

SOUTHWESTERN

LAW SCHOOL

Los Angeles, CA

Examination Policy

Administrative policy approved July 22, 2022. Effective immediately.

Revision history: Formerly a part of the annually revised Student Handbook; established as a standalone policy August 2022; revised in October 2023.

Related policies: Religious and Cultural Observances Policy; Incomplete Grade Policy; Grading, Scholastic and Other Honors, and Specialized Courses Policy; On-Campus Examination Policies (posted on the Registrar’s Office page of the Portal); Student Honor Code.

Scheduled Review Date: July 2025 (Registrar’s Office)

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A. Examination Procedures

All midterm and final examinations will be in person and on campus, even if the course is being taught remotely. The course syllabus will include any exceptions to the in-person and on-campus midterm and final examinations. The Law School reserves the right to change exam administration from on-campus to remote at any time where circumstances render on-campus exam administration unsafe or unfeasible. If circumstances allow, the administration will work with students approved for remote attendance to provide appropriate on-campus testing space.

The examination schedule will be published on the Registrar's Office and Course Specific Information pages on Southwestern's portal. Each student is responsible for registering for courses that allow for an examination schedule that can be managed without alteration. Each student must take the examination on the date and time scheduled for the study and section in which the student is enrolled. No allowance will be made for students who are late to the examination or who fail to complete any part of the examination for any reason. Exceptions to this policy will be made only in the following instances:

1. Administrative change of exam date or time

Administrative changes of time or date resulting in a conflict of exam schedules are a basis for changing exam time and date. Relief from such a conflict will be granted when the conflict is not apparent at registration. A conflict occurs only when two or more examinations are scheduled on the same date and time. Any other administrative changes to the time or date of an exam may be made only due to extraordinary circumstances, religious observance, disability, and pregnancy accommodations.

The following are examples of reasons that may qualify under this extraordinary circumstances provision:

a. Student illness

The student will be expected to visit and obtain appropriate documentation from a treatment provider, such as a physician. The student must also obtain a written statement about the student's illness and fitness to return. If the student receives appropriate documentation on a timely basis, the Associate Dean for Student Services may permit the student to take the examination at the time and under the conditions the school administration determines. If the student does not visit or obtain the appropriate documentation on a timely basis, the student risks receiving an "F" or "Administrative F" grade in the course. Depending on when the illness occurs during the examination cycle, when the appropriate documentation is received, and other factors, the student may have to wait until the next time the examination for that course is offered to take the examination.

b. Death or serious illness

Death or serious illness of a person in the immediate family or another person with whom the student has a similarly close relationship, which requires the student's attention away from the Law School. Please note that while the Law School may be able to reschedule an examination that falls on the day of a funeral, it may not be able to reschedule the

examination several days after the funeral.

c. *Unavoidable conflicts*

Unavoidable conflicts with court hearings or other administrative proceedings connected to the Law School clinical programs, but only if the student has exhausted all means of avoiding the conflict by attempting to reschedule the hearing or to have another attorney handle the hearing if feasible.

d. *Unavoidable military commitment*

Requests for such changes must be directed to the Student Services Office.

2. Deferment of examination for exigent circumstances

When extraordinary circumstances prevent a student from taking an examination at the scheduled time, the following procedures are to be followed:

- a.** The student must notify the Student Services Office and the Registrar's Office **immediately** of the circumstances preventing the student from taking the exam. The student must provide notice **before** the exam.
- b.** The student must submit, as soon as possible, a [Special Exam Administration Form](#) requesting a deferred examination and appropriate documentation supporting the request to the Student Services Office.
- c.** If, after considering the request, permission is granted for a deferred examination, an alternative exam date will be scheduled for that exam period, or a mark of Incomplete will be entered for that course. Absent extraordinary circumstances as determined by the Associate Dean for Student Services or the Registrar's Office, examinations that qualify for rescheduling under this policy will be rescheduled for the next available time that does not create a new conflict under this rule, which may be on a weekend or a date after the official close of the examination period. Absent extraordinary circumstances approved by the Vice Dean(s), no examination will be rescheduled for a time before the regularly scheduled examination. Within these parameters, the Registrar's Office can select the date, time, and location of the deferred examination.
- d.** In most circumstances, a deferred examination to make up an Incomplete

will be taken on the next occasion when the faculty member from whom the student took the course offers an examination in that course. If the faculty member is not offering an exam in that course within one year, the student **must** take the regularly scheduled exam from any other faculty member offering an exam in that course within one year.

- e. It is the student's responsibility to submit a [Special Exam Administration Form](#) to the Student Services Office for approval at least one month before the exam period in which the deferred exam to make up the mark of an Incomplete will be taken. The Student Services Office will forward the approved form to the Registrar's Office to make appropriate arrangements for the deferred exam.
- f. A student graduating before the course is offered again may petition the Associate Dean for Student Services for approval to make up the exam to avoid a delay in graduation. The student must **refrain from seeking approval directly from the professor** as such action will compromise the anonymity of the exam. The student may not graduate with a mark of Incomplete on the transcript.

A student who is denied permission to take a deferred exam or a student who fails to take an approved deferred exam within one year will receive an Administrative F (*F) in the course unless the delay was approved in writing by the Associate Dean for Student Services (e.g., in the case of a disability or pregnancy accommodation). An Administrative Fail is calculated as an F in the student's GPA.

3. **On-campus examination policies**

Students are expected to review and abide by Southwestern's [On-Campus Examination Policies](#), which is located on the Portal. Policy violations may constitute misconduct under Southwestern's Student Honor Code.

4. **Exemplify and ExamSoft**

Exemplify is the student interface for ExamSoft, Southwestern's computer-based testing software. Students must ensure that their computer systems and software are up-to-date and compliant with Exemplify's requirements before sitting for exams. Students are responsible for uploading their exam responses correctly and, if there is an issue, working directly with ExamSoft to address it.

B. **Criteria for Final Course Grade**

The final grade in all seminars will be based on the criteria set out in the course syllabus.

In all other courses, subject to the below paragraphs, in-class examinations will determine final grades. An examination's minimum length will equal the number of units allotted to the course; however, faculty may elect to give a three-hour exam for a four-unit course. Any faculty member can increase a two-hour examination to three hours and a three-hour exam to four hours, but no examination will exceed four hours.

Legal Analysis, Writing, and Skills I and II, clinics, externships, practicums, skills courses, courses satisfying the writing requirement, Independent Study, credit/no credit courses, and any course specifically adopted by the faculty to be graded on a different basis, are exempt from this provision.

The final examination will be an in-class examination (unless remote administration of exams becomes necessary) that will include an essay-type question or questions which will require a minimum of 40 minutes to analyze and develop an appropriate answer. Multiple-choice questions may comprise up to 50% of the final examination.

In all first-year doctrinal courses (including those that are part of the part-time program and scheduled in the second year), the Law School encourages faculty to use a variety of pre-final examination assessment methods, subject to the faculty member basing at least 75% of the final grade on the final examination, which must include an in-class essay examination. Each graded formative assessment or type of formative assessment (e.g., all quizzes) may not count for more than 15% of the final grade.

In all upper division required and elective courses, the Law School encourages faculty to use a variety of pre-final examination assessment methods, subject to the faculty member allocating at least 50% of the final grade on the final examination which must include an in-class essay examination.

Faculty may use a variety of formative assessments beyond essay and multiple-choice (e.g., shorter essays focused solely on analysis or multiple-choice with short answer explanation), if the assessment fits with the course learning objectives.

Nothing precludes any faculty member from requiring the satisfactory completion of additional ungraded assignments during a semester. Such work will not have any bearing on a student's final grade, but the failure to satisfactorily complete any such assignments will result in the student receiving a grade of F.

The grading methodology used for the final course grade must be delineated in the course syllabus by the first day of class.

The above provisions are waivable upon application to the Office of the Vice Dean(s).

C. Examination Review

Faculty typically review final examinations with students upon individual student request. All written examinations will indicate raw points for each question, and a total raw point score will be marked. Students should be aware that the faculty may only change grades as provided in the Policy on Changing Grades section of the Grading, Scholastic and Other Honors, and Specialized Courses Policy. The purpose of the review is solely to enhance the student's education.

1. Grades below C+

A student with a grade of C or below is entitled to an individual conference with the faculty member to determine the causes of the student's poor performance. This conference should not be construed as an opportunity to dispute the grade assigned.

2. Grades of C+ and above

Individual conferences with faculty cannot be expected, but some feedback is appropriate for students with grades of C+ and above. Members of the faculty may devise their methods to provide such feedback.

3. Examination return and retention policy

The multiple-choice score sheet is returned to the student. The law school retains the question-and-answer sheets for multiple-choice questions and prohibits copying, photographing, or duplicating these items. The Law School will make this portion of any examination available to the student during business hours for a reasonable period following the completion of the grading process.

Bluebooks and typed examinations are distributed to students following the completion of the grading process, typically from the Registrar's Office. Graded exams are retained in the Registrar's Office for one year and then destroyed.

Copies of many older essay examinations are available through Southwestern's Portal.

Faculty members are encouraged, but are not required, to provide either a model answer or an outline of the issues indicating how they were weighted.

Faculty members are encouraged to conduct a "post-mortem" review of the fall exam in a two-semester course early in the spring semester.

D. Policy Revisions

Southwestern expressly reserves the right to change or modify any aspect of this policy at

any time, with or without prior notice.