

SOUTHWESTERN

LAW SCHOOL

Los Angeles, CA

Academic Policies and Procedures

Faculty policy. Effective immediately.

**Revision history:** Formerly a part of the annually revised Student Handbook; established as a standalone policy in August 2022; revised in August 2023; technical edits made in September 2023; technical edits, including related to the Online J.D. Program made in May 2024; revised May 2025 given creation of standalone policies for repeated courses and course sequence.

**Related policies:** SCALE Program Policies; Master of Laws Program Policies; Student Honor Code; Incomplete Grade Policy; Academic Disqualification, Academic Probation, and Academic Improvement Program Policies; Registration Policies and Procedures

**Scheduled Review Date:** June 2025 (Student Services Office)

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A. General Policies

This policy is designed to support and enhance each student’s legal education and should be referred to frequently. SCALE and LL.M. students should refer to the *SCALE Program Policies* and *Master of LAWS Program Policies* for specific academic policies governing those programs. SCALE and LL.M. students are subject to any of the following policies that are not explicitly delineated in the *SCALE Program Policies* and *Master of LAWS Program Policies*.

**1. Submitting transcripts**

All students must submit copies of their official transcript(s), with degree conferred, from all undergraduate degree-granting institutions within 30 calendar days of their start term. Per [ABA Standard 502](#), all students must submit copies of their official transcript(s), with degree conferred, from all undergraduate degree-granting institutions. Southwestern requires that students submit all transcripts within 30 calendar days of their start term. Students who fail to submit their official transcript(s) by the deadline are subject to administrative withdrawal from Southwestern. Official transcripts should be submitted directly to the Law School Admission Council. The Registrar at Southwestern has discretion over granting or denying an extension request.

**2. Academic status**

A student is in good academic standing unless the student:

- a. Is on academic probation as defined in the *Academic Disqualification, Academic Probation, and Academic Improvement Program Policies*; or
- b. Has been academically disqualified.

**3. Grade point average requirements**

Students must maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 2.330. See the *Academic Disqualification, Academic Probation, and Academic Improvement Program Policies* for information regarding failure to maintain a GPA of at least 2.330.

**4. Computation of units**

An academic year for continuing students is based on the summer term (if taken), the following fall semester, the January intersession (if taken), and the spring semester. To compute the GPA, units earned in the summer term and the January intersession are applied to calculate the cumulative GPA. Grades earned in the summer session and intersession are not averaged with semester grades. Grades earned in the summer session and intersession do not count toward determining academic disqualification based on a minimum GPA in two consecutive evaluation periods.

**5. Unit overload and underload**

Full-time students may enroll in no more than 16 units per semester (or eight units in the summer session) and no fewer than ten units per semester. Part-time students may enroll in no more than 11 units per semester (or six units in the summer session) and no fewer than eight units per semester. Written approval must be obtained from the Associate Dean for Student Services for any deviation. Students must be in good academic standing to receive permission to overload for one semester.

**6. Minimum number of classroom credits required for J.D. students**

[ABA Standard 311\(a\)](#) requires that a J.D. student complete at least 64 credit hours that require attendance in regularly scheduled classroom sessions or direct faculty instruction. J.D. students should be aware that not all credits they may take for graduation will count toward this 64-credit requirement. All students seeking the J.D. degree must complete 87 credit hours to graduate. This policy does not alter that graduation requirement. Therefore, if a student takes more than 23 non-classroom credits, the student will have to take more than 87 credit hours to earn the degree.

**7. Changing from the part-time program to the full-time program**

Students wishing to change their program from part-time to full-time must obtain a cumulative 3.300 GPA. Students must meet with the Student Services Office to discuss changing programs. Students may not switch from part-time to full-time during their first year.

**8. Switching from a residential program to the Online J.D. Program and vice versa**

Students wishing to change their program from residential to online or vice versa must meet with the Student Services Office to discuss changing programs. Factors that may be considered include, but are not limited to, whether there is a pathway to complete the program, if the change will violate the ABA standard on distance education, whether there is space in the program the student wishes to join, and how the change may impact the student's GPA.

**B. Length of Course Study**

SCALE students are expected to complete their course of study in two years, full-time students in three years, and part-time students in four years.

To be eligible for the J.D. degree, a law student must complete the course of study required for the degree in no fewer than 24 months and no more than 84 months after the student has commenced law study at Southwestern or at a law school from which transfer credit has been accepted.

Students are expected to maintain continuous enrollment in law school. Failure to enroll in any semester will be treated as a withdrawal unless a student has been granted a leave of absence. See *Withdrawal in Registration Policies and Procedures*. Students should also consult with Section F *General Leave of Absence Information* below.

**C. Certification for the Bar Exam**

Those students who have completed the requisite units for graduation at the conclusion of the spring semester or second SCALE year will be certified by Southwestern to take the July Bar Examination of that year. Students who complete the requisite units for graduation at the conclusion of a summer term in July or the fall semester in December

will be certified by Southwestern to take the Bar Examination the following February.

Those students who have completed the requisite units for graduation at the conclusion of the January intersession may graduate in January and could be certified to take the Bar Examination the following February or July. However, January graduates who wish to take the immediate February bar examination should take note that (1) there may not be enough time to certify them for the bar examination due to the timing of the submission of the January intersession grades and (2) their ability to study for the bar will likely be impacted given their enrollment in January intersession courses.

Certification by Southwestern may be withheld when a student faces an Honor Code Committee (HCC) determination regarding an alleged Honor Code violation or has yet to complete sanctions resulting from such a violation.

#### **D. General Leave of Absence Information**

Any student who wishes to take a leave of absence from Southwestern must meet with the Student Services Office to obtain approval. Only a student in good academic standing is eligible for a leave of absence unless special permission is granted by the Associate Dean for Student Services. Any student requesting a leave of absence must complete the appropriate Leave of Absence form. If the leave is approved by the Associate Dean for Student Services, the Associate Dean will forward the leave form to the Registrar's Office for handling. A student who is taking a leave must (i) have an exit interview with the Student Services Office and (ii) visit the Financial Aid Office and the Accounting Office to discuss tuition payment consequences, if any.

Students may request a leave of absence once they have completed at least one full semester or, for SCALE students, Period 1. A leave of absence will be allowed solely in the discretion of the Associate Dean for Student Services and only under compelling circumstances or as an approved disability or pregnancy accommodation. A leave of absence will generally be granted for no more than one academic year.

If granted, a leave of absence does **not** extend the time period of an Incomplete grade unless explicitly approved by the Associate Dean for Student Services or, for an MHLA (see below), the Vice Dean or other senior administrators. Students should also consult the *Incomplete Grade Policy*.

A student returning from a leave of absence is responsible for registering for the semester, period, or term following the expiration of the leave. They must notify the Registrar's Office in writing to have their student account reactivated to register. Notation of the leave is recorded on the student transcript.

Any student who does not return following the expiration of their leave or after their return has been approved will be assumed to have permanently left Southwestern. They will be readmitted only upon filing a new application for admission with advanced standing following regular admission channels. The application will be considered on the same basis as transfer applications received that year. A student who fails to enroll in any semester,

period, or term and has not been granted a leave of absence will be deemed to have withdrawn from Southwestern.

**1. Mandated health leave of absence (MHLA)**

An MHLA is designed to assist in the following situations: (i) when a student presents a substantial risk of harm to self or others or has engaged in threatening or violent activities; (ii) when a student significantly disrupts the educational and other activities of the Southwestern community and that disruption is deemed to be related to a health condition; or (iii) when a student is unable or unwilling to carry out substantial self-care obligations. In the circumstances listed above, the Vice Dean or other senior administrators may determine that a student must take an MHLA before they can function productively within the Southwestern community. Except to attend a meeting or hearing related to their case, a student placed on an MHLA will not be permitted to be on campus or participate in any Southwestern-sanctioned events or activities on or off campus, attend any Southwestern class, participate in academic, co-curricular, or extracurricular activities and on-campus employment unless expressly permitted by the Vice Dean or other senior administrators.

**2. Administrative leave of absence due to consecutive absences**

Students who are absent for 14 consecutive class days or who fail to log into their online class and complete any academic work for two consecutive weeks will be placed on an administrative leave of absence.

**3. Leave of absence for students called to military service**

Students seeking a leave of absence to enter U.S. military service should contact the Associate Dean for Student Services to coordinate a formal leave of absence from Southwestern.

The student must intend to return to Southwestern within the granted leave period, which typically should not exceed one calendar year. Under extenuating circumstances, an extension can be granted.

A copy of the orders to report or proof of active service must be attached to the leave of absence request form.

For periods of less than 30 days, students should contact the Associate Dean for Student Services to see if appropriate accommodations can be made or whether a leave is necessary.

**4. Leave of absence for students enrolled in the Online J.D. Program who temporarily move to a state where Southwestern is not enrolling students**

Students seeking a leave of absence for a temporary move to a state where Southwestern is not enrolling students should contact the Associate Dean for Student Services to coordinate a formal leave of absence from Southwestern.

The student must intend to return to Southwestern within the granted leave period, which typically should not exceed one calendar year. Under extenuating circumstances, an extension can be granted.

Students who are planning a longer change in residence should also contact the Student Services Office to review transfer opportunities and other options.

**E. Policy Revisions**

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