonstrate prior experience with the common law and strong English ability before applying directly to these programs.**

#### 5. What are the differences between the LL.M. programs offered through the Office of International and Foreign Graduate Programs?

Comparative Law: This program is strictly for foreign attorneys. It provides an exceptional opportunity for graduates of foreign law schools to continue their study of the law in a context that emphasizes U.S. law and U.S. perspectives on law. Students also engage in a comparative study of the U.S. legal system with that of the country where they earned their law degree.

Inter-American Law: This program is designed to prepare students for a career in the inter-American legal field, and to expose them to basic aspects of Latin American law and legal culture so that they can more effectively service clients from that region as well as advise clients doing business in Latin America. It is generally for American law graduates who are bilingual.

International Law: The objective of this program is to provide students with the background necessary to recognize, understand, and manage problems arising in the international legal order, including those relating to international trade, investment, business, environmental problems, and the protection of human rights. This program is generally for American Law Graduates.

Ocean and Coastal Law: This program prepares the attorney to be a specialist in the domestic and international legal problems associated with the use and protection of the marine environment.

#### 6. Can I receive credit for my previous law studies?

Depending on what program you wish to do, you may get credit for your previous law studies. You will not receive credit for your previous studies if you pursue a Master of Laws degree. You may receive some credit for your previous studies if you pursue a J.D. degree.

### ***7. Can I get admitted to the bar after finishing the LL.M. Program?***

In the United States, bar admission is regulated by each of the fifty states, and each state has complete discretion in the process. Some states will permit foreign lawyers with an LL.M. degree to take the bar exam and be admitted to practice. New York is a commonly selected jurisdiction which does permit foreign applicants, and each year a group of LL.M. graduates sit for the New York Bar Exam (and pass it!). Other states such as Texas may also be an option depending on your long-term career goals. Florida does not allow foreign applicants to sit for the bar exam with only an LL.M. degree. Only graduates of a three-year ABA-approved J.D. program are eligible for the Bar. Some foreign lawyers become certified under a special Foreign Legal Consultant (FLC) rule, which only allows them to counsel clients on the laws of their country of origin. The FLC rule does not seem to lead to broad job opportunities in Florida. So, if your long-term goal is to practice in Florida, you should consider the J.D. degree. For information on the rules of all 50 states, please consult our website (<http://www.law.miami.edu/ifp/>).

### ***8. What if I want to get my J.D. degree?***

You may already know that obtaining a J.D. degree is your professional goal, particularly if you want to get admitted to practice in Florida. You can choose to apply directly to the J.D. program, or you may wish to start with the LL.M. program and then apply to transfer to the J.D. in the following year.

Students in the LL.M. program may apply to the J.D. following their first semester. The applications are comparable, with the major exception that the LSAT exam is required for all J.D. applicants. A separate admissions committee will review your application and determine your eligibility for the J.D., including such factors as whether your TOEFL is at least 600, your LSAT

is at least 140, and your grade point average is 3.0 or better in the classes that you take with J.D. students while in the LL.M. program.

If you are admitted to the J.D. program, you may be awarded up to 29 advanced standing credits for law courses taken in the degree-granting foreign law school. In addition, you may forego the LL.M. degree and transfer up to many of the credits earned during the LL.M. program towards the J.D. program. As a result, you should be able to earn your J.D. degree in roughly two years.

One benefit of starting in the LL.M. program is that it gives you a chance to decide if you are really interested in returning to law school for the entire J.D. program. It should also provide you with a more gradual transition to law study than the intensity of the first year J.D. curriculum. You will be able to strengthen your English skills and become acclimated to the culture of Miami, and then decide whether the J.D. is really consistent with your long-term goals.

### ***9. Can I just take a course without applying to the program?***

Students may only enroll in classes for credit once they have been admitted to the School of Law. Subject to space ability, the instructor's permission, the permission of the LL.M. program director and the payment of the appropriate fee (which is one-half the otherwise applicable tuition), attorneys may audit classes. Auditors do not take examinations, and no grades or academic credit are recorded for their work. In general, the LL.M. program director will not grant permission unless the attorney satisfies the admission criteria for the program including the required TOEFL score. In addition, attorneys must have an appropriate visa status to register as non-degree auditors.

### ***10. Can I apply to the program while I am still studying for my law degree?***

You may apply while waiting to receive your degree. If admitted, you will be granted a conditional admittance, contingent upon proof that you have received your law degree. You must have your law degree before the date that you enroll in classes at UM.

### ***11. What financial resources exist to help me afford law school?***

Attending a private law school is a big financial commitment. The University of Miami School of Law has a financial aid office whose sole purpose is to help you identify funds to attend law school. The scholarships for our LL.M. program are quite limited. We do make some scholarship awards each spring based upon exceptional cases of merit and need. Students who are citizens or permanent residents of the United States may be eligible for certain federal and state educational loans. Other foreign students may wish to consider other funding sources from their countries of origin or special programs such as the Fulbright Program. We have a separate flyer describing some of these resources in greater detail. Please also contact our Financial Aid Office. (<http://www.law.miami.edu/finaid>)

### ***12. What if I want to continue working during law school?***

Some students in the LL.M. program do work during law school. Some students are working as part-time clerks in local firms or companies. Others are working full-time and taking a reduced course load. Students must complete 24 credits to get their degree; some students take their classes in two, three or four semesters depending on their personal circumstances. Of course, a student's ability to work will be contingent upon their visa status. For information on job postings, please contact the office of Career Planning (<http://www.law.miami.edu/cpc>).

### ***13. What about moving to Miami and getting settled? Will the law school help me?***

A hallmark of the International and Foreign Graduate Programs at UM is the one-on-one attention we provide to all of our students. Once you have decided to attend UM, we will provide you with an extensive apartment guide and assist you with all other facets of your relocation to South Florida – including identifying schools for your children or a car for your commute. We will also provide you with the I-20 Form required to get your visa and help orient you to the University and Law School communities.

The University's Department of International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) exists specifically to meet the special needs of international students, whether it be cultural familiarization, academic and personal matters or compliance with immigration regulations. ISSS assists all UM students with making applications to the INS for Employment Authorization should you wish to work following graduation. For more information, please contact the ISSS Office. (<http://www.miami.edu/international-student>)

International students are also encouraged to join the Council of International Students and Organizations (COISO), the parent organization of all international groups operating on campus. COISO is designed to help international students with social and living adjustments at the University and in the greater Miami area. COISO currently sponsors over 25 individual country organizations and represents over 1500 international students. COISO also sponsors several major University programs that highlight the varied cultures represented at the University, such as International Week and United Nations Day.

**14. What items will I need to apply to the University of Miami School of Law Master of Laws program?**

Here is a checklist for you to verify that the following items become part of your applications:

1. Fill out, sign and return the application form to the Office of International and Foreign Graduate Programs, University of Miami School of Law, P.O. Box 248087, Coral Gables, Florida 33124, U.S.A.
2. Submit two (3) passport-size pictures.
3. Submit a U.S.D. \$50.00 money order or check drawn on a bank in the United States payable to the University of Miami. This application fee is non-refundable, and will not be credited toward tuition or any other account in the event of admission.
4. Submit a statement of purpose of approximately 500 words in English, addressing your academic and professional background, your professional goals, specific areas of interest, and other matters which you think are of importance. This statement is to be prepared by you without any outside help or evaluation whatsoever, and is to contain a statement to that effect.
5. Arrange for an original transcript from your law school, a photocopy of your law school diploma and a translation of your documents (if necessary). As an alternative, you may register for the LSAC service.
6. Request two of your law school professors to send directly to the Office of International and Foreign Graduate Programs letters of recommendation stating in detail their opinion as to your qualifications for graduate study of law. Attorneys in practice more than two years may substitute letters of recommendation from an employer or colleague. For your convenience, we have prepared a form that you should give to your recommenders.

7. Applicants whose native language is not English are required to take the Test of English as a Foreign language (TOEFL), which is administered by the Educational Testing Service. Their address is: P.O. Box 6151, Princeton, NJ 08541-6154, U.S.A.; phone: 609-771-7100; fax: 609-771-7500 ([www.ets.org/toefl](http://www.ets.org/toefl)). If you have taken the TOEFL exam already, you will need to have an official score report sent directly to the Office of International and Foreign Graduate Programs. The University of Miami's school code is 5815 and the department code is 03.
8. Submit a verification of sponsorship or bank letter demonstrating your ability to defray your education and living expenses while in the United States, along with the enclosed Statement of Financial Responsibility. This information is required by the U.S. Government for immigration purposes. (Not required of citizens or permanent residents of the U.S.)

**15. What is the LSAC LL.M. Credential Assembly Service?**

International applicants to the University of Miami School of Law's Masters of Law in Comparative Law program are recommended to register with LSAC's LL.M. Credential Assembly Service ([www.LLM.LSAC.org](http://www.LLM.LSAC.org)).

This new service will save you time and money, especially if you intend to apply to a number of U.S. or Canadian graduate law degree programs. You will only need to obtain your transcripts and other required credentials one time in order to make them available for all of your law school applications. For a registration fee of \$185 (US), LSAC will collect, authenticate, and distribute your university records and TOEFL score(s). Five reports to law schools are included in the registration fee. For additional information about this service, go to [www.LLM.LSAC.org](http://www.LLM.LSAC.org). Please note that you must still complete the

University of Miami School of Law application and submit all required application fees to the Office of International and Foreign Graduate Programs. The LSAC service serves only to authenticate non-U.S. or Canadian credentials that are needed in addition to a completed admission application.

### ***16. When is the application deadline?***

The application deadline for the Comparative Law program is May 1<sup>st</sup>. We do not offer January admission for the Comparative Law Program. The Inter-American, International, and Ocean & Coastal Law Programs' application deadlines are November 15<sup>th</sup> for the Spring semester and June 15<sup>th</sup> for the Fall semester. Foreign students will be considered for January admission only if they have prior work or study experience in the United States or another common law jurisdiction. We operate on a system of "rolling" admissions whereby admission decisions are made throughout the year following the submission of a complete application.

### ***17. Can I apply to the program without having achieved the required TOEFL score? Do you offer conditional acceptances, conditioned on achieving the required TOEFL score or attending an intensive English course?***

Our minimum required score on the TOEFL examination depends upon which version of the test you take. We require a score of 580 on the paper-based test, 237 on the computer-based test, and 70 on the internet-based test (assuming a maximum score of 90 for the reading, writing and listening sections only.) You may apply for the LL.M. program even if you have not yet achieved the required minimum score, but you will not be granted admission until you can document that you have received this score. Depending upon your score, we may require or recommend that you enroll in an Intensive English or Legal English course that is offered at the University of Miami (<http://www.miami.edu/ili>). Waivers of the TOEFL requirement will only be considered in

situations where the applicant can present other evidence of English capability (such as a degree from another accredited American institution.)

### ***18. What is the cost of attending the University of Miami School of Law?***

Full-time tuition for the 2006-2007 academic year is estimated at \$30,027. This presumes that you take 11 credits in the fall and 13 credits in the spring, which is the typical pattern for the Comparative LL.M. program. In addition, there are several mandatory fees. The fee estimates include: a student activity fee which is \$82; a University fee which is \$136; a Wellness Center fee which is \$236.; and a health insurance estimated fee of \$1,292. These fees, totaling \$1,746.00, must be paid to the University.

### ***19. Can I send my application without the Statement of Financial Responsibility and the bank letter?***

It is not necessary to include the Statement of Financial Responsibility or bank letter with your initial application. We will make a decision on your application without having the Statement of Financial Responsibility or bank letter. We will not need the Statement of Financial Responsibility or bank letter until after you have been admitted in order to process your visa.

### ***20. Why do I have to demonstrate that I have \$48,000+ if the cost of tuition is \$30,027?***

Included in the application, there is a form entitled "Statement of Financial Responsibility." This form is required of those students who wish to obtain a student visa. On the back of that form there is an approximation of the total amount of money that one can expect to spend as a University of Miami student. The total amount listed on the form is \$48,593. You can demonstrate that you have the funds available to you by providing us with a bank letter saying that you or your sponsor have at least \$48,593 at your disposal for study in the U.S.

## ***21. What is the academic calendar?***

The Fall semester at UM runs from mid-August through the end of November, followed by two weeks of examinations. The Spring semester runs from January through the end of April, followed by two weeks of examinations. The School of Law also offers a Summer semester during June and July; the course offerings during this semester are far more limited than in the other two semesters. (Comparative law UM students should plan to attend two weeks of orientation beginning approximately August 1<sup>st</sup> of each year.)

## ***22. What times do classes meet?***

The School of Law offers classes from 8:00am – 10:00pm, Monday through Thursday, Fridays, and a few classes on Saturdays. Your schedule will depend on the classes that you select. We cannot guarantee that the classes you wish to take will be at the exact time and the exact day you wish. The academic calendar changes each semester and is announced by the Dean in approximately March for the Summer and Fall semesters, and in October for the Spring semester.

## ***23. What types of jobs can I get after graduation?***

Our LL.M. program includes students who wish to return directly to their countries of origin following graduation, seek a one year period of “practical training” – an internship – prior to returning; and some who want permanent employment in the United States.

The option that is available to you may depend on a number of factors, including your personal immigration status. We urge you to carefully examine current immigration regulations and consult with a United States consulate.

The Office of International and Foreign Graduate Programs works closely with the Office of Career

Planning Services to counsel foreign students on their job options. They will review resumes and cover letters so that they comply with American customs, and provide practice interviews. We also sponsor numerous events with alumni and local law firms in Miami. Our office maintains directories of our nearly 1000 alumni and their current employment, as well as directories of multinational corporations and binational chambers of commerce that may be particularly interested in foreign lawyers. The Law School participates in a large international job fair every January in New York, at which students can meet with employers from around the world.

## ***24. What if I have more questions?***

Always feel free to contact the Office of International and Foreign Graduate Programs. We also have available a brochure, a DVD, and other materials highlighting the school, the faculty, course offerings, and life in South Florida. In addition, our program currently includes nearly 1000 alumni from over 75 countries. We would be happy to put you in touch with alumni from your area that might be able to answer your questions and give you additional insight into the University of Miami. For more information, please contact us in any of the following ways:

Web page: <http://www.law.miami.edu/ifp>

Email: [intl-llm@law.miami.edu](mailto:intl-llm@law.miami.edu)

Phone: 305-284-5402

Fax: 305-284-5497

Mail: P.O. Box 248087

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