SPECIAL ADVICE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL LL.M. STUDENT

Here are some thoughts about whether the New York Bar Exam with its new rigorous requirements, or a degree with many required courses, is a good choice for you.

Many students are considering how to select courses that will meet your various LL.M. goals: not only the degree, but a certificate, preparation for the New York Bar and maybe an externship. The new requirements of the New York Bar present a particular challenge for our students who have many goals, and it is important to think about whether being a member of the New York Bar or having a specialized degree rather than a more general one is one that is relevant to your long-term career goals. Keep in mind the following:

**New York Bar:**

- You do not need membership in a U.S. bar in order to work in the U.S. for the year after graduation, as permitted by your student visa. It is almost exclusively “career positions” that require bar membership.

- Ask yourself, and the lawyers in your home community, whether U.S. bar membership is essential to a career as an international lawyer in the country or region where you will spend your career.

- The majority of our international students who have their careers in the U.S. will be employed by the public sector (World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, International Monetary Fund, and other international organizations), which does not require bar membership for their employees.

- You may be sacrificing many enriching international law classes and some of the practical courses (examples: International Negotiations, Economic Reasoning and the Law) if you take the required 12 credits in American law, since Corporations is the only American business law class tested on the bar exam.

- Foundations of American Law, U.S. Legal Research Analysis and Writing, and Professional Responsibility in the U.S. (“PR in the US”), offered during the LL.M. Summer Experience, are helpful for students who wish to meet the New York Bar requirements. Enrolling in these courses during the summer will allow you to fulfill up to 2 of the required NY Bar courses and have more flexibility to choose your preferred courses during the fall and spring semester. This is particularly important and helpful for those pursuing a more specialized degree and/or certificate.

- See our bar discussion at: http://www.law.georgetown.edu/academics/academic-programs/graduate-programs/current-students/us-bar/index.cfm
U.S. Legal Research, Analysis and Writing:

- We strongly recommend all students, common law and civil law educated, to enroll in this course. It is very useful for all students since it focuses on one of the most important legal skills: legal communication. It is also required for the New York Bar exam. We offer the course in both fall and spring semesters, as well as during the LL.M. Summer Experience Program. (Note that the Summer U.S. Legal Research Analysis and Writing option is only recommended for those who are confident in their English skills and/or have professional experience working in English).

Does the title of my degree matter for my career?

- You should consider also whether the title of your degree really matters. We discuss this often with alumni who are partners at major firms, and with potential employers, and frankly, most do not know the titles of the degrees we offer. (An exception here is in Taxation.) As an example, a switch from IBEL with its more rigid requirements to the more flexible International Legal Studies or the General LL.M. (which is our most popular LL.M. for international students) should help ease course selection for those who feel they must take the bar exam, and will also make it much easier to take a spring externship.

- There is a lot of learning and valuable professional and personal experience that will occur outside the classroom, so you should be aware that you will give up some of those experiences if you are taking the maximum course credit load of 13 credits per semester.

What limitations and flexibility do I have on course selection and my degree?

- Very few limitations! You are eligible to request courses from the entire graduate and "upper-level" (second and third year courses) of the J.D. curriculum (except clinics). It is not necessary, e.g., to be in the Securities and Financial Regulation program to request a course in finance and securities, and you can take upper-level J.D. course such as Bankruptcy and Creditors' Rights or Environmental Law. Please note there is a small number of classes where priority in registration is given to students in a related specialized degree program (e.g. National Security LL.M. students will have priority in registering first for certain seats in some National Security-related courses), but all LL.M. students may request those classes if there is room after the degree students have registered.

- Lots of flexibility. You can change your specialization or add a certificate during your enrollment so we recommend you choose the courses that interest you the most without regard to whether they are part of the LL.M. degree you applied for. Many of our students change their degrees while here and add or drop a certificate. The important thing is to choose courses you want; do not focus on the name of the degree. (While there are some restrictions on switching from a more flexible into a more specialized degree, most students' interest in making a switch will arise when they start focusing on taking the courses that they want, so identifying the courses you are most interested in should be step 1.)
International Law I required as a “prerequisite” for many international classes:

- Many of our international students have taken a public international law course during their first law degree. This satisfies the requirement of our International Law I course, so students who have already taken such a class during their first degree do not need to take this course again – unless you want to. As a 3-credit course, however, it takes a lot of time and registering for it means there is one less course you can otherwise take.

What about other “prerequisites?”

- If a course has a “prerequisite” listed, you can register for the class now. As with the International Law I prerequisite, you often can meet a prerequisite based on a similar course in your home country, or through professional experience. Faculty usually permit students to meet a prerequisite by concurrent enrollment in the required course. At the first class session, faculty discuss the background you will need to be successful in the course. It is important that you do understand what background is required and decide whether you have previous relevant coursework or professional experience which will allow you to be successful in the course (For example, if you have never taken a U.S. Corporations class or had practice experience in corporate law, you many not want to enroll in a class on advanced topics in corporate law such as Mergers and Acquisitions). If you decide to take the course, you can then request a waiver of the prerequisite from the faculty member. We recommend you make the request during the first week of the semester after you have attended the first class – and after you have decided you want to enroll in the course.