

SOUTHWESTERN LAW SCHOOL

L O S A N G E L E S

Master of Laws Program Policies

Revision history: Formerly a part of the annually revised Student Handbook. Established as a standalone policy August 2022.

Related policies: [TBD].

Scheduled Review Date: June 2023 (LL.M. Offices; Vice Deans' Office)

Southwestern offers two LL.M. degree programs: the General LL.M. for those who wish to design a curriculum that will most benefit their own objectives and the LL.M. in Entertainment and Media Law. The two programs have distinct policies and requirements. Neither program is accredited by the ABA or a regional accreditor, which means that students in these programs cannot be awarded federal financial aid. Admissions into the General LL.M. for 2022–2023 have been suspended, except for the Siderman Human Rights Fellow.

A. Master of Laws Program, the General LL.M.

1. Purpose

The Master of Laws, General LL.M. degree program allows students the ability to choose and direct their educational focus. This opportunity to select an emphasis of study enables program participants the ability to best meet individual professional goals. Students work closely with faculty in developing a comprehensive curricular plan and may take classes in either the day or evening programs.

a. Degree Requirements

To qualify for the General LL.M. degree, students must complete 24 credit hours of post-J.D. coursework, 12 of which must be earned at Southwestern. The particular courses each candidate undertakes will depend on the individual's chosen area of concentration. International students will be required to take the course titled Introduction to American Law unless waived by the program director. As a general matter,

courses previously taken for credit for a J.D. or equivalent degree will not be counted toward the LL.M. degree. A maximum of 30 credit hours may be applied to the LL.M. degree. Additional units may be taken, but they will not be considered part of the LL.M. degree.

b. Unit Guidelines and Length of Course of Study

Students work closely with the program director and faculty in developing a comprehensive curricular plan and may take classes in either the day or evening program. Full-time students must enroll in no fewer than 8 units and in no more than 16 units each semester. International students must maintain full-time status. Part-time students must enroll in no fewer than 2 units and in no more than 7 units each semester. LL.M. students enrolled full-time generally complete their degree requirements within one academic year, and part-time students generally complete their degree requirements within two academic years. All LL.M. students are expected to maintain continuous enrollment in the program. Failure to enroll in any semester will be treated as a withdrawal unless a student has been granted a leave of absence.

U.S. students may be granted special permission to extend their course of study to a maximum of four years due to special circumstances upon approval by the program director. International students enrolled in the LL.M. program must maintain full-time enrollment status throughout their course of study; however, special permission to drop below full-time status for one semester may be authorized by the Southwestern SEVIS Designated School Officer and the program director, based upon situations approved by SEVIS (Student Exchange Visitor Information System). (See the *International Students Policy* for more information.)

c. Leave of Absence

U.S. students are eligible to take up to a one-year leave of absence in accordance with Southwestern leave of absence policy. (See the section on Incompletes in the *Academic Policies and Procedures* for more information.) International students may be eligible to take a single one-semester leave of absence, but only in accordance with current U.S. immigration law and as authorized by the Southwestern SEVIS Designated School Officer (DSO) and the LL.M. program director, and based upon situations approved by SEVIS (Student Exchange Visitor Information System). Strict requirements to leave the country and return would be applicable, so students are advised to consult with the program director and DSO before attempting a gap in LL.M. study.

d. Grading, Academic Success and Bar Eligibility

General LL.M. students who graduated from U.S. law schools and those with foreign law degrees who opt for the letter grading system, must attain a cumulative GPA of 2.330 to earn the LL.M. degree. Students are graded using the same standards as J.D. students and must receive a passing grade in all courses. LL.M. students are not ranked with and do not affect the ranking of J.D. students. Students who intend to sit for the California Bar Examination and who need an LL.M. to qualify to take the exam are required to be graded using the standard letter grading system. Students who earn the LL.M. degree may be eligible to take other state bar examinations, and, if successful, be admitted to practice. Students are advised to contact any jurisdiction in which they wish to take a bar examination as requirements vary widely (e.g. [New York LL.M. requirements](#)). For information on California bar certification, see the [Foreign Education](#) page on The State Bar of California website.

An LL.M. student with a foreign law degree who is taking graded courses for the purpose of sitting for the California Bar Exam and does not attain a GPA of 2.330, but receives a passing letter grade (D- or above) in at least 24 units, will be awarded a Certificate of Completion. LL.M. students must meet all other academic requirements set forth in the *Academic Policies and Procedures*.

Students may elect to be graded using a non-letter grading system according to the following scale: High Honors, Honors, High Pass, Pass, and Fail. The non-letter grading system is highly recommended for all international graduates who do not intend to take the California Bar Examination. However, all students are advised to contact any jurisdiction in which they wish to take a bar examination to ascertain their eligibility to sit for the examination. For information on California bar certification, see the [Foreign Education](#) page on The State Bar of California website.

A change to the non-letter Grading System must be opted for within two weeks of receiving the first semester grades or a minimum of eight units of coursework attempted, whichever occurs later. Students will sign a form requesting the change, and must be approved by the director of the General LL.M. Program and the Vice Dean(s). All grades, including those already awarded, will thereafter be recorded on the transcript under the non-letter grading system. The non-letter grading system does not result in a Grade Point Average (GPA). Because the non-letter grading system has an imprecise correspondence with the letter-based grading system, this change is irrevocable and a GPA will no longer be calculable within this grading system, and an estimate cannot be provided upon request. This choice may affect a student's ability to participate in Honor's activities during law school requiring a GPA, and could be viewed less favorably by employers in certain job markets and foreign jurisdictions

who rely upon GPA for hiring decisions. Students are encouraged to consider all of these factors when making this change.

e. Transfer Students

Individuals who have attended an LL.M. program at another law school approved by the American Bar Association (ABA) and a member of the Association of American Law Schools (AALS) may apply for admission to the General LL.M. program and, if accepted, may be awarded up to 12 credits to be transferred from their original LL.M. program. Consideration for admission will be based on available space, academic performance at all previous schools, and compelling circumstances.

2. Special Academic Activities and Consultation with Program Director

LL.M. participation in special academic activities such as honors programs, course audits, and independent studies may be possible on a case-by-case basis. At best, these can augment an individualized study plan. However, in some cases, the structure and demands of the LL.M. program are not easily compatible with participation in these activities. Students wishing to pursue these opportunities are required to consult with the program director as early as possible to be advised on up-to-date policies.

Students enrolled in the Master of Laws, General LL.M. program are subject to all other Southwestern policies not specifically delineated in the Master of Laws Program Policies.

B. Master of Laws (LL.M.) in Entertainment and Media Law

1. Purpose

Through its LL.M. degree in Entertainment and Media Law, Southwestern Law School is committed to identifying and admitting a select and diverse number of attorneys and/or legal scholars who are demonstrably motivated and qualified to undertake intensive studies in this field, and to equip them—through theoretical, experiential and clinical education programs—to become outstanding professionals within the elected field of specialization.

a. Degree Requirements

To qualify for the LL.M. degree in Entertainment and Media Law, students must complete a minimum of 24 credit hours in connection therewith. At least 18 of those 24 credit hours must be earned at Southwestern Law School and be comprised of entertainment and media law courses as designated by Southwestern Law School. Courses taken for credit for a J.D. degree (whether at Southwestern Law School or otherwise) and courses taken other than at Southwestern Law School will not be counted

toward the LL.M. degree, except as determined in each instance by the director of the Donald E. Biederman Entertainment and Media Law Institute of Southwestern Law School. Students may take up to 30 credits in total, it being recognized, however, that only 24 of such credits will be counted toward the LL.M. degree.

b. Unit Guidelines and Length of Course of Study

Students work closely with the program director and faculty in developing a comprehensive curricular plan and may take classes in both the day and evening programs. Full-time students must enroll in no fewer than eight (8) units and in no more than 16 units each semester. International students must maintain full-time status. Part-time students must enroll in no fewer than 2 units and in no more than 7 units each semester. LL.M. students enrolled full-time generally complete their degree requirements within one academic year, and part-time students generally complete their degree requirements within two academic years, but all are expected to complete all course work within four years. All LL.M. students are expected to maintain continuous enrollment in the program. Failure to enroll in any semester will be treated as a withdrawal unless a student has been granted a leave of absence.

U.S. students may be granted special permission to extend their course of study to a maximum of four years due to special circumstances upon approval by the program director. International students enrolled in the LL.M program must maintain full-time status throughout their course of study; however, special permission to drop below full-time status for one semester may be authorized by the SEVIS Designated School Officer and the program director, based on situations approved by SEVIS (Student Exchange Visitor Information System). (See the *International Students Policy* for more information.)

c. Leave of Absence

U.S. students are eligible to take up to a one-year leave of absence in accordance with Southwestern leave of absence policy. (See the section on Incompletes in the *Academic Policies and Procedures* for more information.) International students may be eligible to take a single one-semester leave of absence, but only in accordance with current U.S. immigration law and as authorized by the Southwestern SEVIS Designated School Officer (DSO) and the LL.M. program director, and based upon situations approved by SEVIS (Student Exchange Visitor Information System). Strict requirements to leave the country and return would be applicable, so students are advised to consult with the program director and DSO before attempting a gap in LL.M. study.

d. Grading, Academic Success, and Bar Eligibility

Students enrolled in Southwestern Law School's program for the LL.M. degree in Entertainment and Media Law must complete the program at Southwestern Law School under the following standard letter-based grading system: A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D-, F.

Students enrolled in the program will receive a letter grade as warranted by their examination or other performance criterion as prescribed by the supervising professor(s) of each corresponding class. For the avoidance of doubt, no student enrolled in the program will be graded according to a non-letter scale under any circumstances (e.g., High Honors, Honors, High Pass, Pass, Fail, etc.).

Students are advised to contact any jurisdiction in which they wish to take a bar examination as requirements vary widely (e.g. [New York LL.M. requirements](#)). For information on California bar certification, see the [Foreign Education](#) page on The State Bar of California website.

Students enrolled in the LL.M. program must maintain a cumulative grade point average of 2.330 to earn the LL.M. degree. Any student who fails to maintain a 2.330 GPA in a semester will be placed on academic probation and will be academically disqualified after two consecutive semesters reflecting a GPA lower than 2.330.

e. Transfer Students

Individuals who have attended an LL.M. program at another law school approved by the American Bar Association (ABA) and a member of the Association of American Law Schools (AALS) may apply for admission to the LL.M. in Entertainment and Media Law program and, if accepted, will be awarded up to 6 credits to be transferred from their original LL.M. program. Consideration for admission will be based on available space, academic performance at all previous schools, and compelling circumstances.

Students enrolled in the LL.M in Entertainment and Media Law degree program are subject to all other Southwestern policies not specifically delineated in the Master of Laws Program Policies.