

SOUTHWESTERN

LAW SCHOOL Los Angeles, CA

Administrative Withdrawal Policy

Administrative policy approved August 5, 2022.

Revision history: This policy clarifies information about administrative withdrawals that had been included in the Student Handbook (before the 2022–2023 academic year) and referred to in other policies; technical edits were made in August 2023; revised in May 2024 to address distance education courses offered in a primarily asynchronous format.

Related policies: Attendance Policy; Religious and Cultural Observances Policy

Scheduled Review Date: June 2025 (Student Services Office)

A. Definition and Overview

Under Southwestern’s Attendance Policy, a student enrolled in a course at Southwestern Law School may be administratively withdrawn when absent for more than 20% of regularly scheduled class sessions in a residential course, or the designated equivalents in asynchronous and hybrid courses. Students enrolled in a January intersession or mini-term course must attend all class sessions to receive academic credit.

Being administratively withdrawn means the student will not receive academic credit for a course. The administrative withdrawal will appear as “WA” on the student’s transcript. Students administratively withdrawn from a required course must repeat that course during the next possible term unless the Associate Dean for Student Services approves the student taking the course in a different term for a compelling reason.

B. Process

When a student has exceeded the permissible absences for a course, the Student Services Office will notify the student in writing (via email) that they have been administratively withdrawn from the course and give them five business days to appeal the administrative withdrawal.

During the appeal period, the student should continue attending the class and checking in via

the Qwickly attendance app. A student in a course with an asynchronous component should continue completing their assignments during the appeal period.

A student who wishes to appeal should prepare a detailed written explanation demonstrating compelling circumstances for granting the appeal. The student should submit the appeal to the Student Services Office.

More specifically, the student should provide specific information about the reasons they missed each class session or why they failed to complete the weekly assignments for the asynchronous course—not just the reason for the absence that triggered the administrative withdrawal. Although supporting documentation is not required, it will be weighed heavily.

Compelling circumstances may include missing classes for illness, medical treatment, a student's religious or cultural observances, or a school-sponsored activity (e.g., attending a moot court competition or a hearing as part of a clinical course). Other reasons also may qualify. Although students are not required to report these absences or missing asynchronous coursework to the Student Services Office in advance or contemporaneously, they are encouraged to do so and to provide any supporting documentation they may have.

When a student provides written notice to the Student Services Office in the first week of the term about anticipated absences due to religious or cultural observances, those will be considered compelling circumstances. Any appeal the student files later needs to address only the other absences. A student who provides pre-class or contemporaneous information about an absence to the Student Services Office should attach that information to any appeal they may later submit.

Following receipt of an appeal, the Associate Dean for Student Services will determine whether to grant the appeal, deny the appeal, or request additional information to evaluate the appeal. Factors considered include but are not limited to, the number of absences; the circumstances underlying each absence, not just the absence triggering the administrative withdrawal; whether the students reported any absences in advance or contemporaneously; whether the student contacted the faculty member, the Students Services Office, the Director of Online J.D. Administration, or the Associate Dean for SCALE in advance or contemporaneously; the nature of the documentation provided (if any); steps the student took to learn what they missed in each session (e.g., listening to a recording, seeking notes from a classmate, attending a faculty member's office hours to ask clarifying questions, etc.). For students enrolled in an asynchronous course, additional factors considered include the amount of incomplete coursework and the circumstances why coursework was not completed.

The Associate Dean for Student Services, in consultation with a Vice Dean, has discretion concerning the outcome of the appeal. The Associate Dean for Student Services will also consult the Associate Dean for Online Education if the appeal involves a student enrolled in

the Online J.D. Program and the Associate Dean for SCALE if the appeal involves a student enrolled in the SCALE Program. The determination is final and not subject to further review.

C. Policy Revisions

Southwestern reserves the right to change or modify any aspect of this policy at any time, with or without prior notice.