

SOUTHWESTERN

LAW SCHOOL

Los Angeles, CA

Academic Disqualification, Academic Probation, and Academic Improvement Program Policies

Faculty policy. Effective immediately.

Revision history: Formerly a part of the annually revised Student Handbook; established as a standalone policy August 2022; revised in August 2023; edits related to part-time students made in May 2024 to be effective starting with the 2024/2025 academic year; substantive revisions to the Academic Disqualification Policy made in April 2025 (effective immediately, except that the Section B(1) restriction on petitions by students with a cumulative GPA of less than 2.200 applies only to those entering Southwestern June 1, 2025 or later).

Related policies: SCALE Program Policies; Policy to Prevent Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation; Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy; Student's Right to Cancel and Refund Policy; Policy on Alcohol and Other Drugs, Code of Student Professionalism and Conduct; Policy Statement on Student Academic Work-Product Originality; Student Honor Code; and Interim Sexual Misconduct Policy; Withdrawing from Southwestern

Scheduled Review Date: April 2026 (Academic Success and Bar Preparation Office; Student Services Office)

Table of Contents

[A. Overview of Academic Policies](#)

[B. Academic Disqualification](#)

[C. Academic Probation](#)

[D. Academic Improvement Program \(AIP\)](#)

[E. Policy Revisions](#)

A. Overview of Academic Policies

The following policies apply to all J.D. students in the full-time and part-time (evening or PLEAS/part-time day) residential or online J.D. programs. As used in this policy, an "evaluation period" refers to the fall and spring semesters. Students in the SCALE

program should refer to the SCALE Program Policies for specific policies governing academic disqualification and academic probation.

1. Academic disqualification

A student is academically disqualified when a student fails to achieve the following:

- a. A minimum cumulative GPA:** Students are disqualified if they do not maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 2.330 at the end of each evaluation period, excluding the summer session or the intersession. The minimum cumulative GPA requirement is initially calculated after the first two evaluation periods for full-time students (typically at the end of the spring semester of the first year) and after the first three evaluation periods for part-time students (typically at the end of the fall semester of the second year).

For students who change from the full-time program to the part-time program during their first year after completing their first evaluation period, the minimum cumulative GPA requirement is initially calculated after the first three evaluations periods (typically at the end of the fall semester of the second year) provided that the student achieves a term GPA of at least 2.330 in one of the first two completed evaluation periods. Students who have changed from the full-time program to the part-time program during their first year after completing their first evaluation period and who fail to achieve a term GPA of at least 2.330 in one of the first two completed evaluation periods are subject to academic disqualification without progressing to the third evaluation period.

The following chart outlines when initial GPA checks occur for each program:

| Program Type | Initial Cumulative GPA Check (for disqualification) |
|---|--|
| Full-time | End of 2nd evaluation period (typically Spring, Year 1) |
| Part-time | End of 3rd evaluation period (typically Fall, Year 2) |
| Full-time to Part-time: term GPA at least 2.330 in one of the first two evaluation periods. | End of 3rd evaluation period (typically Fall, Year 2) |
| Full-time to Part-time: term GPA below 2.330 in both of the first two evaluation periods. | End of 2nd evaluation period (typically Spring, Year 1) |

After the initial calculation, the minimum cumulative GPA is calculated at the end of each remaining semester for students in all programs.

- b. A minimum GPA in two consecutive evaluation periods:** Students are disqualified if they do not achieve a GPA of at least 2.330 in each of two consecutive evaluation periods, excluding the summer session or the January intersession. The minimum GPA in two consecutive evaluation periods is initially calculated after the first two evaluation periods for full-time students (typically at the end of the spring semester of the first year) and after the first three evaluation periods for part-time students (typically at the end of the fall semester of the second year).

For students who change from the full-time program to the part-time program during their first year after completing their first evaluation period, the minimum GPA in two consecutive evaluation periods is initially calculated after the first two evaluation periods (typically at the end of the spring semester of the first year).

The following chart outlines when initial GPA checks occur for each program:

| Program Type | Initial 2-Term GPA Check (for disqualification) |
|------------------------|--|
| Full-time | End of 2nd evaluation period (typically Spring, Year 1) |
| Part-time | End of 3rd evaluation period (typically Fall, Year 2) |
| Full-time to Part-time | End of 2nd evaluation period (typically Spring, Year 1) |

After the initial calculation, the minimum GPA in two consecutive evaluation periods is calculated at the end of each remaining semester for students in all programs.

The minimum GPA in two consecutive evaluation periods does not apply if the disqualification occurs in a student's final evaluation period of law school and the student has already completed the minimum requirements for graduation, including, but not limited to, maintaining a cumulative GPA of at least 2.330.

The provision also does not apply if the disqualification occurs in the second to last evaluation period of law school when the following two requirements are met: (i) the student's cumulative GPA is at least 2.600 after the second to last evaluation period of law school; and (ii) the student earned fewer than eight graded units in the second to last evaluation period of law school.

- c. *Fail a required course two times:*** Students are disqualified if they fail a required course a second time.

2. Academic probation

A student is placed on academic probation if their GPA is less than a 2.330 in any evaluation period, excluding the summer terms or January intersession, or when the student has been academically disqualified and readmitted. Full-time students can be placed on academic probation after their first evaluation period, and part-time students can be placed on academic probation after their second evaluation period. Part-time students with a GPA less than a 2.330 after the first semester, while not on academic probation, are required to meet with the Student Services Office to discuss their academic performance. Students on academic probation and part-time students with a GPA less than a 2.330 after the first semester may not participate in externships, student honors programs, or leadership positions. A student remains on academic probation for the duration of the term's Academic Improvement Program.

A student will not be placed on academic probation based on their performance in their second to last evaluation period of law school if the following two requirements are met: (i) the student's cumulative GPA is at least 2.600 after the second to last evaluation period of law school; and (ii) the student earned fewer than eight graded units in the second to last evaluation period of law school.

3. Academic Improvement Program

A student may be required to participate in an Academic Improvement Program (AIP) when the student's cumulative GPA is 2.700 or below after the fall semester of the first year. A student must also participate in an AIP if the student's cumulative GPA is 2.700 or below, as calculated after the spring semester of each academic year. Part-time students required to participate in an Academic Improvement Program are required to meet with the Student Services Office to discuss their academic performance.

B. Academic Disqualification

1. Disqualification procedure

Southwestern reviews student grades at the end of each evaluation period to determine whether a student has been academically disqualified. The Student Services Office will notify students by letter (via email) if they have been disqualified and withdrawn ("Disqualification Letter").

A student with a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of at least 2.200 who believes their grades do not reflect their academic ability may petition Southwestern's Academic Standards Committee (the "Committee") and the Vice Deans' Office for readmission. A student with a cumulative GPA of less than 2.200 may petition the Committee and the Vice Deans' Office only if one of the following two exceptions applies:

- a.** the student achieved a term GPA of at least 2.500 in one evaluation period before the disqualification, or
- b.** the student has completed at least 40 units.

Procedures following academic disqualification for students who are ineligible to petition are set forth below in the section titled, *"Procedures for students who are ineligible to petition or whose petition for readmission is denied."*

No student, regardless of cumulative GPA, may petition for readmission if they fail to meet the conditions of a previous readmission (see the *"Procedures following readmission"* section below).

If a student believes their grades do not reflect their academic capability due to possible discriminatory or harassing action on the basis of race (including hairstyle and hair texture), ethnicity, color, religion, creed, ancestry, national origin, sex, gender, gender identity or expression, reproductive health decision-making, pregnancy (including pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, and medical conditions related to pregnancy, childbirth, or breastfeeding), sex stereotyping (including assumptions about a person's appearance or behavior, gender roles, gender expression, or gender identity), sexual orientation, parental status, marital status, age, disability (mental and physical), medical condition, citizenship status, military status or service, veteran status, genetic information, or any other classification protected by federal or California law, or any combination of any status protected by law in the educational programs (including retention of students) or activities Southwestern operates, the student may file a complaint under Southwestern's Policy to Prevent Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation.

2. Readmission petition procedure

The Committee and Vice Deans' Office are responsible for considering petitions for readmission. A student seeking readmission following disqualification must file a written petition within ten calendar days of the date of the Disqualification Letter from the Student Services Office. Exceptions to this deadline are allowed solely at the discretion of the Associate Dean for Student Services and only in emergencies or under compelling circumstances.

A student who is academically disqualified and is petitioning for readmission may continue in Southwestern courses in which the student is currently enrolled, pending notification by the Student Services Office of the decision on the student's petition. If the student is enrolled in an externship and wishes to continue fulfilling the externship course requirements pending consideration of

the petition, Southwestern will notify the placement of the student's academic status and the student's plan to continue in the externship. If the student chooses not to continue in the externship course but continues to work at the externship placement, Southwestern will notify the placement of the student's plan to continue without receiving school credit. If the externship placement asks Southwestern for the basis of the change, the placement will be notified of the student's academic standing.

A petition for readmission must include all requirements set forth in the *Petition for Readmission following Academic Disqualification* (the "Petition"), which will be provided to all eligible students at the time of the Disqualification Letter. The student must email an electronic copy of their Petition (in PDF format) to studentservices@swlaw.edu by the deadline listed in the Disqualification Letter. The Committee and the Vice Deans' Office will only consider Petitions in writing; personal appearances are prohibited.

3. Standards for readmission

The Committee and the Vice Deans' Office will review all timely submitted written Petitions from eligible students. A positive recommendation from the Committee and the Vice Deans' Office is required for readmission. In evaluating Petitions, the following factors will be considered:

- Reasons offered for the academic performance that led to disqualification, including any supporting documentation and any communications with the Student Services Office related to the student's offered reasons;
- Likelihood that the student will successfully complete law school and be admitted to the bar;
- Student's participation in Southwestern's academic success programming;
- Pattern of the student's law school grades that contributed to disqualification;
- Attendance records and attendance warnings;
- Documented instances of disciplinary warnings and reprimands related to a violation of any Southwestern institutional policy, including but not limited to the Policy on Alcohol and Other Drugs, Code of Student Professionalism and Conduct, Policy Statement on Student Academic Work-Product Originality, Student Honor Code, and Interim Sexual Misconduct Policy;
- Feedback from the student's past professors set forth on the *Faculty Feedback Form*; and
- Any other factors related to the items listed above.

Petitions from students who were assigned to and failed to participate in any component of a required Academic Improvement Program will be presumptively denied absent exceptional circumstances. Letters of support from faculty will not be accepted as each of a student's past professors will be asked to complete a *Faculty Feedback Form*. A voting member of the Committee is not permitted to

share their personal experiences with a student beyond what is stated in the *Faculty Feedback Form*. Letters of support from staff, alumni, or other students will not be accepted.

The following examples provide guidance on circumstances that may support or weaken a Petition for readmission. These examples are illustrative and not exhaustive. Including a particular type of circumstance does not guarantee approval or denial, as the Committee and Vice Deans' Office consider the totality of the student's Petition, supporting documentation, and demonstrated readiness to succeed if readmitted. The Committee and Vice Deans' Office will evaluate each Petition on its own merit.

a. *Examples of circumstances indicative of stronger Petitions*

- **Serious medical condition:** A student was diagnosed with a serious medical condition that directly impacted their ability to complete coursework. The student demonstrates that they are now in a position to complete law school successfully.
- **Unforeseen personal hardship with resolution:** A student experienced the death or serious illness of an immediate family member, resulting in significant emotional and logistical burdens that impacted their studies. The Petition includes an explanation of how the hardship affected their performance and how their circumstances have changed.
- **Temporary and significant financial hardship that has been resolved:** A student faced a temporary and significant financial crisis that severely impacted their ability to focus on coursework. The student demonstrates that their financial situation has stabilized and will not interfere with their ability to succeed going forward.
- **Undiagnosed disability with accommodations in place:** A student struggled academically due to an unknown disability but subsequently received accommodations and significantly improved their academic performance in the following semester.

b. *Examples of circumstances indicative of weaker Petitions*

- **General difficulty with coursework without mitigating circumstances:** The student's Petition states that they found law school challenging or struggled to keep up; the student indicates they have learned how to manage the workload and overcome challenges but does not provide a compelling external reason for their poor academic performance.
- **Foreseeable work or personal commitments:** The student was balancing work, family responsibilities, or other personal obligations and does not demonstrate why these circumstances

were unavoidable. Claims of family responsibilities, work obligations, or extracurricular commitments that existed before a student enrolled in law school are not compelling, even if the responsibilities are significant, as the circumstances are foreseeable.

- **Failure to address the likelihood of future success:** The Petition sets forth circumstances leading to the student's poor performance but does not clearly demonstrate how those circumstances have changed or why the student is likely to succeed if readmitted.
- **Failure to seek academic and other support despite personal hardship:** The student experienced a personal crisis that made it difficult to focus on coursework. However, the student did not take advantage of available academic success programming, seek help from the Student Services Office, attend office hours, meet with Dean's Fellows, or meet with Teaching Assistants, and the Petition does not provide a compelling explanation for why they did not take advantage of programming or reach out for assistance.

Following a decision on a student's Petition, the student will be notified in writing, generally within three weeks of submitting the Petition for readmission, unless unusual or complex circumstances exist. Decisions are final and not subject to further appeal.

Procedures for students whose Petition is granted are set forth below in the section titled, "*Procedures following readmission.*" Procedures for students whose Petition is denied are set forth below in the section titled, "*Procedures for students who are ineligible to petition or whose petition for readmission is denied.*"

4. Procedures for students who are ineligible to petition or whose petition for readmission is denied.

A student who is ineligible to petition or whose Petition is denied will automatically be withdrawn from all currently enrolled Southwestern courses and will receive a full tuition refund for any currently enrolled Southwestern courses. No credit will be granted for any courses from which a disqualified student is withdrawn, and no grades will be recorded. A notation will be placed on the student's transcript when a student has been academically disqualified. The grades for courses taken at Southwestern by any academically disqualified student will remain on the transcript as a part of the student's permanent academic record.

A student who is ineligible to petition or whose Petition is denied may apply to Southwestern as a first-year law student through the regular admission procedures and deadlines.

- If the student is disqualified after the fall semester, the student may apply during the current or any future admissions cycle.
- If the student is disqualified after the spring semester, the student may not apply during the current admissions cycle but may apply in any future admissions cycle.

In evaluating the student's application as a first-year student, the Admissions Committee will consider, among other factors, (i) the student's previous academic performance, (ii) the personal circumstances leading to the academic disqualification, (iii) whether the nature of the student's work, activity, or studies since disqualification indicate a stronger potential for law study, and (iv) the student's overall potential for law study despite the student's previous performance. The student must affirmatively demonstrate that they possess the requisite ability to succeed in law school despite their prior disqualification. Admission as a first-year student is within the discretion of the Admissions Committee. If a student is accepted as a first-year student at Southwestern, no credit will be given for the student's previous coursework. For students who are disqualified and seek admission as a first-year law student, financial aid eligibility may be impacted. Students should carefully read Southwestern's [Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy](#) before applying as a first-year law student.

5. Procedures following readmission

The Committee and Vice Deans' Office have broad discretion and can impose conditions for readmission after an academic disqualification. A readmitted student is automatically placed on academic probation, which is typically at least the following evaluation period. However, probation for an extended period may be required as a condition of readmission. Students readmitted after academic disqualification may also be assigned to an Academic Improvement Program.

The Committee and Vice Deans' Office may also base readmission on other reasonable conditions to support a readmitted student's success in their legal studies (e.g., repeating courses, taking a leave of absence, changing academic programs, limiting outside work, meeting with the Student Services Office, engaging in professionalism conferences, etc.). If a student's Petition is granted, the Committee and Vice Deans' Office may allow the student to continue in currently enrolled courses or require the student to drop a course(s). The Committee or Vice Deans' Office may dismiss a student for breaching the conditions of readmission.

If the student is readmitted, a notation of reinstatement will be placed on the transcript. The grades for courses taken at Southwestern by any academically disqualified student who is readmitted will remain on the transcript as a part of the student's permanent academic record. For every admission or readmission of a previously disqualified individual, a statement of the considerations that led to the decision will be placed in the admittee's file per ABA Standard 501(c). For students who are readmitted following disqualification, financial aid eligibility

may be impacted. Readmitted students should carefully read Southwestern's [*Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy*](#).

Students who fail to meet the reinstatement conditions will be academically disqualified and not eligible to petition for readmission. The academic disqualification will be final, and the student will be withdrawn from the law school.

C. Academic Probation

Southwestern reviews student grades at the end of each evaluation period to determine whether a student is on academic probation. A student is on academic probation when their grade point average is less than a 2.330 GPA in any evaluation period or when a student has been academically disqualified and readmitted. Although the Student Services Office will notify students if they are on probation, probation begins when grades are finalized.

1. Restrictions for students on academic probation

A student on academic probation may not apply for externships or participate in student honors programs, including Law Journal, Law Review, Moot Court Honors Program, Negotiation Honors Program, and Trial Advocacy Honors Program. Students on academic probation may not participate in leadership positions in any student organization, including mentoring roles through any student organization. Students on academic probation also may not participate in the Peer Mentor program through the Student Affairs Office. A student placed on academic probation while participating in an externship may continue the placement barring extraordinary circumstances.

2. Mandatory Academic Improvement Program participation

Students on academic probation must participate in an Academic Improvement Program. All restrictions associated with academic probation remain with the student for the duration of the Academic Improvement Program and will not terminate with the end of academic probation status if the status is cleared mid-academic year. A student on academic probation may also be required to meet with the Student Services Office and faculty members to discuss ways to improve their academic performance and address factors that may have contributed to the probationary status.

D. Academic Improvement Program (AIP)

An Academic Improvement Program is designed to assist underperforming students by requiring them to participate in structured co-curricular and curricular academic support programs. AIPs may be required for all students with cumulative GPAs at or below 2.700 following any academic semester. The duration of AIPs may vary depending on the program, regardless of whether a student's cumulative GPA improves in subsequent semesters.

Students with GPAs above 2.330 and at or below 2.700 are not on academic probation. Although a student may be required to participate in an AIP, the student remains in

good academic standing; no notation of AIP will appear on the student's transcript. The student is free to participate in externships, student honors programs, and student leadership positions if they do not interfere or conflict with the student's mandatory participation and enrollment in academic support programs or courses.

An AIP has three objectives: (1) to require students to enroll in curricular and co-curricular academic support offerings; (2) to require students to follow a curriculum structured to improve academic performance and the likelihood of passing the bar exam; and (3) to limit a student's involvement in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, when necessary. Various curricular and co-curricular programs are offered to assist students with basic skills, such as time management, reading, and briefing cases, outlining, exam writing, and critical thinking and listening. As part of an AIP, among other requirements, students may be required to participate in bar readiness courses. The details of the AIPs for each year, and the programs that students must complete as part of an AIP, are available from the Academic Success and Bar Preparation Office.

E. Policy Revisions

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