

SOUTHWESTERN

LAW SCHOOL
Los Angeles, CA

Administrative Withdrawal Policy

Administrative policy approved August 5, 2022. Effective immediately.

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

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Southwestern’s Attendance Policy, a student enrolled in a course at Southwestern Law School may be administratively withdrawn when absent for more than 20% of regularly scheduled class sessions in that course. 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Being administratively withdrawn means the student will not receive academic credit for a course.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 Students administratively withdrawn from a required course must repeat that course during the next possible term unless the Associate Dean for Student Services approves the student taking the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.

As noted in the Attendance Policy, any absence counts toward the maximum of 20% of permitted absences.

B. Process

When a student has exceeded the permissible absences for a class, the Student Services Office notifies the student in writing (via email) that they have been administratively withdrawn from the course and gives them five business days to appeal the administrative withdrawal.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 who wishes to appeal should prepare a detailed written explanation demonstrating compelling circumstances 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—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 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 any absences were reported 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.).

The Associate Dean for Student Services, in consultation with one or both Vice Deans, has discretion concerning the outcome of the appeal. The determination is final and not subject to further review.