

SOUTHWESTERN

LAW SCHOOL
Los Angeles, CA

Master of Laws Program Policies

Faculty policy.

Revision history: Formerly a part of the annually revised Student Handbook; established as a standalone policy in August 2022; technical edits performed in August 2023; technical edits performed in June 2024.

Related policies: Academic Policies and Procedures; International Students Policy

Scheduled Review Date: March 2025 (LL.M. Offices; Vice Deans' Office)

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Southwestern offers two LL.M. degree programs: the General LL.M. for those who wish to design a curriculum that will most benefit their objectives and the LL.M. in Entertainment and Media. 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 2024–2025 have been suspended, except for the Siderman Human Rights Fellow and Armenia/Artsakh Fellow.

Students enrolled in an LL.M. degree program are subject to all other Southwestern policies not explicitly referred to in the Master of Laws Program Policies.

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

1. **Purpose**

The Master of Laws, General LL.M. degree program allows students to choose and

direct their educational focus. This opportunity to select an emphasis of study enables program participants to best meet individual professional goals. Students work closely with faculty to develop a comprehensive curricular plan and may take classes in 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 courses each candidate undertakes will depend on the individual's chosen area of concentration. Generally, 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 will not be considered part of the LL.M. degree.

b. Unit guidelines and length of course of study

Students work closely with the LL.M. program director (Program Director) and faculty to develop a comprehensive curricular plan and may take classes in the day or evening program. Full-time students must enroll in at least eight units and, at most, 16 units each semester. International students must maintain full-time status. Part-time students must enroll in at least two units and, at most, seven units each semester. Full-time students 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.

Students who are United States citizens 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 Southwestern's Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) Designated School Officer (DSO) and the Program Director, based upon situations approved by SEVIS. (See the *International Students Policy* for more information.)

c. Leave of absence

Students who are United States citizens may take up to a one-year leave of absence. International students may be eligible to take a single one-semester leave of absence, but only following current U.S. immigration law and based upon situations approved by SEVIS. A leave of absence must be authorized by

the Southwestern DSO and the Program Director. 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 their 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 need an LL.M. to qualify for the exam must 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 where they wish to take a bar examination as requirements vary widely. See [Professional Licensure by Program](#) on Southwestern's website. For information on California bar certification, see the [Foreign Education](#) page on The State Bar of California website.

Southwestern will award a Certificate of Completion to an LL.M. student with a foreign law degree who 1) takes graded courses to sit for the California Bar Exam and 2) does not attain a GPA of 2.330 but receives a passing letter grade (D- or above) in at least 24 units. LL.M. students must meet all other academic requirements outlined in the *Academic Policies and Procedures*.

Students may elect to be graded using a non-letter grading system using 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 at least eight units of coursework attempted, whichever occurs later. Students will sign a form requesting the change, which must be approved by the Program Director 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). This change is

irrevocable because the non-letter grading system has an imprecise correspondence with the letter-based grading system. 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 relying on GPA for hiring decisions. Students are encouraged to consider all 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 the 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 must consult with the Program Director as early as possible to be advised on up-to-date policies.

B. Master of Laws in Entertainment and Media

Through its LL.M. degree in Entertainment and Media, Southwestern Law School is committed to identifying and admitting a select and diverse number of attorneys and 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 selected area of specialization.

1. Degree requirements

To qualify for the LL.M. degree in Entertainment and Media, students must complete at least 24 credit hours. 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 at an institution other than Southwestern Law School will not count towards the LL.M. degree, except as determined by the director of the Donald E. Biederman Entertainment, Media, and Sports Law Institute of Southwestern Law School. Students may take up to 30 credits. However, only 24 credits will count

toward the LL.M. degree.

2. Unit guidelines and length of course of study

Students work closely with the Program Director and faculty to develop a comprehensive curricular plan and may take classes in the day and evening programs. Full-time students must enroll in no fewer than eight units and no more than 16 units each semester. International students must maintain full-time status. Part-time students must enroll in no fewer than two units and no more than seven 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 complete all coursework 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 DSO and the Program Director, based on situations approved by SEVIS. (See the *International Students Policy* for more information.)

3. Leave of absence

U.S. students can take up to a one-year leave of absence per Southwestern's leave of absence policy. International students may be eligible to take a single one-semester leave of absence, but only following current U.S. immigration law and as authorized by the DSO and the Program Director and based upon situations approved by SEVIS. 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 their LL.M. study.

4. Grading, academic success, and bar eligibility

U.S. students can take up to a one-year leave of absence per Southwestern's leave of absence policy. International students may be eligible to take a single one-semester leave of absence, but only following current U.S. immigration law and as authorized by the DSO and the Program Director and based upon situations approved by SEVIS. 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 their LL.M. study.

Students enrolled in Southwestern Law School's program for the LL.M. degree in Entertainment and Media 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 another performance criterion determined by each corresponding class's supervising professor(s). To avoid doubt, no student enrolled in the program will be graded on a non-letter scale under any circumstances (e.g., High Honors, Honors, High Pass, Pass, Fail, etc.).

Students are advised to contact any jurisdiction where they wish to take a bar examination as requirements vary widely. See [Professional Licensure by Program](#) on Southwestern's website. 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 academically disqualified after two consecutive semesters reflecting a GPA lower than 2.330.

5. 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 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.

C. Policy Revisions

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