

February 9, 2014

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Re: Programa de Maestría

You have asked me to serve as an external reviewer of the Programa de Maestría en Derecho Corporativo e Internacional at CETYS University. To do so, I have reviewed the Self-Study as well as the responses of Maestra Maria Luisa Walther to some questions I sent by email.

Because I did not visit the Mexicali campus or talk in person with the administrators in charge of the program, students, or professors, this review is based solely on the information I have obtained from the documents listed above.

#### 1. Introduction

The Master's in Corporate and International Law at CETYS has been offered since 1999. The program was revised in 2003 in an effort to broaden its appeal for students. The concept is to offer an academic course of study in combination with independent learning opportunities for students. An effort to internationalize the program involves inviting foreign visitors [from other universities in Mexico and beyond] to teach in the program and encouraging foreign exchanges for the students. The program's inclusion of independent learning hours is intended to make it easier for students to complete the master's degree, including mixed modalities of instruction, and flexibility in the time and space of instruction.

The Mission and Vision of the Master's program focus on the development of specialists who can design and develop applied research projects, using the latest information technology, with respect to national and international legal problems.

In addition to the general learning outcomes of CETYS, the specific learning outcomes for graduates of the Master's program are that they will be able to help businesses with their legal problem; develop plans that enable a business to develop; promote change and innovation within an organization, helping it to improve administrative processes and its strategic position; be able to analyze the Mexican financial system and its impact in business development; specialize in topics such as industrial, environmental, or finance law; be able to serve as a mediator between Mexican, Canadian, and U.S. businesses, and develop legal research projects.

The program was for a number of years offered at both the Tijuana and Mexicali campuses, but now is offered exclusively at Mexicali because there was not sufficient demand in Tijuana to sustain the program.

## 2. Curriculum

The curriculum consists of 14 courses, each of which consists of six credits. Students receive .0625 credits for each hour of independent study. The independent studies may be done under the supervision of a professor at the university, or they may be completed independently outside of the institution. Students do not appear to have any elective courses. Students do prepare a final project of their choice at the end of the program. Given the small numbers of students, it would be difficult to offer a lot of choice as to courses, but thought might be given to allowing students some choice to go more in depth in areas of interest. Perhaps they do so in the independent hours, but I could not tell.

The Self-Study indicates that graduates have found the Master's degree to be very helpful in allowing them to advance in their careers. Graduates appear to suggest that in addition to the academic focus of the classes, they would like them to include more things that they encounter in their jobs. Since most students appear to use the degree for their jobs, it may be useful to explore this issue in more depth.

The Proyecto de Aplicación has apparently caused some concern because the projects have sometimes been supervised by professors in other disciplines who are not interested in law. From what I understood, this typically occurs when there is not a law professor assigned to supervise and the student does want to wait until the following year to complete it. Maestra Walter agrees that the projects should be geared toward law, even if supervised by a professor outside of law.

Based on the Self-Study, I do not have a very clear idea how the independent study time is spent, or how it is accounted for. Do the students record their own time? Are there particular projects that must be completed? How are those reviewed? Given the large amount of time in the program that is allocated to hours outside of class, it would seem there ought to be fairly close monitoring of the independent study time.

## 3. Professors

Most professors who teach in the Master's program do so in an executive format (over weekends), coming from universities across Mexico or elsewhere. The Self-Study indicates that they have participated in helping to guide the Master's program, even though they are not permanent employees of CETYS, and that they can interact with students remotely when not on campus. There would certainly be some benefits to bringing in experts from other parts of the country to teach the Master's students: they gain a breadth that extends beyond their region, and perhaps a diversity of views. Many of these visiting faculty members also have

doctoral work in progress, or hold a doctoral degree and it may not be possible to find faculty in and around Baja California with that educational level in the specialties desired. Some are also the authors of books and articles in their areas of expertise. The disadvantages of this large component of visitors would seem to be that they do not have the connections with the students, employers, and with the region that would come from professors more grounded in Baja California. They also may make it harder to run a cohesive program as well as to do assessment of student learning outcomes, given that the professors are coming from diverse institutions with different experiences.

The professorial evaluations appear to have been rising, and the Self-Study indicates student satisfaction with professors' knowledge of the subject matter they teach. Maestra Walter indicates that the professors often use a case-study method, and that the program is encouraging those who make no use of audio-visual aids to learn how to do this as students are often used to learning this way in their courses for Licenciatura. The Self-Study reports that student evaluations indicate that some of the professors tend to emphasize theory at the expense of focus on case-studies, and that the students would like professors to involve them more in the class, to help more with certain very difficult subjects, and to change the means of examining them because some of the exams do not do justice to the material taught in the course.

Given the heavy use of visitors in a weekend format, it would seem important to address the student comments and to see how the classes are taught. Ideally, a professor from the Mexicali campus should visit each of the classes for a couple of hours and do a thorough evaluation of the teaching and class dynamic. CETYS should decide whether the focus is theoretical or academic, or both, and provide the professors clear guidance as to what is expected and in what amounts. Also, the professors should be encouraged to call on the students for meaningful participation. The students are in classes for so many hours at a time that greater participation on their part would likely make the classes much more interesting.

#### 4. Assessment of Student Learning

The Self-Study indicates that during 2012, the first efforts to assess student learning were instituted, but the visiting professors were not trained in how to do this so the assessment was not completed. In 2013 assessments began and now several classes have assessed some of the learning outcomes. Generally the students appear to be doing well, as would be expected in a Master's program. However when the results are below what appears to be the norm (as is the case in *Tratados y Acuerdos Comerciales* (where only one student is sobresaliente, while 40% are insuficiente, and 2 (20%) are sin escala, some effort should be made to investigate whether this is due to the professor, or the students, or some other anomaly.

There are many student learning objectives for the Programa de Maestría, and they are ambitious. Part of the ongoing Assessment of Student Learning should be to see whether these outcomes are all being taught and mastered by the students.

I was puzzled by the statement in Section 5.3 of the Self-Study, Criterios de evaluación, which indicated that a student will not fail a course “por acumulado de faltas.” I would think that if completion of fourteen subjects is required and classes are offered, student attendance at those classes should count, and that failure to attend could lead to failure.

#### 5. Students

Those admitted to the Master’s program must take an examination and must have completed their studies in a program of Licenciatura. They are also interviewed prior to acceptance, and they must take an English placement test. I do not have any idea from the Self-Study about the selectivity of the program as far as its students.

Most of the students are working while they are doing the work of the Master’s degree. This accounts for the fact that they often do not complete it in a set number of years. Most of the students receive some sort of financial support, whether in the form of a scholarship or tuition discount.

#### 6. Other features of the Master’s program

##### a. Internationalization

In keeping with CETYS’ focus on international study, there is an effort to facilitate international visits or exchanges for the Master’s students. Some of the visitors come from universities outside of Mexico or have studied abroad, so this lends an international perspective. International legal issues are dispersed through the curriculum, as well as covered explicitly in three courses. It would seem difficult for students who are working in full-time jobs to be able to take advantage of international exchanges, but maybe this is possible during vacations or short intervals.

##### b. Research capacity

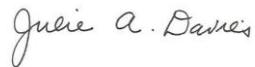
The links between the libraries in the three CETYS campus, the database collection, and the library lending program with libraries in San Diego California should all be very useful to the Master’s students. My understanding is that efforts to purge out-of-date sources in all disciplines are ongoing.

#### 7. Conclusions

Based solely on the documents that were provided to me, it appears that the Maestría program is meeting its own objectives, and that it is offering a distinctive

program in Baja California. If CETYS desires a more thorough external review, some of the issues raised by the Self-Study, which I have identified above, could be examined further by someone who is in a position to look more comprehensively at how the classes are taught, how the students are being tested, and whether the program is meeting its ambitious learning outcomes. I would also think it important to review the student work submitted to the professors and make sure that it is of the level and quality the university expects from post-graduate students. I would also advise looking at the types of examinations that are administered to the students and making sure they test what CETYS believes it is important for the graduates to know. Likewise, it would be important to calibrate grading among the visiting professors so as to be sure there is some commonality in what they expect from the students. It would also be helpful to have more specifics as to how the Master's degree has assisted students, beyond just an increase in rank, and to think about how and whether it could do more or do it differently. I note that the students indicated they would like to create some kind of an incubator for businesses. This is an intriguing idea, as it could allow them to put into practice some of what they are learning and perhaps even become entrepreneurs. There are other models of incubators in universities that could be explored.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julie A. Davies".

Julie Davies  
Professor of Law