

SOUTHWESTERN

LAW SCHOOL Los Angeles, CA

Distance Education Policy for Programs Other Than the Online J.D. Program

Faculty policy approved October 20, 2023.

Revision history: Formerly a part of the Grading Policies, Honors, and Specialized Courses policy; established as a standalone policy and substantively revised due to a change in ABA Standards in October 2023; technical edits made in December 2025.

Related policies: Determination of Credit Hours for Coursework; Online Student Identity Verification Policy; Policy on Student Academic Work-Product Originality (Plagiarism) for All Southwestern Students and Collaboration Rules in Legal Analysis, Writing, and Skills Courses; Student Honor Code; Disability Accommodations Policy (Including Standards for the Study of Law)

Scheduled Review Date: August 2027 (Vice Dean's Office)

A. Purpose

Southwestern Law School is committed to developing and delivering innovative, high-quality curricular offerings. To that end, and in accordance with [Definition 8](#) of the ABA Standards and ABA Standards [306](#) and [511](#), this policy provides students with the flexibility to receive academic instruction leading to the J.D. degree through the use of distance education.

This policy does not apply to Southwestern's ABA-approved Online J.D. Program, which students may complete substantially online.

B. Definitions

1. Distance education course

Consistent with Definition 8 of the ABA Standards, a Distance Education Course means one in which students are separated from all faculty members for more than one-third of the instruction and the instruction involves the use of technology to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and all faculty members, either synchronously or asynchronously.

2. Asynchronous format

Asynchronous format refers to a mode of instruction in which students engage with course materials, lectures, and assignments at their own pace and on their own

schedules, without the requirement for real-time, simultaneous participation with the faculty member or other students. This format allows students to access and complete coursework at times that are convenient for them while meeting defined course pacing deadlines.

3. Synchronous format

Synchronous format refers to a mode of instruction in which students participate in real-time, interactive learning experiences. In this format, students and faculty engage in activities such as live video lectures, discussions, or collaborative activities, all of which require simultaneous participation and interaction at specified times.

4. Blended courses not covered by this policy

Courses where students and faculty are separated from each other for one-third or less of the instruction are not covered by this policy and are not included in the maximum number of distance education units students may take.

C. Accessibility

Courses and programs offered under this policy will be accessible to persons with disabilities in compliance with federal and state laws. Southwestern is dedicated to providing reasonable accommodations and support to ensure that all students, regardless of their abilities, can engage in and benefit from our educational offerings.

D. Course Requirements

All Distance Education Courses must satisfy the following requirements:

- 1.** Provide regular interaction between a student and a faculty member that includes:
 - a.** the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and scheduled basis commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course as defined in ABA Standard 310(b) and set forth in the Determination of Credit Hours for Coursework;
 - b.** monitoring the student's academic engagement and success; and
 - c.** ensuring that the faculty member is responsible for promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student when needed on the basis of such monitoring or upon request by the student.
- 2.** Provide substantive interaction in each Distance Education Course that engages students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and includes at least two of the following:
 - a.** providing direct instruction;
 - b.** assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework;

taking reasonable actions or precautions, including but not limited to:

1. Securing access to a backup electronic device and or software in case of primary device or software failure;
2. Performing assignments expeditiously and not delaying until a deadline;
3. Submitting work in a format or through a mechanism (e.g., Canvas) specified by or acceptable to the professor; and
4. Upon discovering a technology issue, taking reasonable measures to immediately notify the professor and Southwestern's Associate Dean for Student Services of the problem or, if immediate action is not feasible, to provide notice as soon as reasonably possible thereafter.

I. Verification of Student Identity

Students registered in any Distance Education Course will be subject to Southwestern's Online Student Identity Verification Policy.

J. Policy Revisions

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