

SOUTHWESTERN

LAW SCHOOL

Los Angeles, CA

Maximum and Minimum J.D. Units Policy (Including ABA Standard 311(a) Classroom Credit Hours Requirement)

Faculty policy.

Revision history: Formerly a part of the annually revised Student Handbook; established as a standalone policy in August 2022; technical edits were made in August 2023 and May 2024; edits were made in April 2025 to include minimum J.D. unit requirements (previously in the Academic Policies and Procedures); edits made in October 2025 to clarify requirements for the 64-credit minimum; edits made in December 2025 to include additional information related to ABA Standard 311(a); clarifying edits made February 2026.

Related policies: Transfer and Visiting Students Policy; Graduation Requirements Policy; SCALE Program Policies; Federal Financial Aid Eligibility Policy; J.D./M.B.A. Dual-Degree Program Policy

Scheduled Review Date: June 2028 (Student Services Office)

A. Full-Time (non-SCALE) J.D. Students

1. Maximum units

A full-time (non-SCALE) student pursuing the J.D. degree may not enroll in more than 16 units in a fall or spring semester without the Associate Dean for Student Services' permission; in no case may a student enroll in more than 17 units in a fall or spring semester.

A full-time (non-SCALE) student may not enroll in more than 8 units in a summer term without the Associate Dean for Student Services' permission.

The Associate Dean for Student Services will not approve an overload request unless a student is in good academic standing and will not approve more than one overload for a student, absent exceptional or unusual circumstances.

2. Minimum units

A full-time (non-SCALE) student must enroll in at least 10 units per semester unless (i) approved by the Associate Dean for Student Services due to extraordinary circumstances (e.g., the student experiences a significant, unexpected health issue), or (ii) the student requires fewer than 10 units to reach the graduation requirement of satisfactorily completing 87 units.

No minimum unit requirements exist for summer. But full-time J.D. (non-SCALE) students should be aware that a minimum number of units is required to be eligible for federal student aid (see the *Federal Financial Aid Eligibility Policy*).

B. SCALE Students

This policy does not pertain to SCALE students. SCALE students should refer to the *SCALE Program Policies* for SCALE program maximum and minimum J.D. unit requirements.

C. Part-Time J.D. Students

1. Maximum units

A part-time student pursuing the J.D. degree may not enroll in more than 11 units in a fall or spring semester without the Associate Dean for Student Services' permission; in no case may a student enroll in more than 17 units in a fall or spring semester.

A part-time student may not enroll in more than 6 units in a summer term without the Associate Dean for Student Services' permission.

The Associate Dean for Student Services will not approve an overload request unless a student is in good academic standing and will not approve more than one overload for a student, absent exceptional or unusual circumstances.

2. Minimum units

A part-time student must enroll in at least 8 units per semester unless (i) approved by the Associate Dean for Student Services due to extraordinary circumstances (e.g., the student experiences a significant, unexpected health issue), or (ii) the student requires fewer than 8 units to reach the graduation requirement of satisfactorily completing 87 units.

No minimum unit requirements exist for summer. But part-time J.D. students should be aware that they may be ineligible for federal student aid if they take too few units (see *Federal Financial Aid Eligibility Policy*). Part-time students should expect to take some units over the three summer sessions to graduate within four years.

D. Minimum Number of Classroom Credits

[ABA Standard 311\(a\)](#) requires J.D. students to complete at least 64 credit hours through regularly scheduled classroom sessions or direct faculty instruction. Not all credits earned toward graduation meet these criteria. At Southwestern, one credit hour is equivalent to one unit. Accordingly, students who take more than 23 credits in non-classroom activities (e.g., externships, Honors Programs competitions and board positions, or courses completed as part of the J.D./M.B.A. Program) must earn more than 87 credits to graduate (i.e., one additional credit for every non-classroom credit above 23 credits).

Credits that count toward the required 64 classroom credits include credits earned through a regularly scheduled classroom course; a seminar; a simulation course; a course toward the J.D. degree taken at another law school that meets Southwestern's definition of a classroom course, if approved in advance by the Associate Dean for Student Services; a qualified law-related foreign-study program offered by the Law School or approved in advance by the Associate Dean for Student Services; a clinic that includes a significant classroom instructional component; and credit hours taken in approved distance education courses.

Credits that do not count toward the required 64 classroom credits include those earned through participating in non-classroom components of Southwestern Honors Programs (e.g., competitions, board positions, fellows, etc.); courses completed as part of the J.D./M.B.A. Program; independent study; or externships. If a student takes more than 23 non-classroom credits, the student will have to take more than 87 credit hours to earn the J.D. degree.

E. Dual-Degree Students

A student in an approved dual-degree program (e.g., J.D./M.B.A. Program with The Drucker Graduate School of Management, part of Claremont Graduate University (CGU)) must receive approval from the Associate Dean for Student Services to enroll in more than 17 units in a term or semester for both degree programs combined (e.g., a student who desires to take 14 units at Southwestern and 6 units at CGU in one semester must seek approval since this is 20 units

combined). A student must be in good academic standing to receive permission to exceed 17 combined units.

A student in a dual-degree program should note the maximum cross-credits allowed in each degree program (e.g., CGU will accept up to 12 units of appropriate transfer credit toward its 48-unit M.B.A. program, and Southwestern will accept up to 12 units from the CGU M.B.A. program toward the J.D. degree; see *J.D./M.B.A. Dual-Degree Program Policy* for more information, including the grades required to transfer credit).

F. January Intersession

The January intersession program is held for one week each year, typically over four days, following the fall semester's conclusion and before the spring semester's start. J.D. students may not enroll in more than one unit in any single intersession, although students may take courses in multiple intersessions.

G. Honors Programs

Units earned for participating in an Honors Program (Law Review, Law Journal, Moot Court Honors Program, Negotiation Honors Program, and Trial Advocacy Honors Program) are included in the maximum units permitted under Sections A and C above. Only units from the classroom component of an Honors Program will count toward the 64 credit hours of regularly scheduled classroom sessions described in Section D.

H. Limits on Distance Education Course Credits for Residential Students

Students who are not enrolled in the Online J.D. Program may earn no more than 43 of the 87 units required to earn the J.D. degree in distance education courses. For purposes of this policy, a "distance education course" is one in which more than one-third of the instruction is conducted online, whether synchronously or asynchronously.

I. Course Work at Other Law Schools

Except as detailed in the *Transfer and Visiting Students Policy*, Southwestern will accept up to 6 units of coursework taken at another approved school toward the 87 units required to earn the J.D. This 6-unit maximum includes all coursework completed during any term, including study-abroad programs, summer sessions, or intersessions.

J. Study-Abroad Programs

Southwestern will accept credit for study-abroad programs completed through other ABA-approved law schools only if the Associate Dean for Student Services has approved the program before the student's departure. In the case of students who attend both a Southwestern-sponsored summer-abroad program and a summer-abroad program sponsored by another ABA-approved law school, a maximum of 8 units from summer-abroad programs of any kind may be applied toward the J.D. degree.

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.