

SOUTHWESTERN

LAW SCHOOL

Los Angeles, CA

Criteria for Final Course Grade Policy

Faculty policy.

Revision history: Formerly a part of the annually revised Student Handbook, then part of the Examination Policy; established as a standalone policy May 2024; revised to provide for the Online J.D. Program; edited in May 2025 to explain grading components for all mostly asynchronous doctrinal Distance Education Courses.

Related policies: Academic Policies and Procedures; SCALE Program Policies; Distance Education Policy for Programs Other Than the Online J.D. Program

Scheduled Review Date: July 2027 (Office of the Vice Dean(s))

A. Seminars, Experiential Courses, and Other Non-Doctrinal Courses

The final grade in all seminars, Legal Analysis, Writing, and Skills I and II, clinics, externships, practicums, skills courses, courses satisfying the writing requirement, Independent Study, credit/no credit courses, and any course specifically approved by the faculty to be graded on a different basis, will be determined based on the criteria included in the course syllabus posted as of the first class day. Any change to the criteria after that date must be approved by a Vice Dean.

B. All Other Courses

In all other courses, subject to the paragraphs below, examinations will determine final grades. The grading methodology used for the final course grade must be delineated in the course syllabus by the first day of class. Any change to the criteria after that date must be approved by a Vice Dean. If a faculty member requests, a Vice Dean may waive the provisions below.

1. Final examination length

An examination's minimum length will equal the number of units allotted to the course; however, faculty may elect to give a three-hour exam for a four-unit course. Any faculty member can increase a two-hour examination to three hours

and a three-hour exam to four hours, but no examination will exceed four hours.

2. Final examination questions

The final examination will include an essay-type question or questions that will require a minimum of 40 minutes to analyze and develop an appropriate answer. Multiple-choice questions may comprise up to 50% of the final examination.

Faculty may use a variety of formative assessments beyond essay and multiple-choice (e.g., shorter essays focused solely on analysis or multiple-choice with short answer explanation), if the assessment fits with the course learning objectives.

In **first-year doctrinal courses in residential or hybrid programs** (including those that are part of a part-time program and scheduled in the second year), Southwestern encourages faculty to use a variety of pre-final examination assessment methods, subject to the faculty member basing at least 75% of the final grade on the final examination, which must include an in-class essay examination. Each graded formative assessment or type of formative assessment (e.g., all quizzes) may not count for more than 15% of the final grade.

For **all doctrinal Distance Education Courses that are primarily asynchronous**, the faculty member must include a proctored final examination that accounts for at least 50% of the final course grade. The final examination must include an essay examination. See *Distance Education Policy for Programs Other Than the Online J.D. Program* for the definition of Distance Education Courses. In addition to the final examination, at least 25% of the final course grade must be derived from learning activities and assessments occurring throughout the course that promote engagement and reinforce learning. Learning activities and assessments may include discussions, reflection papers, video-based assignments, interactive tutorials, quizzes, group projects, collaborative exercises, and other academic activities or formative/summative assessments aligned with course objectives. Learning activities must be included in every module, whereas assessments are not required for every module but should be regularly distributed throughout the course to support student learning.

In **all upper-division required and elective courses**, Southwestern encourages faculty to use a variety of pre-final examination assessment methods, subject to the faculty member allocating at least 50% of the final grade on the final examination, which must include a proctored essay examination.

3. Other criteria

Nothing precludes any faculty member from requiring the satisfactory completion of additional ungraded assignments during a semester. Failure to satisfactorily complete any such assignments will result in the student receiving a grade of F in the course.

C. Policy Revisions

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