

# SOUTHWESTERN

## LAW SCHOOL Los Angeles, CA

### Incomplete Grade Policy

#### Administrative policy.

**Revision history:** Formerly a part of the Grading Policies, Honors, and Specialized Courses policy (now called the Grading and Scholastic Honors Policy); established as a standalone policy in October 2023; revised May 2024 to address emergencies and the Online J.D. Program; clarifying revisions made in December 2025.

**Related policies:** Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy; SCALE Program Policies; Grading and Scholastic Honors Policy; Criteria for Final Course Grade Policy; Examination Administration Policy; Master of Laws Program Policies

**Related form:** Special Exam Administration Form

**Scheduled Review Date:** August 2028 (Registrar's Office and Student Services Office)

#### A. Definition

An "Incomplete" or "INC" grade is a temporary, non-evaluative grade indicating the student has not yet completed assigned work in the course. The grade may be assigned only with approval from the Associate Dean for Student Services.

#### B. Appropriate Use

An Incomplete may be issued only when (1) the student has completed at least 80% of the class sessions or, for a mostly asynchronous course, the student has completed at least 80% of the required asynchronous coursework, (2) the student has submitted passing work on substantially all completed assignments, and (3) the student has complied with attendance requirements, but, (4) due to extraordinary circumstances (e.g., death in the family, unexpected medical issues, unexpected caregiving responsibilities, etc.), (a) in courses in which the final grade does not include a final examination, the student is unable to complete the remaining coursework within the required time frame; or (b) in courses in which the final grade includes a final

examination, a student is unable to take a final examination before the end of the examination period.

**C. Requesting an Incomplete**

A student who has experienced extraordinary circumstances (See Section B) beyond the student's control and wishes to be considered for an Incomplete in one or more courses must submit a written request and supporting documentation requested by the Associate Dean for Student Services to the Student Services Office before the end of the final examination period for the semester or term. Requests submitted after this deadline would also require an explanation of the extraordinary circumstances beyond the student's control—such as hospitalization—that caused the request to be late. The written request must explain why the student cannot complete the remaining coursework or take the final examination and include appropriate supporting documentation.

The Associate Dean for Student Services may grant the request in whole or in part, deny the request in whole or in part, request additional information, or consult with the Vice Dean(s) or other senior administrators.

An Incomplete is often a solution of last resort; the law school will work with the student to explore other solutions.

**D. Removing an Incomplete or Automatic Conversion to an Administrative Fail “\*F”**

To remove an Incomplete from their transcript, a student does not need to register for the course again; however, they will be permitted to unofficially audit the course in which the Incomplete was earned. When the student completes the course requirements, the credits and grade are assigned to the semester or term in which the student initially enrolled in the course. Incompletes must be changed to an evaluative grade as soon as possible, and no later than one year from the issuance of the Incomplete or the next time the course is regularly offered, whichever occurs first. In most circumstances, the Incomplete should be made up on the next occasion when the faculty member with whom the student took the course offers an examination in that course. If the original faculty member does not offer an exam in the course within one year of the Incomplete's issuance, the student must complete the Incomplete by taking the regularly scheduled exam offered by another faculty member teaching that course within the same one-year period. Unless approved by the Associate Dean for Student Services and Vice Dean overseeing the Online J.D. Program, students must make up the Incomplete by taking an exam for a course in the same program modality in which the Incomplete was issued (i.e., residential or online).

It is the student's responsibility to submit a Special Exam Administration Form, found on the Student Services Office portal page, to the Student Services Office for approval at least one month before the exam period in which the exam will be taken to resolve an Incomplete. The Student Services Office will forward the approved form to the Registrar's

Office, which will make appropriate arrangements for the exam. While the Student Services Office will attempt to process a Special Exam Administration Form received after the deadline above, a late submission may result in a denial of the student's request to take a makeup exam.

A student graduating before the course is offered again may petition the Associate Dean for Student Services for approval to make up the exam to avoid a delay in graduation. The student must refrain from seeking approval directly from the professor, as such action will compromise the anonymity of the exam. The student may not graduate with an Incomplete on their transcript.

Except as described in Section F, a student's failure to resolve an Incomplete so that it converts to an evaluative grade within one year of the Incomplete's issuance will result in an Administrative Fail (\*F), which is final and not subject to change. The one-year deadline is based on the end of the academic term during which the one-year period from the issuance of the Incomplete elapses.

#### **E. Midterm Exams and Other Graded Assessments in Incomplete Courses**

Courses in which a student receives an Incomplete or makes up an Incomplete may have a midterm, other graded assessments, or required coursework as part of the final grade for the course. In this situation, the student must meet with an advisor in the Student Services Office before the start of the term in which they are making up the Incomplete to determine what midterm, assessment scores, or required coursework will be part of the final grade for the course. The Student Services Office will consult with the faculty member for the course in which the student is making up the Incomplete. If the student does not meet with an advisor in the Student Services Office, the default will be that the final exam for the course will comprise 100% of the final grade.

#### **F. Extending the Time Limit**

A student may receive an extension on time to complete an Incomplete only by submitting a written petition demonstrating extraordinary circumstances beyond the student's control, such as continued illness. Absent extraordinary circumstances determined by the Associate Dean for Student Services (e.g., death in the family, unexpected medical issues, unexpected caregiving responsibilities, etc.), the student must submit the petition at least four weeks before the original deadline to make up the Incomplete. The student must present adequate and appropriate documentation to verify the extraordinary circumstances. The petition must be submitted to the Associate Dean for Student Services, who may grant the petition in whole or in part, deny the petition in whole or in part, request additional information, or consult with the Vice Dean(s) or other senior administrators. It will be rare for a petition that seeks to extend an Incomplete for more than one semester or year beyond the original deadline to be granted.

#### **G. Conversion to Withdrawal or Administrative Withdrawal**

An Incomplete may be changed to a "W" (official withdrawal) only if the course in which

the Incomplete was awarded is not offered within the one-year time period (See Section D) or if the student has a documented illness or medical emergency that prevents them from making up the Incomplete within the one-year time period. In these cases, the request for a change to a "W" must be made in writing, documented, and approved by the Associate Dean for Student Services. At the discretion of the Associate Dean for Student Services, an Administrative Withdrawal (WA) can be assigned for an outstanding Incomplete if a student withdraws from the school. Students should understand that withdrawals could have a financial aid impact.

#### **H. Financial Aid Impact**

Under Southwestern's Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Policy, Incompletes will be counted toward enrollment and attempted hours. If the Incomplete(s) is not completed by the deadline, the student could be disqualified from receiving financial aid.

The student is responsible for notifying the Financial Aid Office 1) when they have an Incomplete at the end of a semester and 2) once the Incomplete(s) is updated. Students should meet with a counselor in the Financial Aid Office to review the financial aid implications of Incompletes.

#### **I. Graduation**

A student may not graduate with an Incomplete on their transcript, and Southwestern will not issue a diploma if an Incomplete appears on a student's transcript.

#### **J. Class Rank**

When class ranks are calculated, students with an Incomplete(s) on their transcript will not be included in class ranks. For purposes such as employment, scholarships, or externship placements, students who are not officially ranked may request a letter estimating their likely rank decile. Issuance of such a letter is at the discretion of the Associate Dean for Student Services and the Registrar. The student will be included in the next calculation of class ranks, assuming they have no additional Incompletes on their transcript when class ranks are calculated.

#### **K. Policy Revisions**

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