



A road map for the

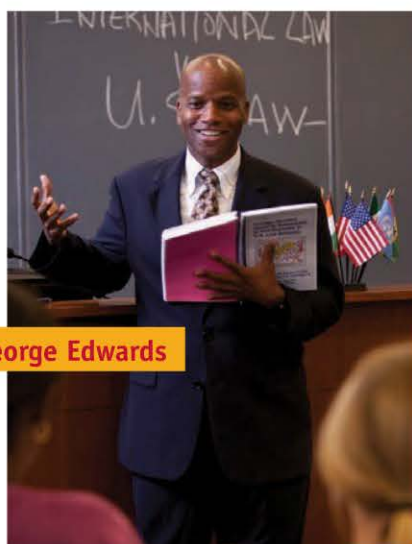
INTERNATIONAL LL.M. student

We sat down with George Edwards, an expert on LL.M. programs for international students, and asked him to guide us through the law school selection process.

Q. Why do international students come to the U.S. to join LL.M. programs?

A. The overarching reasons international students give for wanting to receive an LL.M. are:

First, to make you more marketable to U.S. clients in your home country and to clients from your country in the U.S. In the globalized business marketplace, there is a demand for lawyers well-versed in both sides of international deals. For example,



George Edwards

if you are a Brazilian lawyer with a U.S. LL.M., you can service U.S. clients doing business in Brazil and serve Brazilian clients doing business in the U.S.

Second, to help you get a better job or to do your current job better, using the expertise you will gain during your LL.M. year.

Third, as an economic investment in your career, whether in practicing law, judicial work, teaching or even in a non-law area. After you complete your LL.M., you may not reap immediate results, such as landing a new job or a promotion where you currently work. But in the long term, your U.S. law degree will likely benefit your career.

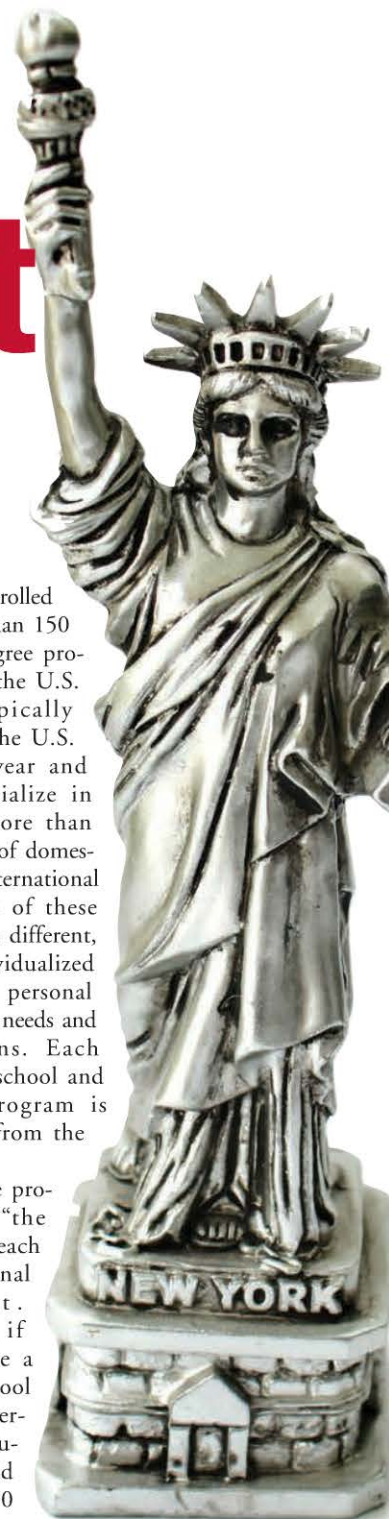
Fourth, to take a break from your current job, to gain some direction or just because. Some international students are young in their careers when they come to the U.S. for an LL.M. and may have little or no work experience in law. They may not even be admitted to practice law in their home countries and may lack direction on what they want to do with their careers. Others may be mid-career and just want a break from the office or courtroom.

Q. What is the best way to choose a U.S. law school?

A. In recent years, about 6,000 non-U.S.-trained lawyers or law graduates

per year enrolled in more than 150 LL.M. degree programs in the U.S. They typically study in the U.S. for one year and may specialize in one of more than 120 areas of domestic and international law. Each of these students is different, with individualized academic, personal and career needs and aspirations. Each U.S. law school and LL.M. program is different from the next.

No one program is “the best” for each international student. Indeed, if there were a “best” school for all international students, could all 6,000





students enroll there? Who would want to enroll in a school with 6,000 in one LL.M. class?

I encourage each international student not to seek “the best” LL.M. program to enroll in. I encourage you to choose the best LL.M. program for you. The best LL.M. program for you may not (will not!) be the best LL.M. program for all other LL.M. students.

Q. Should students consider a law school’s ranking and reputation?

A. I often hear students say they want to attend the “best U.S. law school,” the “highest ranked,” the school or LL.M. program with the “best reputation” or a “top 10” or “top 50” school or program. But, what does that mean?

Also, what happens if the “best” or “highest ranked” school does not offer the curricular specialization that you need, does not have professors who specialize in your area of interest, has tuition higher than you are able to afford or is located in a city or region of the country that does not suit you?

Again, I suggest that you not focus on the “best,” but focus on the school or program that is “best for you.” Focus on whether your needs and aspirations will likely be met at one school versus another,

and then choose accordingly.

Q. What is the “best” school or LL.M. program for a student?

A. Ideally a student’s strengths, interests and expectations will lead the student to a U.S. school or LL.M. program that complements his or her strengths and satisfies his or her interests and expectations. In theory there is a “best” or “ideal” U.S. LL.M. program for each student. The best for you may not be the best for another student. The goal is to find the best or ideal program for yourself, so that your needs will be met.

Q. How would you recommend that LL.M. applicants get information that is reliable?

A. Students need reliable information to help them make sound decisions about their legal education in the U.S.

You must gather critical information, weigh it, acknowledge and honor your personal prejudices and predilections and then make informed decisions based on rational, legitimate criteria you consider important.

Where do you get accurate, comprehensive information needed to make informed decisions about LL.M. programs, based on rational, legitimate criteria? One option

is my book. It is “LL.M. Roadmap: An International Student’s Guide to U.S. Law School Programs.” “LL.M. Roadmap” contains a wealth of information, including information about other important resources that you might contact for further information.

Another great source of information about studying law in the U.S. is EducationUSA, which is part of the U.S. State Department network and has over 450 advising centers in 200 countries around the globe. These centers will provide further information about student visas, scholarships, adjusting to U.S. life, and information about law study and studies in many other fields. To find an EducationUSA advising center near you, check www.educationusa.info. Some EducationUSA libraries even have hard copies of “LL.M. Roadmap” for visitors like yourself to use to help you prepare for your application to, acceptance to and success in a U.S. law school LL.M. program.

Q. Can you offer any more specific guidelines that students might follow as they seek to choose a U.S. law school or LL.M. program?

A. Yes. I encourage students to find a school or LL.M. program where they believe that the students’ reasonable expectations would be met. As mentioned, each student has different background, interests, goals, aspirations, and indeed, different expectations.

To try to sort out what to look for in a U.S. law school or LL.M. program, you might look to objective criteria about the school.

Chapter seven of “LL.M. Roadmap” lists 218 characteristics in 26 categories that LL.M. programs should possess to be able to meet a student’s reasonable expectations regarding high quality education and reaching your post-LL.M. goals. Armed with a self-assessment of your personal aspirations

and needs, and armed with comprehensive, reliable information about various schools, you are in a solid position to determine if a school or an LL.M. program meets the cash cow or diploma mill definition.

Ask yourself whether and to what extent a school possesses the 218 criteria, and assess how important you consider each criterion to be. Choose your school accordingly.

Q. What do you consider to be “reasonable expectations” that international students should have?

A. I believe it is reasonable for any international student to expect to be able to receive a high quality education at the school of his or her choice. It is the obligation of your school to provide that high quality education — with an appropriate knowledge base and training. Of course, you should study hard and excel on exams.

It is also reasonable for you to expect your school to assist you in reaching your career goals, whatever or wherever they are.

After you receive your LL.M. degree, you may want to work for the United Nations or become a judge or minister in your home country. You may want to develop expertise in a specific legal area, network with U.S. lawyers and law students or gain clients for your own law firm when you return home. You may want to work for a year at a Wall Street law firm, teach at a U.S. or overseas law school, or work with a non-governmental organization.

When choosing a school, ask the school whether and to what extent it will help you reach your goals. Choose a school that promises to help and that has a good track record of keeping its promises. Ask LL.M. graduates and current LL.M. students whether the school that interests you fulfilled its promises to them. Many schools do a fine job of helping students reach career goals. Some do not.

Q. Do you have any final tips for students seeking to join an LL.M. program in the U.S.?

A. I encourage applicants to do a self-assessment. I encourage you to take an inventory of yourself, your background,

your goals, your aspirations, your interests and your needs. Ask yourself questions such as: Why do you want to do an LL.M.? What do you hope to accomplish? Do you want a big school or a small school, in a big city or a small city? Do you have a specific substantive area of interest that you wish to pursue? What do you hope to do after you complete your LL.M.?

The ultimate question I encourage students to ask themselves is whether the

school or LL.M. program they choose will likely meet their reasonable expectations in areas such as career, personal, professional, financial and academic. Choose a school at which you believe your reasonable expectations will be met. Choose wisely!

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LL.M. in Miami
Florida International University

Master of Laws
for non-U.S. lawyers

Location: FIU Modesto A. Maidique Campus, College of Law, Miami, Florida	Lugar: FIU Modesto A. Maidique Campus, College of Law, Miami, Florida
Duration: One academic year (August - May)	Duración: Un año académico (agosto - mayo)
Credits required: 24	Créditos académicos obligatorios: 24
Tuition rate of 2014 - 2015: \$20,133 for the total academic year	Matrícula anual de 2014 - 2015: \$20,133 para el año académico
English proficiency exam requirement: TOEFL - 590 (paper-based), 250 (computer-based), 90 (internet-based) or IELTS - 7.0	Examen del dominio del inglés: TOEFL - 590 (paper-based), 250 (computer-based), 90 (internet-based) o IELTS - 7.0
Application deadline: May 15, 2015	Fecha límite de la solicitud: 15 de mayo, 2015
Application fee: \$30.00	Costo de solicitud: \$30.00

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