

SOUTHWESTERN

LAW SCHOOL
Los Angeles, CA

Disability Accommodations Policy (Including Standards for the Study of Law)

Administrative policy.

Revision history: Formerly a part of the annually revised Student Handbook; established as a standalone policy August 2022; technical revisions made in June 2023; revisions made in August 2024 to update documentation requirements; substantive revisions made in April 2026 to confirm Southwestern's commitment to digital accessibility, clarify procedures for students and when accommodations may be denied, add a student responsibility section, confirm protection against retaliation, and add external complaint information.

Related policies: Academic Disqualification, Academic Probation, and Academic Improvement Program Policies; Good Academic Standing Policy for J.D. Students; Attendance Policy; Examination Administration Contingency Plan; Examination Administration Policy; Distance Education Policy for Programs Other Than the Online J.D. Program; Master of Laws Program Policies; J.D./M.B.A. Dual-Degree Program Policy; Policy to Prevent Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation; SCALE Program Policies; Sexual Misconduct Policy; Student Records Policy – FERPA; Website and Digital Accessibility Policy; Student Complaint and Grievance Policy and Procedures (Including Complaints Implicating ABA Standards); Course Content Accessibility Policy

Related forms: Accommodations Request Form; Southwestern Qualified Professional Certification Form

Scheduled Review Date: June 2028 (Admissions Office; Career Services Office; Student Services Office)

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Appendix A: Standards for the Study of Law

A. Policy Statement

This policy is designed to ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to Southwestern Law School’s educational opportunities, programs, activities, and physical campus. Our commitment to accessibility extends to digital environments (e.g., website, learning management system, and online course materials).

This policy is part of Southwestern’s integrated accessibility framework. Along with the Website and Digital Accessibility Policy and the Course Content Accessibility Policy, it strives to ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to all academic programs, services, and digital environments. This policy focuses on the process for students to request accommodations and sets forth Southwestern’s obligations to provide reasonable accommodations under applicable law. Institutional standards and oversight responsibilities for digital accessibility are established in the Website and Digital Accessibility Policy, while requirements and responsibilities for ensuring that all instructional course content, regardless of format, is accessible to students with disabilities and complies with applicable accessibility standards are set forth in the Course Content Accessibility Policy.

This policy outlines the procedures for requesting and receiving reasonable accommodations in compliance with applicable state and federal laws, including the California Fair Employment and Housing Act, the Fair Housing Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

While Southwestern is committed to providing reasonable accommodations in compliance with applicable federal and state law, accommodations may be denied if they would impose an undue burden or fundamentally alter the nature of a course, academic program, service, or activity.

An undue burden means a significant difficulty or expense when considered in light of Southwestern's total institutional resources and operations. A fundamental alteration is one that would substantially modify the essential requirements, objectives, or academic standards of a program.

In such cases, Southwestern will engage in an individualized, interactive process to explore alternative accommodations that would provide equally effective access without imposing an undue burden or fundamentally altering the academic program.

Available accommodations may also depend on program modality. For example, accommodations appropriate for in-person instruction may not be appropriate for the Online J.D. program, and vice versa.

B. Admissions

1. Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) requirement

Without exception, Southwestern will not waive the LSAT requirement as the Law School Admission Council provides extensive accommodations for taking the test.

2. Self-identification

Applicants are not required to self-disclose a disability. But applicants who would like Southwestern to consider their disability during the admissions process must disclose the nature of the disability at the time of the application and describe how it affects the student's candidacy.

3. Reconsideration

It is not Southwestern's practice to reconsider rejected applications unless an applicant presents new information that did not exist or was not available to the applicant at the time they applied.

C. Students Requesting Accommodations

1. When to request accommodations

Students seeking accommodations must contact the Student Services Office as soon as possible after admission or upon diagnosis of disability. Students may request accommodations at any time during enrollment. Students who require accommodations are solely responsible for requesting accommodations before academic disqualification or dismissal.

Indicating a disability to a faculty or staff member outside the Student Services Office, on the Southwestern admissions application, or a Southwestern survey or similar instrument does **not** provide notice of the student's need or request for accommodations.

Challenges such as common exam anxiety or chronic lateness are not ordinarily considered disabilities that justify accommodation.

Students should request accommodations as early as possible, given the time required to complete the interactive process and approve appropriate accommodations. Academic decisions (e.g., grades, probation, disqualification, etc.) made before accommodations are approved and in place will not be revisited on the basis that accommodations were not yet in effect.

2. Where to request accommodations

Accessibility Services, which is part of the Student Services Office, coordinates and processes accommodation requests.

3. How to request accommodations

To request accommodations, students must:

- Submit an Accommodations Request Form to initiate the request.
- Meet with the Section 504 Coordinator.
- Submit appropriate documentation as outlined in Section F (Required Documentation).
- Adhere to all applicable deadlines to allow time for processing and implementation.
- Once approved, the student must submit a Semester Request through the Accommodate platform each semester or quarter to reaffirm the student's approved accommodations.
- After receiving approved accommodations, if a student requests a new or modified accommodation, the student must submit a

Supplemental Request through the Accommodate platform or contact the Section 504 Coordinator by emailing accessibility@swlaw.edu.

4. Deadlines

To ensure timely evaluation and implementation, students are strongly encouraged to submit accommodation requests:

- No later than eight weeks before a scheduled exam, or
- No later than eight weeks before the first day of the final exam period.

While Southwestern will do its best to process a request for accommodations that is submitted beyond the stated deadlines, requests received less than two weeks before these deadlines may be denied if there is insufficient time to:

- Gather and review the appropriate documentation,
- Evaluate possible accommodations, or
- Implement an accommodation.

D. Accommodations

1. Academic accommodations

Academic modifications include reduced course loads, extended graduation timelines, part-time programming, and similar measures. In appropriate cases, such as a reduced course load, the adjustment will be made in consultation with a Vice Dean and the Student Services Office.

2. In-class accommodations

Once accommodations have been approved through Accessibility Services, the student must notify Accessibility Services sufficiently in advance of any in-class assessment (e.g., quiz, timed assignments, etc.) for which those accommodations are requested, as assessments in a particular course likely will not be known by Accessibility Services.

For auxiliary accommodations (e.g., speech-to-text and text-to-speech software, special equipment, etc.), see Section D.4. below.

3. Exam accommodations

Exam modifications may include additional time to take the exam, time for rest breaks, using a reader or scribe, permission to eat, a reduced-distraction testing environment, or taking the exam at a time other than

the regularly scheduled time. Students requesting certain exam modifications may be asked to speak with the faculty member to learn the exam format to determine the appropriate modification. For example, if the student has difficulty writing but not difficulty reading, the need for additional time would differ depending on whether the exam is multiple-choice or essay.

For logistical reasons, students receiving exam accommodations will be scheduled with exam start and end times that differ from those on the official exam schedule. Students should be prepared to start and end their exams earlier or later than the officially scheduled times. In some circumstances, exams may also be scheduled for dates that differ from those on the official exam schedule. Students are expected to make themselves available to accommodate their individual exam schedules provided by Accessibility Services.

a. Reduced-distraction testing room

Southwestern regularly approves accommodations for a reduced-distraction testing environment when the functional limitations caused by a student's disability prevent them from testing in the regularly scheduled classroom. The purpose of providing a reduced-distraction testing environment is to increase control over noise and other environmental factors that can impact student performance in a testing situation. A reduced-distraction testing room at Southwestern limits the number of students to one-third of the room's capacity, and each student is assigned to an individual workspace. Privacy screens are available upon request made to the proctor. The workspaces are distanced, and students have access to earplugs or other noise-reduction devices.

b. Private testing room

If a student believes they require a testing room accommodation other than a reduced-distraction testing environment, such as a private testing room, they must engage in an interactive process with Accessibility Services to discuss how the conditions of a reduced-distraction testing environment are not an effective accommodation for the functional limitations caused by their disability. Students must submit documentation from a qualified professional that gives a clear rationale for alternate testing room accommodations based on the student's functional limitations.

Details should be specific; general statements such as the student is “easily distracted” or “distracted by others” are insufficient.

A reduced distraction or private testing room is intended to provide an environment with fewer interruptions than a standard classroom setting. However, these spaces do not guarantee the complete elimination of noise or distraction. While Southwestern makes every reasonable effort to minimize disruptions, some background noise (e.g., from adjacent rooms, building operations, hallways, etc.) may still occur, and students should plan accordingly.

4. Auxiliary accommodations

Auxiliary services may include interpreters, note-taking services, text-to-speech software, and other support services in connection with the academic program. Southwestern does not provide services for students to use for personal reasons. Purchasing special equipment or software (such as Dragon Naturally Speaking, Fusion Suite, assistive listening devices, etc.) for Southwestern-related activities may also constitute an auxiliary service.

5. Digital access accommodations

Southwestern will also provide accommodations to ensure equal access to digital materials and services. When digital content or tools are not fully accessible, Southwestern will provide alternate formats or equally effective accommodations, consistent with the student’s documented needs.

6. Architectural accommodations

While most aspects of Southwestern’s facilities are accessible, some students may have accessibility needs that require pre-arrangement.

- **Parking.** Southwestern has several designated accessible parking spaces near Southwestern buildings for individuals with state-issued handicap parking designations.
- **Ramped entrances.** Entrance to Southwestern buildings is via ramped access.
- **Accessible restrooms.** Accessible restrooms are available on every floor of the Westmoreland Building and throughout the Bullocks Wilshire Building.
- **Classrooms.** All classrooms are accessible, but some may be easier to reach than others. For this reason, students with mobility

impairments are requested to contact Accessibility Services as early as possible in the registration process to allow feasible adjustments.

7. Requests to modify the Attendance Policy

Class attendance is a fundamental aspect of legal education. Reduced course loads, extensions of time for graduation, and other accommodations are available, so it would be extremely rare that modifying the Attendance Policy would be a necessary reasonable accommodation. Accessibility Services will generally not waive the Attendance Policy as an accommodation.

8. Service animals

Service animals are dogs individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. Service animals are working animals, not pets. Service animals are permitted to accompany people with disabilities in all areas of campus where community members and visitors are allowed. Other animals, including support or comfort animals, are prohibited in Southwestern buildings, meaning academic and administrative buildings. Support or comfort animals may be approved for residents of The Residences through the housing accommodation process.

Service animals do not need to be pre-approved. However, Southwestern strongly encourages students to register their service animals with Accessibility Services voluntarily. Registration allows the office to notify relevant staff, faculty, and campus security about the presence of a service animal. Registration also allows Accessibility Services to notify appropriate campus partners for safety and emergency support for the animal and the student.

Service animals must have a harness, leash, or tether unless the handler's disability precludes the use of tethers or the tether would interfere with the service animal's ability to perform its work or tasks safely. In these cases, the service animal must be under the handler's control (e.g., via voice commands, hand signals, or other effective means).

Southwestern reserves the right to deny access to campus or remove from campus any service animal if (1) the animal is disruptive or out of control and its handler does not take action that is effective to control it; (2) the animal is not housebroken; (3) the animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others that cannot be eliminated or reduced to an acceptable level by a reasonable modification to other policies or

procedures; or (4) the handler fails to comply with their responsibilities under this policy.

E. Student Responsibility

Students play an important role in the accommodation process. All students are responsible for promptly notifying Accessibility Services if they encounter barriers that affect their access to courses or programs. This responsibility applies both to students requesting accommodations for the first time and to students with previously approved accommodations whose current arrangements are no longer sufficient. Timely notice allows Southwestern to engage in the interactive process and determine whether additional or different accommodations are appropriate.

Students are also responsible for timely reviewing notices from Student Services staff and timely responding to requests for information and meetings.

F. Required Documentation

The diagnosis of a disability or condition alone does not automatically qualify an individual for accommodations. Documentation supporting the requested accommodations must indicate that the stated disability substantially limits some major life activity and must reasonably and logically demonstrate the need for accommodations that directly address the disabling condition.

All students are held to the same academic performance and behavior standards. The specific standards for the study of law appear in Appendix A.

Southwestern's provision of reasonable accommodations and services is based on assessing the impact of the student's disabilities on their academic performance at a given time in their life. Because accommodation needs can change over time, the documentation must verify the need for accommodations based on the student's current level of functioning within the law school setting.

1. Students with a prior history of accommodations

Students with a record of prior accommodations approved for another educational program or a high-stakes examination (e.g., LSAT, GRE, GMAT, MPRE, etc.) can request that Southwestern approve the same or lesser accommodations if the following conditions are satisfied:

- Southwestern regularly provides the same or equivalent accommodations;
- The student provides a record of the official approval of the prior accommodations; and

- The student provides a Southwestern Qualified Professional Certification Form or equivalent documentation completed by their medical provider that verifies the need for accommodations based on the student's current level of functioning.

Students requesting accommodations that are new or different from those previously received must submit the following:

- A detailed explanation of why the prior accommodations are insufficient, including any changes in the student's diagnosis or functional limitations; and
- The documentation described in Section F.2 below.

2. Students without a prior history of accommodations

Students without a record of prior accommodations are required to provide the following:

- Southwestern Qualified Professional Certification Form or equivalent documentation completed by their medical provider that verifies the need for accommodations based on the student's current level of functioning; and
- Relevant supporting documentation substantiating the student's disability-related functional limitations, their specific access needs, and how those needs relate to the accommodations recommended. Documentation may consist of a comprehensive evaluation; a relevant history; standardized test data from appropriate evaluation instruments; or a written statement describing the applicant's disability, impairment, areas of limitation, effects on activities of daily living, and testing accommodation needs. Self-report questionnaires and interviews are generally insufficient on their own.

If the initial information provided is insufficient to fully determine the nature of the disability or the appropriate accommodations, Southwestern may ask for additional information.

G. Bar Examination and the Multistate Professional Responsibility Exam

Students with disabilities are encouraged to meet with Accessibility Services at least one year before taking the Multistate Professional Responsibility Exam (MPRE) or bar examination to discuss the accommodation request process. Information about how to contact bar examiners in all states is available in the

law library, the Registrar's Office, Accessibility Services, or online at <http://www.ncbex.org>. Many state bar examiners will request that Southwestern provide information about accommodations received during law school. Accessibility Services will provide that information after receiving a written release from the student and will normally do so within 10 working days of receiving the written release.

The National Conference of Bar Examiners and each state bar make an independent determination regarding the approval of exam accommodations. Southwestern's approval of exam accommodations does not guarantee that these other organizations will approve the same or any accommodations, and vice versa.

H. Temporary Accommodations

Students seeking accommodations for a temporary disability should provide a Southwestern Qualified Professional Certification Form that verifies the student's condition and expected duration, and recommends appropriate accommodations. If the initial information provided is insufficient to fully determine the nature of the disability or the appropriate accommodations, Southwestern may ask for additional information. The cost of obtaining the initial verification and any further assessments will be the student's responsibility. The documentation should reflect the student's current condition and be no older than 60 days.

I. Pregnancy and Pregnancy-Related Accommodations

Southwestern does not discriminate based on pregnancy or related conditions. Pregnancy-related conditions include childbirth, termination of pregnancy, and lactation. Pregnancy-related conditions also include medical conditions and recovery related to pregnancy, childbirth, termination of pregnancy, or lactation. Southwestern will not require a student to take a leave of absence, withdraw from the law school, or limit the student's legal studies.

Southwestern will provide individualized, reasonable accommodations to pregnant students so they may complete their education program. Reasonable accommodations may include, but are not limited to, allowing the student to make up tests and assignments missed due to pregnancy-related reasons, approving a leave of absence, providing a clean, private space for lactation, etc. Reasonable accommodation will also include allowing medically necessary absences.

Pregnant students who intend to request pregnancy-related accommodations are encouraged to complete the Pregnancy & Pregnancy-Related Accommodations Intake Form.

When a student informs a Southwestern employee of their pregnancy or pregnancy-related condition, the employee is required to share the Title IX Coordinator's contact information and inform the student that the Title IX Coordinator can coordinate specific actions to prevent sex discrimination and ensure the student's equal access to the education program or activity.

J. Privacy and Confidentiality of Records

Documentation of a student's disability is maintained separately from the student's general academic record. Southwestern treats all information related to a disability as confidential. Southwestern discloses that information only to school employees with a legitimate education interest, consistent with Southwestern's Student Records Policy – FERPA and applicable state and federal law. Southwestern employees or volunteers apprised of a student's disability are advised that such information is confidential. Documentation related to a student's disability will be retained for the duration of a student's time at Southwestern and is subject to being destroyed five years after the end of the academic term in which the student no longer attends Southwestern. Students are advised to retain copies of all disability-related documentation submitted to Accessibility Services since access to this documentation is not guaranteed upon a student's graduation, dismissal, or withdrawal.

K. Academic Dismissal and Readmission

Students who are academically disqualified sometimes raise a disability as the basis for academic difficulty. While this basis may sometimes affect the decision for readmission, it is the student's responsibility to explain why the disability was not previously disclosed to Accessibility Services. If it was disclosed, the student may clarify why accommodations were not requested, or if accommodations were provided, why they were insufficient.

L. Grievances and Protections Against Retaliation

This grievance process applies to individual student accommodation requests. Concerns about barriers to Southwestern's website may instead be addressed under the Website and Digital Accessibility Policy.

Students who believe they have been denied a reasonable accommodation, or that an accommodation was not implemented appropriately, should first bring

the matter to the Associate Dean for Student Services, who will attempt to resolve it.

If the student is unsatisfied with the resolution, the matter may be brought in writing to the Vice Dean in charge of academics within 30 calendar days of the Associate Dean's decision. The written appeal should include:

- A description of the accommodation requested;
- The reason the student believes the accommodation was denied or not implemented appropriately;
- Any supporting documentation; and
- The remedy the student is seeking.

The Vice Dean will review the appeal and issue a written decision within 30 calendar days of receipt.

If the matter still cannot be resolved, the student may file a written appeal with the Dean within 30 calendar days of the Vice Dean's decision. Upon receiving the appeal, the Dean will follow the appeal procedures set forth in the Student Complaint and Grievance Policy and Procedures (Including Complaints Implicating ABA Standards).

Students who believe they have been discriminated against because of their disability, pregnancy, or pregnancy-related condition should report the matter to the Student Services Office and consult the Policy to Prevent Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation and the Interim Sexual Misconduct Policy.

Southwestern prohibits retaliation against any student for requesting a disability accommodation, filing a grievance, or exercising their rights under disability laws.

If a student believes they have been discriminated against based on disability, or if they are unsatisfied with the outcome of Southwestern's grievance process, they may contact:

- U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights www.ed.gov/ocr | (800) 421-3481
- California Civil Rights Department (for students residing in California) calcivilrights.ca.gov | (800) 884-1684 voice | (800) 700-2320 (TTY)
- Appropriate civil rights enforcement agency in their state (for students residing outside of California)

M. Additional Resources

ABA Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs

https://www.americanbar.org/groups/lawyer_assistance.html

ABA Commission on Disability Rights

Email: cdr@americanbar.org

<https://www.americanbar.org/groups/diversity/disabilityrights/>

American Council of the Blind

225 Reinekers Lane

Suite 660

Alexandria, VA 22314

(800) 424-8666 (voice)

E-mail: info@acb.org

<http://www.acb.org/>

Association on Higher Education and Disability

16810 Kenton Drive

Suite 220

Huntersville, NC 28080

(704) 947-7779 (voice/TTY)

Contact: <https://www.ahead.org/contactus>

<https://www.ahead.org/>

Braille Institute of America

741 North Vermont Avenue

Los Angeles, CA 90029

(800) 272-4553 (voice)

Contact: <https://www.brailleinstitute.org/contact/#contactform>

<http://www.brailleinstitute.org/>

California Department of Rehabilitation

Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Greater Los Angeles District

888 South Figueroa

Suite 900

Los Angeles, CA 90017

(213) 736-3904 (voice)

(916) 558-5673 (TTY)

<https://www.dor.ca.gov/>

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

4301 Wilson Boulevard

Suite 300

Arlington, VA 22203

(703) 524-7600 (voice)

(800) 950-6264 (helpline)

Contact: <https://www.nami.org/contact-us/>

<https://www.nami.org/>

N. Policy Revisions

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

Appendix A: Standards for the Study of Law

To help applicants for admission and current students understand the rigor of Southwestern's academic programs and the minimum essential skills and abilities needed for successful completion, Southwestern has developed standards for successful law study. These standards are based in part on the ABA Task Force on Law Schools and the Profession, Legal Education and Professional Development—An Education Continuum (1992) (often referred to as the "MacCrate Report" in honor of the chair of the task force), Southwestern's Learning Outcomes, and the American Bar Association's Standards for Approval of Law Schools.

Intellectual—Conceptual and Integrative Skills: A student must be able to recall and analyze complex factual information, integrate this information with complex legal theories, and apply to those facts the substantive legal principles that will control the result in a particular case. This form of analytical ability involves the ability to recognize and identify the legal issues that are implicated by specific facts, the ability to sort material facts from immaterial facts, the ability to recognize and evaluate competing legal theories that might apply to the facts, and the use of sound and logical legal reasoning in applying legal principles to material facts to reach a proper result. It also involves the ability to recognize when different legal analysis might lead to a different but logically supportable result. The student must be able to perform legal research. A student must be capable of achieving the designated learning outcomes for their program.

Effective Communication Skills: A student must be able to organize ideas and express them with a high degree of organization, clarity, precision, and persuasive force. A student must demonstrate proficiency in English and a commitment to writing well, including appropriate vocabulary, grammar, syntax, spelling, and punctuation. A student must be able to memorialize and organize information in an accessible form. A student must be able to communicate candidly and civilly with others. A student must be honest in advocating a particular result and should not misrepresent facts or the content of any legal principle upon which the student relies.

Behavioral and Social Attributes: A student must possess the emotional health required to fully utilize their abilities and possess the interpersonal skills to work with others. The student must possess the ability to

- comply with requirements of applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, statutes, and applicable orders of a court or tribunal;
- comply with the ethical norms of the profession as expressed in the Code of Professional Responsibility and the ABA Model Rules of Professional Conduct, including the avoidance of acts that are illegal, dishonest, fraudulent, or deceitful;

- avoid acts that exhibit disregard for the rights or welfare of others;
- avoid acts of self-harm or violence against others;
- use honest and good judgment in financial dealings on behalf of oneself and others; and
- act diligently and reliably in fulfilling one's obligations to others.

Attendance and Participation: A student must be able to maintain regular and punctual class attendance, participate in class discussions, and complete course assignments.

Time Management: A student must be able to meet deadlines and time constraints, and to prioritize and manage multiple tasks.

Participating in Required Administrative Processes: If issues arise regarding the student's behavior, they must possess the emotional health to participate in meetings and any required investigation regarding the student's behavior.