



Master in Environmental Studies/Juris Doctor Joint Program Handbook 2024-2025

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environmental &
urban change

YORK U

Land Acknowledgement

We recognize that many Indigenous nations have longstanding relationships with the territories upon which York University campuses are located that precede the establishment of York University. York University acknowledges its presence on the traditional territory of many Indigenous Nations. The area known as Tkaronto has been care taken by the Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Wendat, and the Métis. It is now home to many Indigenous Peoples. We acknowledge the current treaty holders and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. This territory is subject of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement to peaceably share and care for the Great Lakes region.

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MES/JD Joint Program Handbook

This handbook is a comprehensive guide to the **Master in Environmental Studies/Juris Doctor (MES/JD) Joint Program** offered by the Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change (EUC) and the Osgoode Hall Law School of York University. It is designed for use by prospective and current students, faculty and staff. Students interested in the MES/JD Joint Program should familiarize themselves with both the MES and the JD Programs prior to reading this guide. Information regarding the MES and JD degrees is available on the two faculties' websites: [Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change](#) and [Osgoode Hall Law School](#).

This handbook focuses on information particular to the MES/JD Joint Program. Additional information about the Joint Program is available on the [Osgoode website](#) and the [Environmental Studies Program website](#).

This handbook is reviewed and revised periodically by the MES/JD Joint Program Coordinators, who welcome input on how to improve it -- see the last page for contact information. MES/JD students should also consult the **MES Program Handbook** (PDF).

Joint Program Coordination

Two faculty members coordinate the MES/JD Joint Program, one from the MES Program in Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change and the JD Program from Osgoode. The two Coordinators are responsible for overall academic and administrative guidance, direction and support of the MES/JD Joint Program. They work closely with MES/JD students throughout the program. Please see the last page of this handbook for their contact information.

Disclaimer

Information about rules, policies, procedures, fees and other requirements of the MES and JD degrees described in this handbook is presented for convenience only and is subject to change. In the event of any discrepancy between this handbook and the MES/JD, MES and JD Programs regulations, the program regulations will prevail.

Introduction to the MES/JD Joint Program

The MES/JD Joint Program was established in 1974. Its first alumnus graduated in 1978. It was the first and remains the only program of its kind in Canada. It is at the leading edge of interdisciplinary teaching and research in law and environmental studies nationwide. This unique program brings together one of Canada's premier law schools with one of its most innovative environmental studies programs. It draws upon Osgoode's recognized strength in social justice, environmental, planning and aboriginal law, and Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change's acclaimed leadership in interdisciplinary environmental education.

The program attracts a small group of some of the best students interested in environment and law nationwide. Joint program students are often among the strongest in both the JD and MES classes and have won numerous awards and scholarships. Graduates of the program have gone on to a variety of positions in government, private law firms, non-profit organizations, business, the academy and other settings.

The MES/JD Joint Program offers students the opportunity to complete both the MES and JD degrees in just under four years, approximately one year less time than it would take to complete the two degrees separately.

About the Two Faculties

The Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change (formerly the Faculty of Environmental Studies) is a driving force behind sustainability research and learning at York. Since its inception in 1968, Canada's first Faculty of Environmental Studies has established itself as an international leader in environmental research and innovation in environmental education. Distinguished by its commitment to bringing interdisciplinary perspectives to bear on environmental issues and its emphasis on integrating theory and practice, the Faculty defines 'environment' broadly to include natural, built, social and organizational environments and the relationships between them – and has established strengths in the areas of sustainability, environmental policy, economics and management, climate change, sustainable energy, business and the environment, environmental education, urban planning, geographic information systems, ecology, gender and the environment, indigenous knowledge, sustainable food systems and culture and the environment.

Osgoode Hall Law School, established in 1889 and affiliated with York University since 1968, is Canada's largest common law school and one of its premier law faculties. It is internationally renowned for its leading-edge research and teaching about law's transformative role in promoting social justice and environmental sustainability. Many Osgoode faculty members have research interests touching on environmental issues. Osgoode is home to internationally renowned scholars of aboriginal law, environmental law, planning law, occupational health and safety law, natural resource law, women's rights, poverty law, human rights, disability law, labour law, health and bioethics, international development, international peace and conflict, war crimes, consumer protection, business regulation, and corporate governance and accountability. For more than a century Osgoode has been a leading innovator in legal education.

In 2007, Osgoode became the first law school in Canada to introduce a mandatory public interest service requirement and to incorporate the study of legal ethics, professionalism, and globalization into its mandatory First Year Curriculum. Its strength in social justice, human rights, international law and clinical legal education is unsurpassed in Canada. Osgoode was a pioneer in environmental law research and teaching in the 1970s and boasts a diverse and still-growing environmental research and teaching program today. Its Intensive Programs in Poverty Law, Indigenous Lands, Resources and Governments and its Environmental Justice & Sustainability Clinic are among the mainstays of its commitment to producing generations of lawyers with a lifelong commitment to social justice and sustainability.

The MES/JD Program was created in 1975 and approved by York Senate on May 22, 1975.

Integration of Environmental Studies and Law

York University's slogan promises to 'redefine the possible' by promoting interdisciplinary studies and breaking down artificial boundaries to knowledge creation and dissemination. Environmental Studies – the study of the environments in which humanity is situated and the relationships that exist between humans and their environment – is a field of critical importance. At the same time, law is a powerful force that mediates the manner in which humans relate to our environments and to each other. The purpose of the MES/JD Joint Program is to encourage the integration of these two critical fields of study and to prepare students for a range of opportunities in environmental affairs, law or planning.

The integration of environmental studies and law is the heart of the Joint Program. Successful integration of the two fields is challenging, and approaches to integration take many forms. Students in the Joint Program generate an individual Plan of Study that provides the intellectual framework for integrating the fields of law and environmental studies. Study in the MES portion of the Joint Program culminates with a Major Research (in the form of a Major Paper, Major Project, Portfolio or Thesis) that supports the integrative field of study, as outlined in a student's individual Plan of Study.

The Plan of Study

The Plan of Study is the central feature of each student's academic activity in the Joint Program and provides the framework for this integration. Prepared and developed by each student in consultation with the student's MES faculty Advisor, the Plan of Study serves to define and organize the student's pursuit of knowledge and skills in the program. For Joint Program students, their Plan of Study outlines the conceptual framework for the integration and synthesis of the fields of environmental studies and law.

A Plan of Study for Joint Program students must include:

- an area of concentration that describes the specific subject matter drawn from the fields of environmental studies and law that the student proposes to master;
- specific components of the area of concentration on which the student intends to focus;
- learning objectives relevant to the area of concentration and its components; and
- learning strategies for achieving each of the learning objectives;
- exhaustive bibliography on your area of concentration.

Evidence of the integration of environmental studies and law in a student's Joint Program curriculum should be identifiable in each of the Plan of Study elements.

A sampling of some recent students' areas of concentration indicates the diversity of approaches Joint Program students have taken to integrating environmental studies and law:

- Environmental Policy and Indigenous Legal Traditions
- Indigenous Governance over Resource Planning
- Sustainable Energy and Climate Change Law and Policy
- International Marine Wildlife Conservation
- Planning and Law: The Role of Ontario Land-Use Planning Appeals Tribunal
- Legal Process and Popular Education
- Women, Environments, and Public Policy
- Community Economic Development for First Nations
- Ecosystems Science and Ontario Forest Policy
- Planning Urban Sustainability
- Aboriginal Resource Control and Self Determination
- Ethics, Law and the Life Sciences Industry
- International Trade, the Environment and Sustainable Development

For more information on the Plan of Study, please see the **MES Program Handbook** (PDF).

Osgoode Courses and the MES Plan of Study

Joint Program students should list all Osgoode courses relevant to their plan in their learning strategies. While the courses do not count as credit towards the MES degree, they should be listed nonetheless because this encourages students to reflect carefully on how to integrate the two fields of study.

MES Examinations

The Plan of Study is the basis of advancement to different stages of the program. MES exams are organized to report on progression (MES I-II, MES II-III, final exam) or to monitor progress between stages (through general exams when plans are revised to reflect progress in the program). Each time a Plan of Study is revised, it must be examined; it is the student's responsibility to arrange for a general exam, generally once per term.

Successful completion of the MES/JD Joint Program requires that careful attention be paid to program requirements and that students' programs be planned in a way that ensures that they meet these requirements. This can only be achieved by ensuring regular meetings between students and the Joint Program Coordinators.

All Joint Program students are required to have a general exam with the Joint Program Coordinators at the beginning of each academic year in the program, including their Osgoode years. Furthermore, the Osgoode Joint Program Coordinator or their designate participates in all MES II-III exams for Joint Program students. Finally, one of the two Joint Program Coordinators participates in every Joint Program student's MES final exam.

Joint Program students must consider the timing of general examinations in the context of their progress through the Joint Program to avoid conflict between the academic demands of the two programs. For example, if a student fails to arrange for a general exam agreed for the end of a Summer term, it may be very difficult to schedule the exam around law school courses in the Fall term.

The **MES program** is organized in three progressive stages:

MES I - Students formulate their initial Plan of Study during the required MES course ENV5 5100: Interdisciplinary Research in Environmental Studies. This stage usually encompasses one term of full-time study.

MES II – Joint Program students develop and demonstrate general competence in their integrative area of concentration through formal coursework in both faculties, individual directed studies and/or field experience; students formulate their proposal for a Major Research (Major Paper, Major Project, Portfolio or Thesis) that addresses their area of concentration. This stage usually encompasses one to two terms of full-time study in the MES Program and/or the JD Program.

MES III – The final stage of the MES program provides a culminating experience of mastery in the field and represents the synthesis of in-depth understanding and knowledge of the Joint Program student's integrative area of concentration. This stage generally encompasses one to three terms of full-time study in the MES Program and the JD Program.

There are several approaches open to students for achieving MES III objectives. The final output of the MES III level should help address the objective of the final examination, which is to establish that the Plan of Study has been fulfilled by the student in the following ways: i) the area of concentration has been defined successfully and its substance mastered; ii) the various components of the area of concentration have been integrated; and iii) the learning objectives have been satisfied.

A Joint Program student's MES final examination is conducted only when the student has completed the requirements of both the MES and JD degrees (please see Completion and Convocation, below).

Major Research (Major Paper, Major Project, Portfolio or Thesis)

The output of MES III activities is a Major Research in the form of Major Paper, Major Project, Portfolio or thesis that addresses the area of concentration. The Major Research is prepared under the supervision of a faculty member. Experience has shown that the workload demands of the Joint Program make the undertaking of an MES thesis (as opposed to Major Paper, Major Project or Portfolio), with its additional formal requirements, very difficult to accomplish within the tight timeframe of the Joint Program. Note that a Major Paper is substantially equivalent to a thesis.

What makes the Major Research unique for Joint Program students, as compared with other MES students, is its focus on integration of environmental studies and law. To promote this integration, Osgoode professors may (if available) supervise a Joint Program student's Major Research or provide informal advice on its legal aspects. The MES Major Research also satisfies Osgoode's JD writing requirement.

For further information on the Major Research, please see the **MES Program Handbook** (PDF).

Program Details

Admission to the Joint Program

Students must apply and be admitted separately to each of the MES and JD programs. Upon admission to both Faculties and registration in both, students are understood to be in the Joint Program. Approximately 5 or 6 students enter the Joint Program each year, for a total of 20-25 students in the program at any time.

Students typically apply for admission to both programs in the same year, before starting either program. They typically indicate their interest in the Joint Program on both their applications. Some students, however, only learn about the Joint Program after starting one or the other degree program. Students who are enrolled in either the MES or the JD program may enter the Joint Program during their first year of study, by applying and being admitted to the other program. This is only possible during the first year of either program, and students must observe the other program's application deadlines.

It is the student's responsibility to be aware of, and adhere to, the admission requirements, application procedures and deadlines applicable to each faculty. For information about the respective application deadlines and admission requirements, see [Environmental Studies Program's website](#) and [Osgoode JD's admission page](#).

Admission from 2L

In exceptional circumstances, it is possible for students to apply for entry to the MES/JD Joint Program during their 2L year, applying to the MES Program before the spring application deadline. In this pathway, certain unique aspects of the MES/JD program apply. First, the funding package available in the MES Program will be tied to the actual number of terms the student is actively enrolled as an MES student and paying tuition and thus cannot be determined conclusively in advance; in general, the package is likely to be limited to only 3 terms of funding. Second, the student's ability to take up clinical and other experiential education activities at Osgoode in the 3L year are likely to be constrained, depending on whether (and how) the student wishes to take advantage of the transfer credit term (see below). Students interested in entering the program from 2L should approach the Program Coordinators at the earliest opportunity.

Duration of the Joint Program

The minimum and typical time to complete the Joint Program is three and two-thirds years of full-time study (11 terms). Students who start the program in the Fall term of Year 1 typically complete all requirements of both degrees by the end of the Winter term of Year 4. During this time, they register for full time study for all academic terms – Fall, Winter, and Summer (with one exception: students who start the JD program in Osgoode do not register during the Summer term after their first year of law school). Please see Sequence of Study, below, for typically timelines followed by students in the program.

Occasionally students require an extra term to complete the Joint Program, but students seldom take more than four full years in total. An equivalent time for separate degrees typically takes five years.

Graduate Student Status

Once students begin the MES part of the Joint Program, they attain graduate student status. **Students must maintain this status by registering** (accepting fees) **in the MES program each term** for the duration of the Joint Program even when they are **registered in the JD program** at Osgoode. During the terms when they register and pay fees to Osgoode, Joint Program students will only be charged a **\$15 administrative fee to maintain their graduate student status and remain in good standing in the MES program**. During other terms, when they are participating in the MES degree program they will be charged full graduate tuition fees. Graduate student status allows students to be eligible for teaching assistantships, graduate assistantships and extended library privileges, all of which are substantial advantages unavailable to other JD students (see Benefits and Funding, below).

ENVS Course Selection

When enrolled full-time in one faculty, a student is expected to concentrate their formal coursework in that faculty. As a general rule, students should take JD courses when enrolled at Osgoode and ENVS courses when registered in the MES Program (but see Transfer Credits, below, for a variation on this general rule).

The MES Program is a self-directed program with a high degree of flexibility in course selection. MES students are normally permitted to take courses in other faculties, but as a matter of policy, Joint Program students who begin the Joint Program in the MES program are not permitted to take JD courses during **Year 1** of the Joint Program, barring exceptional circumstances. Since Joint Program students are law students as well as MES students, they must observe the sequence of study appropriate to law students. The first-year law school curriculum is an essential foundation that should be completed before registering for other law school courses.

In exceptional circumstances, a student who starts the Joint Program in the MES Program may be permitted to take an Osgoode course during **Year 1** of the Joint Program, if the student's Advisor and the Joint Program Coordinators are convinced that:

- available ENVS course offerings do not to meet the needs of the student's Plan of Study;
- the Osgoode course is critical to the student's Plan of Study; and
- the Osgoode course does not assume or require a prior foundation in law (for instance, because it takes an interdisciplinary approach to a topic of interest to a wider scholarly community).

In such situations course selection should be determined only after consultation with the Joint Program Coordinators and the course instructor.

When considering their course selections, students who begin the program in the MES Program should be aware that they cannot earn any credits toward the JD degree until they start the JD program. Any law school course taken during the first year of the MES program does not appear on the student's Osgoode transcript, count as credit toward the JD degree, or diminish the number of course credits required to complete the JD program. Potential employers will not see such a course on the student's Osgoode transcript. Furthermore, students may not take the same course again for JD credit. This may interfere with students' ability to complete one of Osgoode's specialized curriculum streams or advanced courses for which the course is a prerequisite.

JD Course Selection

With the exception of one Perspective Option course in the Winter term, the first year of the JD program is a prescribed course of study. Students in **Years 2 and 3** of the JD program must meet the following degree requirements as found in the Academic Rules of the Osgoode Student Handbook:

- Successfully complete a minimum of 60 upper year JD credits;
- In each of 3rd and 4th years, successfully complete a seminar, course or other option satisfying the Upper Year Research & Writing requirement;
- Complete the 40-hour Osgoode Public Interest requirement;
- Complete a course or seminar that satisfies the Practicum requirement; and
- Complete the Indigenous and Aboriginal Law requirement.

In **Years 3 and 4** of the Joint Program, students enroll full time in upper year JD courses during the Fall and Winter terms, selecting courses that support the law dimensions of their Plan of Study. This typically involves a combination of 'foundation courses' and a number of courses/seminars that advance their understanding of environmental, resource, international, native law issues, etcetera.

Joint Program students are not required to follow any special curriculum at Osgoode. Subject to some restriction on experiential education and clinical programs in combination with transfer credit terms, as described above, MES/JD students have the same flexibility as other JD students in choosing their law school courses. However, **regular participation in the MES/JD seminar is mandatory.**

If demand for a particular elective course exceeds the available spaces, enrolment is by lottery. Osgoode makes no special arrangements for Joint Program students in this situation.

Joint Program students should consult with the Osgoode Joint Program Coordinator before making their upper year JD course selections to discuss how far they have progressed toward completion of the MES requirements, their options regarding counting of MES credits toward the JD degree and what these issues might mean for JD course selection (see Transfer Credits, below).

Completion and Convocation

Joint Program students receive two distinct degrees, the JD from Osgoode and the MES from EUC, once they have successfully completed the academic requirements for both degrees. Typically, students complete both the MES and JD degree requirements by the end of the Winter term of their fourth year in the Joint Program, thereby completing both degrees in a total of 3 2/3 years and graduating from both programs at the Spring Convocation of that year.

Although it is possible to complete the requirements of the MES degree earlier than spring of Year 4, the Joint Program policy is that once a student starts the MES portion of the Joint Program, they must remain registered in the MES Program until they have completed both degrees. Therefore, even if a Joint Program student completes the Major Research requirement before completing the JD program, the MES final exam will be administered only upon completion of both programs. In such cases Joint Program students are not required to revise the Major Research for purposes of the MES final exam, but they are expected to be up to date on relevant subject matter regardless of when the Major Research was submitted.

While students typically complete the Joint Program in 3 2/3 years, on occasion an additional term of study in the MES Program is required to complete the requirements of the MES Plan of Study. In such cases, students may finish the JD program first, and subsequently the MES degree, thereby signaling completion of the Joint Program.

Students must recognize, however, that enrolling in the MES Program for the Summer Term of Year 4 and completing any outstanding requirements for the MES degree in time for fall convocation may delay or interfere with commencement of the articling or bar admission process. The articling process in the Province of Ontario typically begins in June and may conflict with completion of the MES degree during this Summer

Term. Students are responsible for determining the articling requirements and timing in the jurisdiction in which they propose to article.

If a student needs or wishes to convocate from the JD Program before completion of the MES program, the fact that they have not yet completed all requirements of the MES program shall not prevent convocation from the JD program, so long as the student remains in good standing in the MES program and has completed any MES credits counting towards completion of the JD (see Transfer Credits, below). In such cases the student shall not be identified as a Joint Program student in the JD Convocation program.

Sequence of Study

Upon admission to the Joint Program, students elect to start the Joint Program in the MES Program or in the JD Program. Neither option is considered preferable to the other. Students should communicate their decision to both faculties as soon as possible to ease the various administrative processes that must be put in motion.

Upon the student's decision of a starting faculty, the other faculty will defer its offer of admission by one year. There is no guarantee, however, that offers of scholarships or other financial assistance will be deferred, and this may be one factor to consider in choosing a starting faculty (see Benefits and Funding, below).

Joint Program students are strongly encouraged to remain focused on their Plan of Study throughout all phases of the Joint Program, so that time spent at Osgoode does not distance them too much from the Plan of Study process.

Two typical sequences of study are described below, based on whether a student elects to start the Joint Program in the MES or JD Program. This election affects the sequence of study in Years 1 and 2, but Years 3 and 4 are typically identical regardless of starting faculty. Both sequences assume that the student earns 'transfer credits' at Osgoode for MES Major Research work. This opportunity allows students to take a reduced Osgoode course load during Year 4 of the program while earning MES Major Research credits in EUC (see Transfer Credits, below). Students who do not plan to use transfer credits should consult the Joint Program Coordinators very early in the program about the implications for their sequence of study. Neither of the following two sequences is considered preferable to the other. Students interested in pursuing a sequence other than one outlined below should consult the Joint Program Coordinators.

MES Program Start: Years 1 and 2

Year 1: Students register full time in the MES program:

- Fall: Complete MES coursework. Develop initial Plan of Study integrating the fields of law and environmental studies in required course ENVS 5100: Interdisciplinary Research in Environmental Studies. Complete MES I-II exam.
- Winter: Complete MES coursework.
- Summer: Register full time in the MES Program; enroll in courses, experiential learning activities, or individual directed studies supportive of Plan of Study.

Year 2: Students register full time for their first year in the JD program, followed by Summer in the MES Program:

- Fall: Complete prescribed 1L coursework.
- Winter: Complete prescribed 1L coursework.
- Summer: Register full time in the MES Program; enroll in courses, experiential learning activities,

or individual directed studies supportive of Plan of Study. They may also wish to pursue summer credit opportunities through Osgoode or a partner institution, or non-credit opportunities relevant to their academic program.

JD Program Start: Years 1 and 2

Year 1: Students register full time for their first year in the JD program, followed by Summer for other pursuits:

- Fall: Complete prescribed 1L coursework.
- Winter: Complete prescribed 1L coursework.
- Summer: No prescribed course of study. Students may not register in the MES Program until Fall of Year 2. They may wish to pursue summer credit opportunities through Osgoode or a partner institution, or non-credit opportunities relevant to their academic program.

Year 2: Students register full time for their first year in the MES program:

- Fall: Complete MES coursework. Develop draft Plan of Study integrating the fields of law and environmental studies in required course ENVS 5100: Interdisciplinary Research in Environmental Studies. Complete MES I-II exam.
- Winter: Complete MES coursework.
- Summer: Register full time in the MES Program; enroll in courses, experiential learning activities, or individual directed studies supportive of Plan of Study.
- They may also wish to pursue summer credit opportunities through Osgoode or a partner institution, or non-credit opportunities relevant to their academic program.

Note: Students normally identify their Major Research Supervisor, complete the MES II-III exam and initiate their Major Research work in Year 3 of the Joint Program after completing some upper year JD courses.

Both Sequences: Years 3 and 4

Year 3: Students register full time at Osgoode in Fall and Winter for their second year in the JD program, followed by Summer in the MES Program:

- Fall: Pursue JD upper year coursework.
- Winter: Pursue JD upper year coursework, identify Major Research Supervisor, complete Major Research Proposal and MES II-III exam in April/May
- Summer: Register full time in the MES Program; enroll in ENVS 7899 MES Major Research course (for credits), experiential learning activities, or individual directed studies supportive of Plan of Study. Many students pursue law-related jobs during this summer, for which they may earn experiential learning credit if the job is supportive of their Plan of Study.
- Note: Students must complete the MES II-III exam by the end of the Summer of Year 3 at the latest, so that they can complete the Major Research in time to graduate with their JD class.

Year 4: Students register full time in Fall and Winter for their third year in the JD program, and graduate with both degrees at the Spring Convocation:

- Fall: Register full time at Osgoode, enroll in just one JD upper year course (3-4 credits) at Osgoode and enroll in ENVS 7899 MES Major Research for 12 credits in the MES Program, for which transfer credits will be awarded at Osgoode. Complete MES Major Research.
- Winter: Register full time in a full JD upper year course load. Complete MES Major Research if not already done and MES final exam.
- Summer: Convocate with both degrees or register full-time to complete the MES degree requirements.

Note: Students relying on transfer credits must finish the MES Major Research in time for JD graduation. Otherwise their JD graduation will be delayed, potentially jeopardizing bar admission and articling processes.

Typical Sequences of Study at a Glance

| | | MES Program Start | JD Program Start |
|---------------|--------|---|---|
| Year 1 | Fall | Full time in the MES Program: First year MES courses MES I-II exam | Full time in the JD Program: 1L courses |
| | Winter | Full time in the MES Program: First year MES courses | Full time in the JD Program: 1L courses |
| | Summer | Full time in the MES Program: Courses, experiential education activities, or individual study | No prescribed course of study, possible credits via Osgoode or partners, or non-credit opportunities |
| Year 2 | Fall | Full time in the JD Program: 1L courses | Full time in the MES Program: First year MES courses MES I-II exam |
| | Winter | Full time in the JD Program: 1L courses | Full time in the MES Program: First year MES courses |
| | Summer | Full time in the MES Program: Courses, field experience or individual study, plus possible JD credits via Osgoode or partners | Full time in the MES Program: Courses, experiential learning activities or individual study, plus possible JD credits via Osgoode or partners |
| Year 3 | Fall | Full time in the JD Program: Upper year JD courses | |
| | Winter | Full time in the JD Program: Upper year JD courses | |
| | Summer | Full time in the MES Program: Major Research (Major Paper/Major Project/Portfolio or Thesis), experiential learning activities, individual directed study; possible law-related summer job MES II-III exam, if not completed before | |
| Year 4 | Fall | Full time in the JD Program: One upper year JD course, MES Major Research (12 transfer credits) Complete MES Major Research | |
| | Winter | Full time in the JD Program: Upper year JD courses (full load) Complete MES Major Research, if not completed before MES final exam | |
| | Summer | JD and MES Spring Convocations | |

Academic Requirements

Students must meet the academic requirements of each of the MES and JD degrees to graduate from the Joint Program. Study in the Joint Program is governed by the MES regulations of the Faculty of Environmental of Urban Change and the academic rules of Osgoode Hall Law School. Students should familiarize themselves with both sets of rules.

Grading

The MES Program uses a grading scheme which involves either a "Pass" or "Unsatisfactory" grade, with each course having an individualized written evaluation from the course instructor. Students can request that a letter grade be included on their course evaluation forms. However, these grades will not appear on their official York transcript. The grade of "P" must be at least equivalent to a "B" in order to be credited at the graduate level under the regulations of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. The JD Program in Osgoode employs a system of letter grades and a mandatory grading profile.

Course Credits

Osgoode requires students to complete the prescribed Year 1 curriculum plus a total of at least 60 upper year course credits over the second and third years of the JD program. In the upper years, students must enroll in at least 13 and no more than 17 credits per term.

The MES Program requires a minimum of 36 credits of coursework aligned with their Plan of Study. MES/JD students must also complete 12 credits of Major Research (transfer credits). Full time registration in ENVS courses earns a minimum of 9 credits and a maximum of 12 course credits per term. Typically, in the Joint Program, students register full-time in the MES Program for 5 terms. Sometimes an additional term is required to complete the MES portion of the Joint Program.

Transfer Credits

Joint Program students may, with the approval of the Joint Program Coordinators, count up to 15 MES credits toward the JD degree, with the result that they only need to complete a minimum of 45 rather than 60 upper year credits at Osgoode.

Students wishing to take advantage of these transfer credits must meet with the Osgoode Joint Program Coordinator at the earliest opportunity (before finalizing Third Year JD course selections), indicate precisely which MES credits they wish to use for this purpose and the term in which they will earn those credits, and obtain the approval of a Joint Program Coordinator.

The MES credits used for this purpose do not necessarily have to be earned in the same term that a student takes a reduced course load at Osgoode but in any given term the student must enroll in at total of at least 13 MES and JD credits to satisfy Osgoode's requirement that students register in a minimum of 13 credits every term. These 13 credits may be made up of any combination of JD and MES credits. For example, in a given term a student might register for nine MES Major Research credits and a four-credit JD course at Osgoode (maximum number of credits students may register for in the MES Program in any given term is 12). Therefore, students must always register for at least one course at Osgoode in each of the Fall and Winter terms of Years 3 and 4 of the program to make up the minimum 13 credits.

Provided that students maintain the minimum 13 credits per term, making use of transfer credits does not adversely affect their eligibility for OSAP or for other student funding that is contingent on full time enrolment in the JD program.

Students who take advantage of transfer credits must still register as full-time students and accept full time fees in the JD Program during the Fall and Winter terms of Years 3 and 4 of the Joint Program, even if they take a reduced Osgoode course load during one or more of these terms. On the other hand, they pay only the \$15 administrative fee in the MES Program during these terms even if they register for ENVS credits during one or more of these terms. For registration purposes, such students are considered full-time Osgoode students during these terms. One important implication of this is that students must pay a total of six terms of regular fees to Osgoode to receive the JD degree, regardless of whether they take advantage of transfer credits.

Transfer credits will only be counted towards the JD degree after the academic work generating the credits has been completed in the MES Program and the corresponding MES credits have been recorded in the York student information system. If a student is relying on MES credits earned in the final term of the Joint Program, all work must be done, all conditions for awarding the credits must be fulfilled (for example, completion of the MES final exam, if required for the credits to be awarded) and the completed credits must be entered into the York student information system before Osgoode's cut-off date for reporting Winter term grades (usually no later than mid-May). It is the student's responsibility to ensure that this is done. Failure to do so may jeopardize the student's graduation from the JD program and commencement of the articling and bar admission process.

MES/JD Seminar

Participation in the MES/JD Program Seminar is an MES degree requirement for students in the MES/JD Joint Program. Four annual Joint Program seminars are offered annually (2 in fall term and 2 in winter term). The seminars provide an opportunity for students and faculty to share research and for students in the Joint Program to meet and learn from each other.

Students entering the Joint Program must attend 8 of the 16 seminars that would normally be available over the four years of their program. Students entering the Joint Program after completing their first year in either the MES Program or the JD Program would have to attend 6 of the 12 seminars that would be available over the final three years of their programs.

Typically, three of the seminars each year presents speakers, including graduates of the Joint Program, who address topics of current interest that reflect the integrative nature of the Joint Program, while one seminar each year is student led with one or more MES/JD students making presentations on their MES Major Research. **Students must make at least one presentation to the MES/JD seminar over the course of their Joint Program.**

Seminar attendance is recorded by the MES/JD Program Coordinators. Each student's participation record in the seminar will be reviewed during their fall general exam with the program Coordinators.

Additional Diploma and Specialized Program Options

The MES Program offers several graduate options (e.g., MES Planning, Business and the Environment diploma, Environmental Education Sustainability diploma) and many other graduate diplomas are offered at York. Osgoode offers a specialized clinical program in Environmental Justice & Sustainability that can be combined with the MES/JD program, as well as international exchange opportunities and specialized curriculum streams (tax law; labour law; international, comparative and transnational law; and litigation, dispute resolution and administration of justice).

While it is normally possible for Joint Program students to complete any of these special programs, providing they fulfill the applicable requirements, Joint Program students who count 15 MES transfer

credits toward completion of their JD degree are normally permitted to complete only one Osgoode intensive program, one single-term Osgoode exchange program, or a single term of study at another institution on a letter of permission. Students who do not take advantage of the “transfer credits” rule and complete the full 60 upper year JD credits are not subject to this restriction.

Osgoode also offers other Joint Programs (including the JD/MBA with the Schulich School of Business and the JD/JD program with New York University). It is not possible for a student to complete the MES/JD Joint Program and another Joint Program.

Registration, Fees and Course Enrolment

Registration refers to the process through which students identify their status and accept fees at York. Enrolment refers to the process through which students select specific courses in a particular academic unit or units. When registered in the MES Program, students pay fees through EUC. When registered in the JD Program, students pay fees through Osgoode. **When Joint Program students are registered in the JD Program, they however must also register in the Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change and pay a \$15.00 administrative fee per term.** This additional fee ensures that students in the Joint Program maintain their status as a graduate student at York University, which is a condition of participating in the Joint Program and is critical to eligibility for assistantships and graduate awards. The fee must be accepted using Passport York prior to the MES registration deadline each term. **A \$200.00 late fee will be charged to students who miss this deadline.** It is the student's responsibility to ensure these fees are accepted and paid.

Joint Program students enrolling in the MES portion of the Joint Program must do so in accordance with the MES graduate program rules. Similarly, students in the Joint Program who are enrolling in JD courses must do so in accordance with Osgoode rules.

Administrative Issues

The two Faculties make every reasonable effort to reduce such complexity and avoid administrative problems for students by, among other things, keeping each other informed about the progress of Joint Program applications and ensuring that once admitted, Joint Program students receive information and are included in class and electronic distribution lists appropriate to their stage in the Program. Nonetheless, students are likely to encounter some administrative glitches and are encouraged to work together with the Joint Program Coordinators and administrations to resolve them.

Advising, Supervision and Mentoring

Upon entering the MES program, each student is assigned a faculty **Advisor** whose role is to facilitate the development of the student's Plan of Study, from initial stages through to a final plan. The advising process aims to help students create innovative and exciting study programs, to ensure that academic requirements are met and that the objectives of the student's Plan of Study reflect appropriate levels of competence and scholarship. Advising is an integral part of the Joint Program's approach to interdisciplinary teaching and learning, and to the integration of environmental studies and law.

To facilitate this integration and help students navigate the two Faculties' requirements, the MES/JD Joint Program Coordinator in the MES Program is normally assigned as the Advisor to all incoming Joint

Program students. If a student enters the Joint Program from the first year of the MES program and already has an Advisor other than the MES/JD Joint Program Coordinator, the student might be reassigned to the MES/JD Joint Program Coordinator or should meet with the MES/JD Joint Program Coordinator on a regular basis.

Access to Osgoode faculty members for informal advice on the Plan of Study is also available through the MES/JD Joint Program Coordinator in Osgoode.

Normally Joint Program students find a **Supervisor for their Major Research** in the full-time faculty members in Environmental Studies or the Osgoode Faculty. Alternatively, a Supervisor from outside these Faculties can also be sought, pending approval of the Environmental Studies Graduate Program Director. It is also possible to have MES individual directed studies supervised by Osgoode faculty members.

Mentors and Student Organizations

On a volunteer basis, continuing students in the Joint Program are encouraged to work with incoming students to provide advice and support, facilitated by Joint Program Coordinators. A number of student organizations on campus are of potential interest to Joint Program students as well. For example, the Osgoode Environmental Law Society (ELS) is an active student organization with a keen interest in the public interest and social justice, especially as it pertains to the nexus between law and sustainable development. The mandate of the ELS is to raise the profile of environmental law as a potential profession for students who attend Osgoode and promote environmental sustainability at Osgoode and the York community in general. ELS works towards these goals through a speaker series with environmental law professionals as well as networking and campaigns with other environmental student organizations on campus. To get involved in ELS look for Clubs Day every September at Osgoode and for signs posted at the Faculty of Environmental Studies.

Funding and Benefits

As graduate students, students in the Joint Program are eligible for graduate student funding, including Graduate Assistantships, Teaching Assistantships and Research Assistantships.

Joint Program students sometimes hold teaching assistantships in EUC or another faculty when enrolled in courses at Osgoode. In such circumstances, Osgoode will not change a student's class schedule to accommodate their employment schedule. It is each student's responsibility to ensure that their work obligations do not conflict with their Osgoode class schedule. This is especially important in the first year of the JD program, when students are divided into Sections and take the obligatory curriculum with all the students in their Section. The integrity of the Sections is an important element of the first-year program and cannot be compromised to accommodate a student's work demands.

In the years in which students are registered full time at Osgoode, Joint Program students are eligible for Osgoode scholarships, awards and bursaries. This normally includes undergraduate awards and bursaries such as the Millennium Bursary, but students should check with the Osgoode Student Financial Services office for information about specific awards.

Students should be aware that while they may defer one faculty's offer of admission by one year so that they may start the Joint Program at the other faculty, they may not be able to defer acceptance of entrance scholarships and bursaries. A Joint Program student who is offered such a scholarship or

bursary by one faculty may wish to take this into account when deciding in which faculty to start the Joint Program. Please check with the student financial services offices of the relevant faculty for more information.

The Jim MacNeill Award is a scholarship fund specifically supporting Joint Program students. Details of this award, as well as other awards applicable to Joint Program students while registered full-time in EUC.

For information on funding opportunities, see [EUC Financial Support information page](#), the [Faculty of Graduate Studies' Funding page](#), and [Osgoode's financial support in the JD Program](#).

MES/JD students receive their graduate student funding, if provided, in three portions. The first portion is paid during their first year in the MES program. The second and third portions are paid in the Summer terms after Years 2 and 3 of the program, when students are once again registered full time in the MES Program.

The Osgoode Career Development Office and EUC Student and Alumni Resource Centre also provide guidance to students on summer jobs, post-graduation employment, internships, and field placements. For more information, refer to [EUC's experiential education page](#) and [Osgoode's experiential education page](#).

Library Benefits

MES/JD Joint Program students are eligible for the same library and computing privileges as all other full-time graduate students, from the time they begin the Joint Program onward.

Health Benefits

All full-time students in the Joint Program are eligible on an annual basis (beginning in the Fall Term) for health insurance coverage through the academic unit in which they are enrolled. Students enrolled in the Fall Term in the MES Program are eligible for the same annual coverage arrangements as regular full-time MES students. Joint Program students enrolled in the Osgoode Hall Law School in the Fall Term are eligible for the same coverage arrangements as regular, full-time Osgoode Hall Law School students. Please note that there are differences between health coverage for students in the two academic units. Information on Health Insurance Coverage for graduate students is available from the Graduate Student Association.

After Graduation

Graduates of the Joint Program have gone on to a variety of positions in private law firms, solo legal practice, government, non-profit groups, business corporations, the academy and other settings all over Canada and beyond. Examples include:

- Judicial clerkships with Canadian trial and appeal courts
- Major Canadian full-service law firms and environmental law specialty firms
- Legal departments of major corporations including Ontario Power Generation
- Federal Department of Justice
- Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
- The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport
- City of Hamilton
- Federal Indian Claims Commission

- West Coast Environmental Law
- Government of Nunavut
- Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity
- Various inquiry commissions

Professors Dayna Scott (EUC and Osgoode), Gus Van Harten (Osgoode), and Estair Van Wagner (Osgoode) are graduates of the MES/JD Joint Program.

Contact Information

Questions, comments or concerns about the MES/JD Joint Program should be directed to the following people:

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