

SOUTHWESTERN

LAW SCHOOL
Los Angeles, CA

Administrative Withdrawal Policy

Administrative policy approved August 5, 2022.

Revision history: This policy clarifies information about administrative withdrawals that had been included in the Student Handbook (before the 2022–2023 academic year) and referred to in other policies; technical edits were made in August 2023; revised in May 2024 to address distance education courses offered in a primarily asynchronous format; revised in December 2024 to clarify the process for a student who is administratively withdrawn from all courses in a term; revised in April 2026.

Related policies: Attendance Policy; Religious and Cultural Observances Policy; Withdrawing from Southwestern; Student Complaint and Grievance Policy and Procedures (Including Complaints Implicating ABA Standards)

Related form: Administrative Withdrawal Appeal Form

Scheduled Review Date: April 2028 (Student Services Office)

A. Definition and Overview

Under Southwestern’s Attendance Policy, a student enrolled in a course at Southwestern Law School may be administratively withdrawn when absent for more than 20% of regularly scheduled class sessions in a residential course, or the designated equivalents in asynchronous and hybrid courses. See Attendance Policy for details. Students enrolled in a January intersession or mini-term course must attend all class sessions to receive academic credit.

Administrative withdrawal means the student will not receive academic credit for a course. The administrative withdrawal will appear as “WA” on the student’s transcript.

Students administratively withdrawn from a required course must repeat it in the next available term, unless the Associate Dean for Student Services approves the student taking it in a different term for a compelling reason.

A student who is administratively withdrawn from all courses in a term may be subject to involuntary withdrawal under the Withdrawing from Southwestern policy.

B. Process

When a student exceeds the permissible absences for a course, the Student Services Office will notify the student in at the student's official Southwestern email address.

If the Student Services Office does not know the basis for some or all of the absences, the notice will include information about the student's opportunity to appeal a potential administrative withdrawal from the course. The student must submit any appeal within 5 business days from the date of the notice, following the instructions provided below.

If the Student Services Office already knows the basis for the absences and has the appropriate documentation, the Office may determine that an appeal process is unnecessary under the circumstances.

During the appeal period, the student should continue attending the course and checking in via the Qquickly attendance app where applicable. A student in a course with an asynchronous component should continue completing their assignments during the appeal period.

A student who wishes to appeal should submit an [Administrative Withdrawal Appeal Form](#) to the Student Services Office demonstrating compelling circumstances for granting the appeal.

More specifically, the student should provide detailed information about the reasons they missed each class session or failed to complete course modules in the asynchronous course. Although supporting documentation is not required, students are encouraged to provide it where available (e.g., a doctor's note).

Compelling circumstances may include missing classes for illness, medical treatment, a student's religious or cultural observances, or a school-sponsored activity (e.g., attending a moot court competition or a hearing as part of a clinical course). Other reasons also may qualify. Although students are not required to report these absences or missing asynchronous coursework to the Student

Services Office in advance or contemporaneously, they are encouraged to do so and to provide any supporting documentation they may have.

When a student provides written notice to the Student Services Office in the first week of the term about anticipated absences due to religious or cultural observances, those will be considered compelling circumstances. Any appeal the student files later needs to address only the other absences. A student who provides pre-class or contemporaneous information about an absence to the Student Services Office should attach that information to any appeal they may later submit.

Following receipt of an appeal, the Associate Dean for Student Services will determine whether to grant the appeal, deny the appeal, or request additional information to evaluate the appeal. Factors considered include, but are not limited to, the number of absences; the circumstances underlying each absence, not just the absence triggering the administrative withdrawal; whether the students reported any absences in advance or contemporaneously to the Student Services Office; the nature of the documentation provided (if any); steps the student took to learn what they missed in each session (e.g., listening to a recording, seeking notes from a classmate, attending a faculty member's office hours to ask clarifying questions, etc.). For students enrolled in an asynchronous course, additional factors considered include the amount of incomplete coursework and the circumstances under which coursework was not completed.

The Associate Dean for Student Services, in consultation with a Vice Dean, has discretion concerning the outcome of the appeal. The Associate Dean for Student Services will also consult the Online Education Department if the appeal involves a student enrolled in the Online J.D. Program and the SCALE Office if the appeal involves a student enrolled in the SCALE Program. The determination is final and not subject to further review, including under the Student Complaint and Grievance Policy and Procedures (Including Complaints Implicating ABA Standards).

C. Post-Appeal Attendance

If an appeal is granted and the student is permitted to remain enrolled in the course, the student is expected to attend all remaining class sessions (or complete all remaining course modules for asynchronous courses). Any additional absences or missed coursework after an appeal has been granted may result in further review.

When further review is needed, the Associate Dean for Student Services, in consultation with a Vice Dean and the faculty member of record for the course, will determine whether the student may continue in the course or should be administratively withdrawn. In making this determination, the Associate Dean for Student Services will consider not only the reasons for the additional absences but also whether the student has missed such a significant portion of the course that they cannot meaningfully engage with the material or successfully complete the course. This determination is final and not subject to further review, including under the Student Complaint and Grievance Policy and Procedures (Including Complaints Implicating ABA Standards).

D. Policy Revisions

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