SOUTHWESTERN
LAW SCHOOL
Los Angeles, CA

Graduation Requirements Policy

Revision history: **Formerly a part of the annually revised Student Handbook; established as a standalone policy in August 2022; revised in August 2023.**

Related policies: **Academic Disqualification, Academic Probation, and Academic Improvement Programs Policies; Academic Policies and Procedures; and Student Honor Code.**

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A. Overview

Requirements to receive the Juris Doctor degree from Southwestern Law School are listed below. See *Academic Policies and Procedures* for the standards a student must meet to remain in good academic standing while enrolled at the law school. SCALE and LL.M. students should refer to the *SCALE Program Policies* and *Master of Laws Program Policies*

for graduation requirements. SCALE and LL.M. students are subject to the following policies not explicitly delineated in the *SCALE Program Policies* and *Master of LAWS Program Policies*.

1. All students must satisfactorily complete 87 units. If a student receives a grade of F in a course, the course is not considered satisfactorily completed, and course or unit credit will not be granted. A student may not graduate with a grade of Incomplete on their transcript. A student may not extend the degree date after completing 87 units and required courses satisfactorily.

2. All students are required to earn six residency units to graduate. "Residency credits" are defined in Section C below.

3. All students must maintain a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of at least 2.330 (C+), calculated based on all work completed at Southwestern.

4. All students must satisfy the provisions of *Academic Policies and Procedures* including "Minimum Number of Classroom Credits Required for J.D. Students" and "Length of Course of Study."

5. All students must enroll in and complete all courses designated by the faculty as required. The required courses are (in alphabetical order, not in the order students take the courses):

    - Business Associations
    - Civil Procedure I and II
    - Constitutional Criminal Procedure
    - Constitutional Law I and II
    - Contracts I and II
    - Criminal Law
    - Evidence
    - Legal Analysis, Writing, and Skills (LAWS) I and II
    - Legal Profession
    - Property
    - Torts
    - A course that satisfies the upper-division writing requirement
    - Six units of coursework that satisfy the experiential requirement

    Students may not satisfy the upper-division and experiential writing requirements using the same course.

6. All students must pass all required courses with a D- or higher grade. A student who fails a required course must repeat that course during the next semester in which it is offered. See *Repeated Courses* in *Academic Policies and Procedures* for information on calculating a passing grade in a two-semester course and the effect of repeated courses on the GPA.

7. Any student who has been academically disqualified and subsequently readmitted to the law school may be required to meet additional requirements determined by the Academic Standards Committee.

8. Each student is responsible for regularly monitoring their academic progress and ensuring they comply with all graduation requirements and academic standards.

B. Character and Fitness

Absent extraordinary circumstances as determined by the Dean of the law school, the student must not have any pending Honor Code, disciplinary, or Title IX matters, unresolved admission application amendments, or criminal charges to receive the Juris Doctor degree.

C. Residency Units

In addition to the 87 units required to graduate, students must satisfy the Southwestern residency requirements. All students are required to earn six residency units to graduate. They are earned as follows:

1. Traditional day students earn one residency unit for each fall or spring semester completed satisfactorily (6 semesters x 1 residency unit = 6 residency units).

2. Traditional evening and PLEAS/Part-time day students earn 0.75 of a residency unit for each fall or spring semester completed satisfactorily (8 semesters x .75 residency unit = 6 residency units).

3. SCALE students earn 0.67 of a residency unit for each term or grading period completed satisfactorily. SCALE students attend nine terms, or grading periods, during their program (9 periods x .67 residency unit = 6 residency units).

4. Residency units are not earned for any summer session, summer-abroad law program, or intersession program, except units completed in the required SCALE summer session.

5. Please note:

    a. Residency units are earned when a student is charged the normal, flat-rate tuition for a semester or SCALE term and completes at least one unit.

    b. If a student has completed the residency requirement but has not completed 87 units, the student will be charged per unit tuition for any remaining units. Students in the SCALE 2.5-Year Modified Curriculum are excluded.

c. If a student has not completed the residency requirement, regardless of how many units the student needs to graduate, the student will be charged flat-rate tuition for a semester or SCALE term. For example, if a student needs only a few units to reach 87 units but has not met the residency requirements, the student will be charged the full flat program rate because tuition for six or eight semesters has not been paid or terms of flat-rate tuition have not been completed.

d. For information regarding early graduation requests, please see Appendix A.

D. Upper-Division Writing Requirement

Southwestern has adopted an upper-division writing requirement for graduation. A student may fulfill this requirement by taking either a seminar or a course specifically approved and designated as meeting the writing requirement. Successful completion of the Law Review or Law Journal fall writing courses will also satisfy the writing requirement. Some courses designated to meet the writing requirement may also be designated as meeting the experiential requirement; however, the same course cannot satisfy both requirements. Students who take a course to fulfill the writing requirement may not use the same course to meet the experiential requirement.

Because writing instruction requires a low student-faculty ratio and out-of-classroom supervision of students' research and writing, enrollment in seminars and similar courses typically will be limited to 20 students.

For more information regarding seminar standards and guidelines, see Appendix B.

A course may be specifically approved and designated by the faculty as meeting the upper-division writing requirement according to the following criteria:

1. The course must require the student to timely submit at least three written and graded assignments, at least two of which must be research assignments. The written research assignment(s) must total at least 30 pages.

2. Examples of writings that would meet the research requirement include research memoranda, memoranda of points and authorities, trial briefs, appellate briefs, and papers of publishable quality.

3. Examples of writing that would not meet the research requirement are bare pleadings, discovery requests, and documents not involving substantial original research and writing by the student.

4. Under these criteria, a course can be designated as meeting the writing requirement upon request of the professor to the faculty curriculum committee. The writing requirement designation does not attach to a course title but to the specific course requirements described in the registration materials distributed

to the students. The designation of a course meeting a writing requirement must occur before the commencement of the academic term in which the course is scheduled.

Assuming that the student is otherwise eligible to register for the seminar or course that satisfies the writing requirement, registration is open to second- and third-year day students and second-, third-, and fourth-year evening, and PLEAS/Part-time day students.

E. Experiential Requirement

Per ABA Standard 303, Southwestern has adopted an experiential requirement for graduation. Students must complete at least six credit hours of coursework specifically approved and designated as meeting the experiential requirement. Students must take at least one unit in oral communications-focused courses. Registration materials will outline courses meeting the experiential requirement each semester. Some courses that meet the experiential requirement may also be designated as meeting the writing requirement. However, the same course cannot be used to satisfy both requirements. Students who take a course to fulfill the experiential requirement may not use the same course to meet the writing requirement.

F. Bar Readiness Curriculum

All students are required to complete a Bar Readiness Curriculum before their graduation. Courses include Cal Bar Writing: Skills and Strategies, MBE: Skills and Strategies, Wills and Trusts, Community Property, Remedies, and other bar-related courses. The Bar Readiness Curriculum is subject to change due to Southwestern's ongoing commitment to annually review and modify its course offerings to better prepare students for the Bar Exam.

Students with a GPA of 3.33 or above at the end of their second year in bar-tested courses completed as part of their first or second year may opt out of the Bar Readiness Curriculum. For traditional students, the bar-tested courses used to calculate the opt-out eligibility GPA currently include Torts, Property, Civil Procedure I and II, Criminal Law, Contracts I and II, Evidence, Constitutional Law I and II, and Business Associations. For part-time students, these courses include Torts, Property, Civil Procedure I and II, Criminal Law, Contracts I and II, and Constitutional Law I and II. The Bar Readiness Curriculum was carefully constructed to maximize all students' chances of passing the bar exam on their first attempt. Thus, even for students who have a GPA at or above 3.33, the Bar Readiness Curriculum is strongly recommended.

Regardless of GPA, required courses for all SCALE students include Cal Bar Writing: Skills and Strategies, MBE: Skills and Strategies, Wills and Trusts, Community Property, and Remedies.

The Student Services Office will publish the Bar Readiness Curriculum each spring for the upcoming academic year. Requirements can be modified from year to year based on course offerings.

G. Graduate Employment Survey and Exit Interview with the Career Services Office

To be awarded the JD degree, all graduating students must complete a Graduate Employment Survey and an Exit Interview with the Career Services Office. The ABA and NALP require all law schools to collect this information, which is reported anonymously to protect the graduate's privacy.

H. Awarding Diplomas

After confirming with the Registrar's Office that graduation and other requirements have been met, Southwestern Law School will award diplomas at the conclusion of the fall and spring semesters, the summer term, and the January intersession. Absent extraordinary circumstances as determined by the Dean, to receive a diploma, a student must have completed all graduation requirements by the date the Vice Dean(s) establishes for faculty to submit grades for graduating students. In addition, absent extraordinary circumstances as determined by the Dean, the student must not have any. pending Honor Code, disciplinary, or Title IX matters; unresolved admission application amendments; or criminal charges.

I. Commencement

Southwestern Law School holds one commencement per year following the conclusion of the spring semester. Eligible students are permitted to participate in one commencement ceremony only.

Students graduating in May can participate in the commencement scheduled immediately after graduation.

Students graduating in December can participate in the commencement scheduled immediately before or after graduation. December graduates must notify the Administrative Services Office at least six months before the scheduled commencement date if they intend to participate in the commencement before their graduation. Otherwise, it is assumed that December graduates will participate in the commencement following graduation, and no notification is required.

Appendix A

Early Graduation Request

Early graduation requests apply only to traditional students who wish to complete their legal studies early but would be short no more than one (1) residency unit and would not have paid the expected six or eight terms of tuition. Based on residency units, this would not be allowed unless a student who wishes to finish early:

1. requests a waiver (no later than one semester before the student's last semester) of the missing residency unit, AND,

2. if approved, pays an early graduation fee of one term's tuition, based on the student's academic program, which would be added to the last semester's charges.

In addition, some students may change academic programs as their needs and conditions allow. Below are some examples of when students changing programs may also need or want to request early graduation. All examples assume that the student completes each semester, i.e., does not take a leave of absence during a semester. Please note that to change from the part-time to the full-time day program, the cumulative GPA must be at least 3.300, and the Associate Dean of Student Services must grant approval. In Scenarios 1 and 2, a student may formally switch their academic programs and meet the residency requirements. In Scenarios 3 to 5, the student would not meet the residency requirements and would need to complete the items listed above for an early graduation request.

Scenario 1: *Changing from Full-Time Day to Part-Time*	**Year**	**Program**	**Residency Unit Earned Fall**	**Residency Unit Earned Spring**	**Total Residency Units**	**Cumulative Residency Units**
No Early Graduation Request Needed	1	Full-Time Day	1	1	2	2
	2	Part-Time	0.75	0.75	1.5	3.5
	3	Part-Time	0.75	0.75	1.5	5
	4	Part-Time	0.75	0.75	1.5	6.5

Scenario 2: *Changing from Part-Time to Full-Time Day*	**Year**	**Program**	**Residency Unit Earned Fall**	**Residency Unit Earned Spring**	**Total Residency Units**	**Cumulative Residency Units**
No Early Graduation Request Needed	1	Part-Time	0.75	0.75	1.5	1.5
	2	Full-Time Day	1	1	2	3.5
	3	Full-Time Day	1	1	2	5.5
	4	Full-Time Day	1	0	1	6.5

Scenario 3: *Graduating Early While Remaining Part-Time*	**Year**	**Program**	**Residency Unit Earned Fall**	**Residency Unit Earned Spring**	**Total Residency Units**	**Cumulative Residency Units**
Early Graduation Request Is Needed	1	Part-Time	0.75	0.75	1.5	1.5
	2	Part-Time	0.75	0.75	1.5	3
	3	Part-Time	0.75	0.75	1.5	4.5
	4	Part-Time	0.75	0	0.75	5.25

Scenario 4: *Changing from Part-Time to Full-Time Day*	**Year**	**Program**	**Residency Unit Earned Fall**	**Residency Unit Earned Spring**	**Total Residency Units**	**Cumulative Residency Units**
Early Graduation Request Is Needed	1	Part-Time	0.75	0.75	1.5	1.5
	2	Full-Time Day	1	1	2	3.5
	3	Full-Time Day	1	1	2	5.5
	4	Full-Time Day	0	0	0	5.5

Scenario 5: *Changing from Full-Time Day to Part-Time*	**Year**	**Program**	**Residency Unit Earned Fall**	**Residency Unit Earned Spring**	**Total Residency Units**	**Cumulative Residency Units**
Early Graduation Request Is Needed	1	Full-Time Day	1	1	2	2
	2	Part-Time	0.75	0.75	1.5	3.5
	3	Part-Time	0.75	0.75	1.5	5
	4	Part-Time	0	0	0	5

Appendix B
Seminar Standards and Guidelines

A. A seminar paper will be required for each student enrolled in a seminar.

B. The seminar requires the timely submission, at points throughout the semester to be established by the professor, of a topic outline, including a bibliography, and at least one draft of the seminar paper before submission of the final paper. The writing must display substantial legal writing skills and reflect in-depth research and cogent legal analysis. It must be original work, and all sources must be properly footnoted. To promote academic integrity, papers must be submitted through Turnitin.

C. Except with the professor's prior written approval, all research papers submitted for credit will have been prepared and researched solely for the course for which they are submitted.

D. Each student must submit their final seminar paper by email to Faculty Support Services at facultysupport@swlaw.edu. The professor will return one graded copy of each seminar paper to the Registrar's Office when the final grades for the seminar are submitted. A second unmarked copy will be forwarded to the law library, specifically indexed and placed in locked files, available only to faculty.

E. Since active oral participation is a seminar goal, each student can engage in oral analysis and argument of issues with other seminar members. This may be accomplished in a variety of ways within the discretion of the professor.