

# SOUTHWESTERN LAW SCHOOL

## L O S A N G E L E S

### Graduation Requirements Policy

**Revision history:** Formerly a part of the annually revised Student Handbook. Established as a standalone policy in August 2022.

**Related policies:** [TBD].

**Scheduled Review Date:** June 2023 (Dean of Students and Diversity Affairs Office; Registrar's Office)

#### A. Overview

Requirements to receive the Juris Doctor degree from Southwestern Law School are listed below. See Part II Academic Policies and Procedures for the standards that a student must meet to remain in good academic standing while enrolled at the law school. (SCALE and LL.M. students should refer to the SCALE Program Policies and Masters of Laws Program Policies for graduation requirements. SCALE and LL.M. students are subject to any of the following policies that are not specifically delineated in the SCALE Program Policies and Masters of LAWS Program Policies).

1. All students must satisfactorily complete 87 units. No course will be considered satisfactorily completed, and no course or unit credit will be granted, if a grade of F is received. A student may not graduate with a grade of Incomplete on their transcript. A student may not extend the degree date after 87 units and required courses have been satisfactorily completed.
2. All students are required to earn 6 residency units to graduate. "Residency credits" are defined in Section C below.
3. All students must maintain a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of at least 2.330 (C+), calculated on the basis of all work completed at Southwestern.
4. All students must satisfy the provisions of the "Minimum Number of Classroom Credits Required for J.D. Students" policy.

5. All students must adhere to the provisions of the "Length of Course of Study" Policy.
6. All students must enroll in and complete all courses designated by the faculty as required courses. The required courses are (in alphabetical order, not in the order students take the courses):
  - Business Associations
  - Civil Procedure I and II
  - Constitutional Criminal Procedure
  - Constitutional Law I and II
  - Contracts I and II
  - Criminal Law
  - Evidence
  - Legal Analysis, Writing and Skills (LAWS) I and II
  - Legal Profession
  - Property
  - Torts
  - A course that satisfies the upper-division writing requirement
  - 6 units of coursework that satisfies the experiential requirement

In addition, see Section F below about the required Bar Readiness Curriculum.

7. All students must pass all required courses with a grade of D- or higher. A student who fails a required course must repeat that course during the next semester in which it is offered. (See Academic Policies and Procedures, Repeated Courses for information concerning the calculation of a passing grade in a two-semester course and the effect of repeated courses on the GPA.)
8. Any student who has been academically disqualified and subsequently readmitted to the law school may be required to meet additional requirements as determined by the Academic Standards Committee.
9. It is the responsibility of the student to regularly monitor their academic progress and make sure that they comply with all graduation requirements and academic standards.

## **B. Character and Fitness**

In addition, absent extraordinary circumstances as determined by the Dean, the student must not have any pending Honor Code, disciplinary, or Title IX matters; unresolved admission application amendments; or criminal charges.

## **C. Residency Units**

In addition to the 87 units required to graduate, students must satisfy the Southwestern residency requirements. All students are required to earn 6 residency units to graduate. They are earned as follows:

1. Traditional day students earn one residency unit for each fall or spring semester completed satisfactorily (6 semesters x 1 residency unit = 6 residency units).
2. Traditional evening and PLEAS/Part-time day students earn 0.75 of a residency unit for each fall or spring semester completed satisfactorily (8 semesters x .75 residency unit = 6 residency units).
3. SCALE students earn 0.67 of a residency unit for each term or grading period completed satisfactorily. SCALE students attend nine terms, or grading periods, during their program (9 periods x .67 residency unit = 6 residency units).
4. Residency units are not earned for any summer session, summer-abroad law program, or intersession program, with the exception of units completed in the required SCALE summer session.
5. Please note:
  - a. Residency units are earned when a student is charged the normal, flat-rate tuition for a semester or SCALE term and completes at least one unit.
  - b. If a student has completed the residency requirement but has not completed 87 units, the student will be charged per unit tuition for any remaining units. Students in the SCALE 2.5 Year Modified Curriculum are excluded.
  - c. If a student has not completed the residency requirement, regardless of how many units the student needs to graduate, the student will be charged flat-rate tuition for a semester or SCALE term. For example, if a student needs only a few units to reach 87 units, but has not met the residency requirements, the student will be charged the full flat-program rate because tuition for six or eight semesters has not been paid or terms of flat rate tuition have not been completed.
  - d. For information regarding early graduation requests, please see Appendix A.

#### **D. Upper-Division Writing Requirement**

Southwestern has adopted an upper-division writing requirement for graduation. A student may fulfill this requirement by taking either a seminar or a course that has been specifically approved and designated as meeting the writing requirement. Successful completion of the Law Review or Law Journal fall writing courses will also satisfy the

writing requirement. Some courses designated to meet the writing requirement may also be designated as meeting the experiential requirement; however, the same course cannot be used to satisfy both requirements. Students who take a course to fulfill the writing requirement may not use the same course to fulfill the experiential requirement.

Because writing instruction requires a low student-faculty ratio and out-of-classroom supervision of the students' research and writing, enrollment in seminar and similar courses normally will be limited to 20 students.

For more information regarding seminar standards and guidelines, see Appendix C.

A course may be specifically approved and designated by the faculty as meeting the upper-division writing requirement pursuant to the following criteria:

1. The course must require the student to timely submit, at points throughout the semester to be established by the instructor, at least three written and graded assignments, at least two of which must be research assignments. The written research assignment(s) must total at least 30 pages.
2. Examples of writings that would meet the research requirement are the following: research memoranda, memoranda of points and authorities, trial briefs, appellate briefs, and papers of publishable quality.
3. Examples of writing that would not meet the research requirement are the following: bare pleadings, discovery requests, and documents not involving substantial original research and writing by the student.
4. A course can be designated as meeting the writing requirement upon request of the professor to the faculty curriculum committee, pursuant to these criteria. The writing requirement designation does not attach to a course title, but to the specific requirements of a course as described in the registration materials distributed to the students. The designation of a course meeting a writing requirement must occur prior to the commencement of the academic term in which the course is scheduled.

Assuming that the student is otherwise eligible to register for the seminar or course that satisfies the writing requirement, registration is open to second- and third-year day students and second-, third-, and fourth-year evening, and PLEAS/Part-time day students.

## **E. Experiential Requirement**

In accordance with ABA Standard 303, Southwestern has adopted an experiential requirement for graduation. Students are required to complete at least 6 credit hours of course work that has been specifically approved and designated as meeting the experiential requirement. Announcement of such courses is made in the registration

materials each year. Some courses designated to meet the experiential requirement may also be designated as meeting the writing requirement. However, the same course cannot be used to satisfy both requirements. Students who take a course to fulfill the experiential requirement may not use the same course to fulfill the writing requirement.

#### **F. Bar Readiness Curriculum**

All students are required to complete a Bar Readiness Curriculum before their graduation. Courses include: Cal Bar Writing: Skills and Strategies, MBE: Skills and Strategies, Wills and Trusts, Community Property, Remedies, and/or other bar-related courses. The Bar Readiness Curriculum is subject to change due to Southwestern's ongoing commitment to annually review and modify its course offerings to better prepare students for the Bar Exam.

Students who have a GPA of 3.33 or above at the end of their second year in bar-tested courses completed as part of their curriculum in their first or second year may opt out of the Bar Readiness Curriculum. For traditional students, the bar-tested courses used to calculate the opt-out eligibility GPA currently include: Torts, Property, Civil Procedure I and II, Criminal Law, Contracts I and II, Evidence, Constitutional Law I and II, and Business Associations. For part-time students, these courses currently include: Torts, Property, Civil Procedure I and II, Criminal Law, Contracts I and II, and Constitutional Law I and II. The Bar Readiness Curriculum was carefully constructed to maximize all students' chances of passing the bar exam on their first attempt. Thus, even for students who have a GPA at or above 3.33, the Bar Readiness Curriculum is strongly recommended.

Each spring, the Dean of Students Office will publish the Bar Readiness Curriculum for the upcoming academic year. Requirements can be modified from year to year based on course offerings.

#### **G. Graduate Employment Survey and Exit Interview with the Career Services Office**

In order to be awarded the JD degree, all graduating students must complete a Graduate Employment Survey, as well as an Exit Interview with the Career Services Office. The ABA and NALP require all law schools to collect this information, which is reported anonymously in order to protect the graduate's privacy.

#### **H. Awarding Diplomas**

Southwestern Law School will award diplomas at the conclusion of the fall and spring semesters, the summer term, and the January intersession, after confirming with the Registrar's Office that graduation and other requirements have been met. Absent extraordinary circumstances as determined by the Dean, to receive a diploma, a student must have completed all graduation requirements by the date the Vice Dean(s) establishes for faculty to submit grades for graduating students. In addition, absent extraordinary circumstances as determined by the Dean, the student must not have any

pending Honor Code, disciplinary, or Title IX matters; unresolved admission application amendments; or criminal charges.