

SOUTHWESTERN LAW SCHOOL
Determination of Credit Hours for Coursework

Students are required to complete 87 credit hours to graduate. Generally, each hour of classroom credit is based on 60 minutes of direct faculty instruction. For students in the traditional program, the academic semester includes 14 weeks of direct instruction, followed generally by two weeks for final examinations. For students in the SCALE program (Southwestern's two year accelerated program), each credit hour, with any exceptions noted below, is based on 14 hours of instruction.

In each program, each unit of credit is equivalent to 14 hours and totals 840 minutes of instruction. For each hour of classroom instruction, students shall spend, on average, a minimum of two hours (based on a 60-minute hour) on out-of-class work. For example in a 3-unit course, meeting a total of 3 hours a week, the student would be expected to spend a minimum of 6 hours a week on out of class work during the semester. In SCALE, a 3-unit course may meet 4 hours a week to accommodate the different structure of the term. In this instance, the student would be expected to spend a minimum of 8 hours a week on out of class work during the term.

During the summer session, each hour of classroom credit is based on 60 minutes of direct faculty instruction over 7 weeks, followed by .5 weeks for final examinations.

The Law School faculty, upon the recommendation of the Curriculum Committee, establishes the number of credit hours allotted for each course. To assess whether a course proposal meets these requirements, the Curriculum Committee normally looks at the number of credit hours suggested in the course proposal; and reviews the course syllabus, reading assignments, and assessments to determine compliance with the accreditation requirements for instruction time and out-of-class preparation time. If it appears the contact hours or out-of-class preparation time may be insufficient, the Curriculum Committee will request that the course proposal or syllabus be modified to comply with the applicable standards, prior to approval.

The Vice Dean's Office is responsible for monitoring this Policy to ensure consistency and compliance with ABA Accreditation standards. In no event, shall a course be offered that does not meet the minimum minutes of instruction per credit hour, or is not the equivalent amount of work with an appropriate combination of in-class instruction, direct faculty instruction, and out-of-class student work as required by ABA Standard 510.

Traditional Classes: Fall and Spring Terms

A four-credit course will ordinarily meet for 240 minutes each week for a total 3360 minutes of direct instruction over the 14 week semester. Students are expected to spend, on average, a minimum of 8 hours on out-of-class work per week during the semester.

A three-credit course will ordinarily meet for 180 minutes each week for a total of 2520 minutes of direct instruction over the 14 week semester. Students are expected to spend, on average, a minimum of 6 hours on out-of-class work per week during the semester.

A two-credit course will ordinarily meet for 120 minutes each week for a total of 1680 minutes of direct instruction. Students are expected to spend, on average, a minimum of 4 hours on out-of-class work per week during the semester.

A one-credit course will ordinarily meet for 60 minutes each week for a total of 840 minutes of direction instruction over a 14 week semester. Students are expected to spend, on average, a minimum of 2 hours on out-of-class work per week during the semester.

Summer Term

A three-credit course will ordinarily meet 360 minutes each week for a total of 2520 minutes of direction instruction over the 7 week summer session.

A two-credit course will ordinarily meet for 240 minutes each week for a total of 1680 minutes of direction instruction for 7 weeks, followed by an examination period. Students are expected to spend, on average, a minimum of 8 hours on out-of-class work per week during the term.

A one-credit course will ordinarily meet for 120 minutes each week for a total of 840 minutes of direct instruction over 7 weeks, followed by an examination period. Students are expected to spend, on average, a minimum of 4 hours on out-of-class work per week during the term.

SCALE Classes

A four-credit course includes 14 hours of direct instruction per credit for a total of 3360 minutes of direct instruction. For each hour of classroom instruction, students shall spend, on average, a minimum of two hours (based on a 60-minute hour) on out-of-class work.

A three-credit course includes 14 hours of direct instruction per credit for a total of 2520 minutes of direct instruction. For each hour of classroom instruction, students shall spend, on average, a minimum of two hours (based on a 60-minute hour) on out-of-class work.

A two-credit course includes 14 hours of direct instruction per credit for a total of 1680 minutes of direct instruction. For each hour of classroom instruction, students shall spend, on average, a minimum of two hours (based on a 60-minute hour) on out-of-class work.

A one-credit course includes 14 hours of direct instruction for a total of 840 minutes of direction instruction. For each hour of classroom instruction, students shall spend, on average, a minimum of two hours (based on a 60-minute hour) on out-of-class work.

Legal Analysis, Writing, and Skills I and II (LAWS)

Each hour of classroom credit is based on a minimum of 750 minutes of classroom time or direct faculty instruction per unit for a minimum of 2250 minutes. Students are expected to spend, on average, a minimum of 6 hours on out-of-class work per week during the semester.

Clinical Programs, Externships, and Independent Studies

For clinical courses, externships, and independent research, an equivalent amount of work with an appropriate combination of in-class instruction, direct faculty instruction, and out-of-class student work is included in the following calculation as required by ABA Standard 510(b).

a. Clinical placements

Clinical placements require 3.5 hours per week of work for each credit granted.

A three-credit clinical placements require 10.5 hours of work per week over 14 weeks for a total of 147 hours of work.

A five-credit clinical placement require 17.5 hours of work per week over 14 weeks for a total of 245 hours of work.

b. Externships Placements

Externship placements require approximately 60 hours of work per credit.

c. Independent Studies

Independent studies require 90 hours of work per credit with a maximum of two credits awarded.