

SOUTHWESTERN

LAW SCHOOL Los Angeles, CA

Policy on Student Academic Work-Product Originality (Plagiarism) for All Southwestern Students and Collaboration Rules in Legal Analysis, Writing, and Skills Courses

Administrative policy approved July 22, 2022.

Revision history: Technical and substantive edits made in August 2023; substantive edits made in May 2024 to address draft submissions; edits made in August 2025, including a title change.

Related policies: Student Honor Code; Code of Student Professionalism and Conduct

Scheduled Review Date: April 2027 (Director of Legal Analysis, Writing, and Skills)

A. Overview

Law students are expected to learn the law and the tools of legal practice while preparing for the demands and responsibilities of the legal profession. Students must establish habits that will carry them forward as professionals. As measures of learning and preparation, a law student's academic work must be their own.

Section B of this policy defines plagiarism for all courses, co-curricular activities, and extracurricular activities at Southwestern Law School.

Section C of this policy articulates the collaboration rules for students enrolled in a Legal Analysis, Writing, and Skills (LAWS) course.

B. Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism means submitting or presenting any work, in any form, that is not a student's own without acknowledging the source. A student must not appropriate ideas, facts, or language from the work of another, including a machine or generative artificial intelligence tool, without proper attribution. All student work must be original. Any sources used must be fully cited. However, unless prohibited by a faculty member for a particular class or assignment and subject to Section C.4 of this policy, students may use spell-checking and grammar-checking tools on their student-created content for a submission without providing a citation or other disclosure. Plagiarism is a serious Student Honor Code (Honor Code) violation that may result in expulsion; even lesser punishments imposed under the Honor Code may result in career-limiting consequences.

C. LAWS Collaboration Rules

Unless provided otherwise in the course syllabus or permitted by the LAWS professor for discrete assignments, all LAWS assignments must be original works of authorship. To clarify when a work is **not** an original work of authorship, this section describes specific examples of improper conduct. Because it is impossible to anticipate and list every possible example of improper conduct, the examples provided are illustrative and not exhaustive. Therefore, the absence of a particular act from this document does not prevent appropriate discipline under the Honor Code or the Code of Student Professionalism and Conduct.

A violation of any portion of Section C of this policy may result in an "F" on the affected LAWS assignment and an "F" in the course. Grading remains within the faculty member's discretion. Faculty members are required to refer any violation or suspected violation of Section C to the Honor Code Committee as misconduct under the Honor Code.

This section does not override or revise the school's plagiarism policy set forth above and in the Honor Code.

1. Collaboration with other LAWS students

Unless otherwise restricted by the course professor, students may discuss general LAWS concepts with other students in the LAWS course. A general LAWS concept is a broad principle, strategy, or skill taught in the LAWS course that can be applied to many different legal problems and does not reveal the specific work a student is producing for an assignment. Examples of general LAWS concepts include, but are not limited to, how to structure your paper using the paradigm taught by your professor (e.g., CREAC), techniques for synthesizing multiple cases into a single legal rule, how to identify the court's holding of a case from the court's opinion, the difference between binding and persuasive authority, how to identify policy in a case and how to use it in your assignment, etc.

Students may not share their notes (other than class notes), case lists, printouts, charts, drafts, or any other materials that contain the students' thoughts on the assignment, and may not work together except as expressly permitted by the professor. Students may not read written prohibited materials out loud to another student, as this activity constitutes impermissible collaboration.

Students enrolled in SCALE may not discuss thoughts, ideas, or written information with any student enrolled in the LAWS course in the full-time day program, PLEAS, part-time day program, or the Online J.D. program. They may discuss LAWS only with other students currently enrolled in the SCALE LAWS course; even then, discussion should be limited to general LAWS concepts described above.

Students enrolled in the full-time day program, PLEAS, part-time day program, or the Online J.D. program may not discuss thoughts, ideas, or written

information with any student enrolled in SCALE. They may discuss LAWS only with students in the full-time day program, PLEAS, part-time day program, or Online J.D. program; even then, discussion should be limited to general LAWS concepts described above.

2. Collaboration with anyone other than a LAWS student

Students are encouraged to seek assistance from their LAWS professor and teaching assistants, the faculty librarians who teach research, and the Writing Center staff. These individuals have been instructed on how to give students appropriate assistance.

Students may not seek any assistance outside of these sources. For example, a student may not seek assistance from other faculty members or deans, staff outside the Writing Clinic, family members, acquaintances, mentors, tutors, Dean's Fellows, or other upper-level students, regardless of whether the individual is an attorney or has attended law school. Assistance of any kind, including substantive guidance and help with grammar and citations, is prohibited.

3. Using court documents prepared by attorneys

Students may review court briefs and other court documents prepared by attorneys in actual cases about matters that relate to the student's assignment. However, students should exercise caution when consulting these materials because not all materials prepared by attorneys are well-written, and the availability of the materials does not indicate their quality.

As reiterated in Section B of this policy, students must never copy or paraphrase another's words without putting quoted language in quotation marks and providing proper attribution for quoted and paraphrased material by citing the source. Moreover, students must never use someone else's idea without providing proper attribution by citing the source. Using another's words, thoughts, and ideas without proper attribution is plagiarism.

4. LAWS generative AI policy

All submissions in a LAWS I or LAWS II course, whether in draft or final form, including papers, projects, exams, reflections, and oral presentations, must be the student's own work. To avoid plagiarism, cheating, or improper collaboration, when a submission includes or relies on content borrowed from other sources or authorities, the submission must cite the sources appropriately.

Each LAWS professor will instruct students on how to cite sources, including generative AI sources, appropriately for their assignments.

Consistent with Section B of this policy, LAWS students may use spell-checking and grammar-checking tools on the content that the student created for a submission without providing a citation or disclosure.

However, students may not use generative artificial intelligence tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, Jasper, Lex, GrammarlyGO, CoPilot, or any other chatbot or generative AI tool) to generate, revise, or edit the content of any assignment unless their LAWS professor explicitly directs in writing or grants explicit written permission for that assignment.

If a student is unsure whether they are permitted to use a specific tool or platform for an assignment, it is their responsibility to ask their LAWS professor in advance.

5. Consequences of academic dishonesty in draft submissions

Academic dishonesty—including plagiarism, cheating, and improper collaboration—in preparing a draft or other initial work of an assignment, compromises the integrity of the initial work and all subsequent submissions of the work. Thus, using content or ideas derived from a draft tainted by academic dishonesty in subsequent submissions will subject a student to discipline for both the initial draft and the subsequent submissions. Each submission of an assignment tainted by academic dishonesty may be treated as a separate and additional Honor Code violation. If Southwestern detects academic dishonesty in a draft, and the student is permitted to continue in the course, the student may be required to submit a new paper on an alternative topic, in addition to facing other penalties.

D. Policy Revisions

Southwestern reserves the right to change or modify any aspect of this policy at any time, with or without prior notice. Matters raised for discipline will, absent extraordinary circumstances, be reviewed using the version of the policy in effect when the alleged conduct occurred.