

## **SJD PROGRAM PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES**

This document provides general information regarding (1) the qualifications and application process for admission to the SJD degree program Golden Gate University School of Law (the “Program”) and (2) the procedural steps, standards, and performance expectations applicable to students in the Program.

### **Application**

Applications for admission to the Program should be submitted to the SJD Program Admissions Committee, which is chaired by the Director of the Program. The Admissions Committee meets regularly and considers applications as they are received. With very rare exception, however, students admitted to the Program are required to begin their studies in the fall semester of the academic year, which begins in August.

### **Qualifications**

Applicants for admission to the Program must have an LLM degree judged by the Admissions Committee to be equivalent to an LLM degree earned at Golden Gate University School of Law. Applicants should submit the completed application form and the application fee, along with complete academic transcripts, a writing sample (preferably an original legal research paper written entirely by the applicant), three letters of reference (at least two of which should be from persons able to address the applicant’s academic ability and promise based on personal experience with the applicant), and a detailed statement of the applicant’s proposed area of legal research and writing. Because the language of instruction in the Program is English, English language proficiency is required of all applicants. Therefore, any applicant whose native language is not English must meet the current TOEFL requirement established by the Committee and published on the Program’s website. For applicants whose English language proficiency is otherwise clearly demonstrated, the TOEFL requirement may be waived at the discretion of the Director in consultation with the Committee. Program costs and financial requirements are also published on the Program’s website.

**Basic Programmatic Steps**

Once a student is admitted, completion of the Program requires four essential steps. Applicants and admitted students should be aware however, that admission to the Program is not a guarantee that the admitted student will earn the SJD degree. In fact, some admitted students never obtain the degree. Success requires hard work and total commitment on the part of the student. A successful doctoral dissertation demonstrates the candidate's ability to conduct extensive, independent research on a specific topic within his or her chosen field and to present the results of such research in a way that makes a substantive contribution to the field. Originality on the part of the student is imperative. An admitted student who fails to demonstrate satisfactory progress at any stage of the Program can be administratively withdrawn from the Program.

**Step 1: Constitution of Dissertation Committee**

Soon after a student is admitted to the Program, s/he should meet with the Director to discuss the student's topic and the composition of her or his dissertation committee. Thereafter, the Director shall appoint a suitable dissertation committee (the "Committee") of academics, judges and/or other appropriate professionals to monitor and guide the student in his or her chosen area of study.

**Step 2: Completion of Residency and Research Plan**

During the student's first year in the Program (typically the fall semester and spring semester of an academic year), s/he must complete eight required units in residency, including either the SJD Research course or the Graduate Legal Research course. During the same period, the student shall also (1) prepare a detailed research plan including a comprehensive bibliography, an introduction, and the first chapter of his or her dissertation, and (2) secure Committee approval of such plan and materials. The student shall have begun work on the dissertation in earnest by the end of his or her first year in the Program, and the Committee should be assessing the student during this time.

**Step 3: Oral Examination**

The Committee should conduct an oral examination of the student by the end of her or his second semester in the Program. The oral examination affords the Committee an opportunity to further assess the student, and to provide additional input and direction. In order to pass the oral examination and advance to candidacy, a student should be able to:

- (1) Succinctly and clearly describe the topic chosen for the dissertation;
- (2) Provide a convincing explanation of why the topic is worthy of study;
- (3) State the central thesis being proposed in the dissertation;
- (4) Describe in detail the contemplated organization of the dissertation; and
- (5) Explain the strategy for conducting the necessary research, including means of obtaining the remaining source materials.

If a student's research plan and materials are not satisfactory to the Committee, the oral examination may be postponed for one semester at the discretion of the Director in consultation with the Committee. The student will be required to register for Additional Residency during any such extension. If the student is not ready for the oral examination by the end of her or his third semester in the Program, the student will be administratively withdrawn from the Program, except in extraordinary circumstances as determined by the Director. In order to avoid such potential problems, the student should work with the Committee during the first year to develop her or his topic and research plan and materials properly.

#### **Step 4: Completion of the Dissertation**

Once the oral examination is satisfactorily completed, the student is advanced to candidacy and has four years to complete the Program and earn the SJD degree. During this period, the candidate should be registered for "SJD Candidacy" during every semester until completion of the Program. A candidate registered for SJD Candidacy Residency may enroll in Law School courses, but such courses will not be counted toward satisfaction of the requirements for any degree other than the SJD. Thus, an SJD candidate who wants to earn, for example, a second LLM degree during the course of his or her SJD studies must pay tuition at the prevailing rate for courses to be counted toward

satisfaction of the requirements for such second LLM degree. Moreover, an SJD student may pursue an additional degree while in the SJD Program only if s/he has obtained the written approval of the Director.

The candidate should remain in contact with the members of his or her Committee during this period, and must be able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Director that the candidate is making normal progress toward completion of the dissertation. Any candidate who fails to make such normal progress may be administratively withdrawn from the Program by the Director. Draft dissertation chapters should be submitted to committee members at appropriate intervals. It is unwise and inadvisable to wait until all the chapters have been completed before sending them to the Committee. The four year limitation on candidacy will be extended only in extraordinary circumstances as determined by the Director.

The dissertation should be double spaced, properly referenced, and not less than 200 pages excluding bibliography and other appendices. Acknowledgment and Dedication Pages are proper, but an abstract page is optional. The Cover Page should follow the format of the Appendix hereto. If a student is in any doubt regarding how to properly structure the final work, s/he should review copies of previously completed dissertations (available in the Law Library) and seek guidance from the Director or Program staff. The candidate's public defense of her or his dissertation can be scheduled only after the majority of the candidate's Committee members agree that the dissertation is of good quality and satisfies the Program standard of publishability. After such approval is obtained, the candidate should submit a minimum of three bound copies of the dissertation.

#### **Step 5: Public Defense of the Dissertation**

The final step toward completion of the Program is the candidate's successful, public defense of her or his dissertation before a panel that will usually consist of the candidate's Committee. The panel's decision will be announced at the end of the defense session or soon thereafter.

(Appendix)

**GOLDEN GATE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW**

**[DISSERTATION TITLE AS APPROVED]**

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**FULL NAMES OF CANDIDATE**

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**SUBMITTED TO THE GOLDEN GATE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW,  
DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL LEGAL STUDIES, IN FULFILMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE CONFERMENT OF THE DEGREE OF  
*SCIENTIAE JURIDICAE DOCTOR (SJD)*.**

**[LIST OF THE MEMBERS OF THE DISSERTATION COMMITTEE]**

**SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA**

**[DATE]**