

SOUTHWESTERN

LAW SCHOOL

Los Angeles, CA

Online Student Identity Verification Policy

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Revision history: Technical edits made in May 2024; technical edits made in July 2025; technical edits made in December 2025.

Related policies: Acceptable Use Policy; Examination Administration Policy; Online Privacy Policy; Student Records Policy—FERPA; Disability Accommodations Policy (Including Standards for the Study of Law); Student Honor Code

Scheduled review date: April 2027 (Chief Information Officer and Online Education Department)

A. Policy Statement

Southwestern Law School is committed to maintaining the highest level of academic integrity and complying with Standard 511 of the American Bar Association's Standards for Approval of Law Schools and the provisions of the U.S. Higher Education Opportunity Act concerning verification of student identity in distance education. The purpose of these regulations is to ensure that the person who receives credit for the course is the same person who did the work for the course.

This policy outlines the procedures Southwestern uses to verify the identity of students participating in online or hybrid courses and programs. Southwestern does not charge fees for any student verification process.

To assist students and faculty in complying with this policy, Appendix 1 includes a checklist for students, and Appendix 2 includes a checklist for faculty.

B. Individual Courses and Grades

Each mostly asynchronous course (online or hybrid) must include a clear and actionable plan for verifying the identity of each student enrolled in the course. For courses in the Online J.D. Program, the plan must be approved by the Assistant Dean for Online Education Administration or a Vice Dean. For other courses, the plan must be approved by the Assistant Dean for Academic Administration or a Vice Dean..

In mostly asynchronous doctrinal courses, at least 50% of the course grade must consist of work accomplished by the student when their identity is verified and it is highly likely that they are using only the aids intended (e.g., proctored examinations, live video presentations, video-based assignments, etc.). In mostly asynchronous skills and other courses, at least 20% of the course grade in an online or hybrid course must consist of work accomplished by the student when their identity is verified and it is highly likely that they are using only the aids intended.

C. Procedures

Not all of the tools and procedures listed below are or need to be used in every online or hybrid course. But in all online and hybrid courses, the means of verifying student identity must equal or exceed the means used in residential instruction.

- 1. Identity verification during the admissions and matriculation processes:** During the application and admission process, student identity is vetted in accordance with standard practices. Students must provide their complete and true identity information in any identification verification process. Sharing or allowing others to use their username, password, or account is against Southwestern policy. To help verify identity, Southwestern may request that an admissions applicant present a current, government-issued ID during an interview. Before matriculating into the Online J.D. Program, students must acknowledge that they have read this policy, the Acceptable Use Policy, and the Online Privacy Statement. All admitted students must show a current government-issued ID before Southwestern issues an ID and campus access card.
- 2. Secure username and password:** Southwestern will provide each student with a secure username and password following initial registration ("Southwestern Credentials"). A student's Southwestern Credentials enable authentication to various Southwestern systems, such as school email, the Canvas Learning Management System (LMS), the Portal (student information), and Colleague Self-Service (class registration, student grades, tuition). During the admissions process, students are emailed their Southwestern Credentials through the Unite Admissions CRM platform. For additional information, consult the "About Passwords" document on the Information Technology section of the Portal.
- 3. Strong password requirements and changes:** Passwords must be at least 12 characters long, contain at least one alphabetic and one numeric character, be different from the last five passwords, and not easily guessable (e.g., license plate, telephone number, birthday, etc.).
- 4. Multifactor authentication and single sign-on:** Southwestern uses multi-factor authentication to provide additional security for the student's username and password. Two-factor authentication is required for a student to access

applications, including the learning management system. All students are issued a Microsoft 365 account to authenticate for internal, hosted, and cloud solutions.

5. **Account responsibility:** Students are responsible for maintaining the security of usernames, passwords, and other required access credentials. An account is given to an individual for exclusive use by that individual. It is against Southwestern policy for a user to disclose their password to someone else or permit others to use their account. When using Southwestern resources, users must not attempt to disguise their identity, the identity of their account, or the machine they are using. Users are held responsible for all activities associated with their accounts and must report any account compromises immediately to ithelp@swlaw.edu. Attempting to discover another user's password or gain unauthorized access to another person's account, files, or email is prohibited and violates Southwestern's Acceptable Use Policy.
6. **Learning management system (Canvas):** Southwestern uses Canvas as its learning management system. Canvas integrates with Southwestern's authentication services to ensure appropriate and secure student access to courses and other student information systems. Students must use their Southwestern username and password to access Canvas. Only students officially enrolled in a course and student Teaching Assistants or Dean's Fellows for the course can access the course Canvas page and academically engage in the course. In addition, every action within a Canvas course site registers on Canvas' extensive tracking features. These feature track each user in terms of time and duration of the action and part of the site involved, even if the student does not post. Students are encouraged to associate a current photo with their LMS account to help visually identify them.
7. **Assignments submitted via Canvas:** Students authenticate to Canvas through the Southwestern single sign-on platform using their Southwestern Credentials. This single sign-on authentication verifies the student's identity on the Canvas platform and ensures that the assignment is uploaded by the correct student.
8. **Synchronous classes:** For courses with online synchronous components, a faculty member may request that the Academic Administration department prepare a photo roster. Professors are encouraged to require students to keep their cameras on during each session, absent good cause. Professors may require students to submit a short video assignment at the start of the course that will help them get to know the students and create a baseline for future assignments, or may meet virtually with students, with cameras on.

9. Proctored examinations:

- a. Online platform:** Most online examinations are administered using an online platform with features designed to verify student identity and ensure exam security. These features may include live or AI proctoring and facial recognition technology.
- b. Zoom proctoring:** In limited circumstances, Southwestern may authorize proctoring via Zoom. For Zoom proctoring, an individual authorized by Southwestern will observe as the student completes an examination or other assessment. Before the assessment begins, the student must share their Southwestern ID card with the proctor. For Zoom proctoring, students will use two devices: one to take the test and another for a video feed to the proctor that shows the student's face, the computer screen, and the workspace. A proctor may not work with more than 10 students at any given time.

D. Privacy

Southwestern is committed to ensuring the privacy of its students and student information. All methods of verifying student identity in distance learning protect the privacy of student information under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). All personal information collected for the purposes of this policy will be handled in accordance with applicable laws and Southwestern's Online Privacy Policy.

Southwestern also reserves the right to use other technologies to verify student identity that are not specifically mentioned in this policy.

E. Responsibility for Student Identity Verification

- 1.** The Information Technology department oversees username and password assignments and password changes, multi-factor authentication, Single Sign-On (SSO) protocols, system monitoring, and overall online security.
- 2.** The Administrative Services Office verifies entering student identities before issuing a Southwestern ID and access card.
- 3.** The Registrar's Office is responsible for compliant proctoring.
- 4.** Academic deans are expected to ensure that faculty within their programs are aware of and comply with this policy.
- 5.** Individual faculty teaching online or hybrid courses are responsible for ensuring their individual courses comply with this policy.
- 6.** When necessary, the Vice Deans or the President & Dean may address non-compliance through performance reviews or other measures as appropriate.

F. Accessibility and Inclusivity

Southwestern will make appropriate accommodations to this policy for students who cannot use standard verification processes due to a disability or other legitimate circumstances, in accordance with the law school's Disability Accommodations Policy and relevant laws.

G. Policy Revisions

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

Appendix 1: Student Identity Verification Checklist

This checklist outlines key student responsibilities and requirements under Southwestern's Online Student Identity Verification Policy. It is provided as a convenience for students and should not be used as a substitute for reading the full policy. Any conflict between this checklist and the policy will be resolved in favor of the policy.

- **Secure Your Credentials:** Use a strong, unique password for your Southwestern accounts (at least 12 characters with a mix of letters and numbers) and update it as required. Also enable and use Southwestern's mandatory two-factor authentication for all logins.
- **Protect Account Access:** Never share your Southwestern username or password with anyone or allow others to access school systems using your identity; each account is issued for individual use, and you are accountable for all activity under your login. Immediately report any suspected account compromise to the IT Helpdesk (ithelp@swlaw.edu).
- **Identification for Exams:** Be prepared to verify your identity during proctored exams and assessments. For example, you will be required to show your current Southwestern student ID card to the proctor during an online proctored examination.
- **Webcam Use in Online Courses:** Be ready to use a webcam for identity verification in online classes and exams. Professors may require you to keep your camera on during live class sessions (absent special permission for an exception) to confirm your presence. Likewise, remote proctored exams may require a video feed of your face, screen, and workspace while you take the test.
- **Identity-Verified Assignments:** Participate fully in all required identity-verified learning activities. Common examples include proctored examinations (administered in-person or via secure online platforms with live or AI proctors), live video presentations or oral exams, and video-recorded assignments—all designed to confirm that you are completing your own work with only permitted resources.
- **No Verification Fees:** Southwestern does not charge any fees to students for identity verification services or processes.
- **Support and Questions:** If you have any questions, technical issues, or need assistance regarding identity verification requirements, contact the IT Helpdesk (ithelp@swlaw.edu) for support.

Appendix 2: Faculty Identity Verification Checklist

This checklist summarizes faculty responsibilities and requirements under Southwestern's Online Student Identity Verification Policy. It is provided as a convenience and should not be used as a substitute for reading the full policy. Any conflict between this checklist and the policy will be resolved in favor of the policy.

- **Course Identity Verification Plan:** For each online or hybrid course, develop a clear plan for verifying the identity of all enrolled students and submit that plan for approval to the appropriate academic administrator before the course begins.
- **Grading Requirements:** Ensure that the appropriate percentage of each course's grade is based on identity-verified work. In an online or hybrid *doctrinal* course, at least 50% of the grade must be based on assessments completed with verified student identity. In *skills and other courses*, at least 20% of the grade must be identity-verified.
- **Identity Verification Rigor:** Use identity verification methods in your online/hybrid course that are as robust as those used for on-campus classes, ensuring that all chosen tools meet or exceed the standards of face-to-face instruction.
- **Approved Platforms and Tools:** Use only secure, Southwestern-approved systems for online teaching and testing. For example, use Canvas (the official LMS) for course materials and assignments, and conduct online exams through authorized proctoring platforms (such as the designated exam software) that verify student identity.
- **Student Identity in Live Sessions:** Use available resources to confirm student identity during live (synchronous) online class sessions. Request photo rosters with student headshots from Academic Administration for your online classes and encourage students to keep their webcams on during live sessions (unless a specific exception is granted).
- **Secure Exam Proctoring:** Coordinate with the appropriate offices to ensure all exams are proctored securely and in compliance with policy. Work with the Registrar's Office (responsible for exam proctoring) to arrange any required proctoring services..
- **Account Integrity Enforcement:** Do not permit shared accounts or any unauthorized access in your course. Ensure each student uses only their own Southwestern Credentials for all course activities; any instance of credential sharing or impersonation is violates this policy (and potentially the Honor Code) and should be addressed immediately.