

SOUTHWESTERN

LAW SCHOOL

Los Angeles, CA

Maximum and Minimum J.D. Units Policy

Faculty policy.

Revision history: Formerly a part of the annually revised Student Handbook; established as a standalone policy in August 2022; technical edits were made in August 2023 and May 2024; edits were made in April 2025 to include minimum J.D. unit requirements (previously in the Academic Policies and Procedures).

Related policies: Transfer and Visiting Students Policy; Graduation Requirements Policy; SCALE Program Policies; Federal Financial Aid Eligibility Policy; Academic Policies and Procedures; Interdisciplinary Programs Policy

Scheduled Review Date: June 2026 (Student Services Office)

A. Full-Time (non-SCALE) J.D. Students

1. Maximum units

A full-time (non-SCALE) student pursuing the J.D. degree may not enroll in more than 16 units in a fall or spring semester without the Associate Dean for Student Services' permission; in no case may a student enroll in more than 17 units in a fall or spring semester.

A full-time (non-SCALE) student may not enroll in more than eight units in a summer term without the Associate Dean for Student Services' permission.

The Associate Dean for Student Services will not approve an overload request unless a student is in good academic standing and will not approve more than one overload for a student absent exceptional or unusual circumstances.

2. Minimum units

A full-time (non-SCALE) student must enroll in at least ten units per semester unless (i) approved by the Associate Dean for Student Services due to extraordinary circumstances (e.g., the student experiences a significant, unexpected health issue), or (ii) the student requires fewer than ten units to reach the graduation requirement of satisfactorily completing 87 units.

No minimum unit requirements exist for summer. But full-time J.D. (non-SCALE) students should be aware that a minimum number of units is required to be eligible

for federal student aid (see the Federal Financial Aid Eligibility Policy).

B. SCALE Students

This policy does not pertain to SCALE students. SCALE students should refer to the *SCALE Program Policies* for SCALE program maximum and minimum J.D. unit requirements.

C. Part-Time J.D. Students

1. Maximum units

A part-time student pursuing the J.D. degree may not enroll in more than 11 units in a fall or spring semester without the Associate Dean for Student Services' permission; in no case may a student enroll in more than 17 units in a fall or spring semester.

A part-time student may not enroll in more than six units in a summer term without the Associate Dean for Student Services' permission.

The Associate Dean for Student Services will not approve an overload request unless a student is in good academic standing and will not approve more than one overload for a student absent exceptional or unusual circumstances.

2. Minimum units

A part-time student must enroll in at least eight units per semester unless (i) approved by the Associate Dean for Students Services due to extraordinary circumstances (e.g., the student experiences a significant, unexpected health issue), or (ii) the student requires fewer than eight units to reach the graduation requirement of satisfactorily completing 87 units.

No minimum unit requirements exist for summer. But part-time J.D. students should be aware that they may be ineligible for federal student aid if they take too few units (see Federal Financial Aid Eligibility Policy). Part-time students should expect to take some units over the three summer sessions to graduate within four years.

D. Minimum Number of Classroom Credits

ABA Standard 311(a) requires J.D. students to complete at least 64 credit hours through regularly scheduled classroom sessions or direct faculty instruction. Although 87 total credits are required for graduation, students who take more than 23 non-classroom credits (e.g., externships, clinics, Intersession courses, etc.) will need to exceed the 87-credit minimum to graduate (see Academic Policies and Procedures).

E. Concurrent-Degree Students

A student in an approved concurrent-degree program (e.g., J.D./M.B.A. Program with The Drucker Graduate School of Management, part of Claremont Graduate University (CGU)) must receive approval from the Associate Dean for Student Services to enroll in more than 17 units in a term or semester for both degree programs combined (e.g., a student who desires to take 14 units at Southwestern and six units at CGU in one semester must seek approval since this is 20 units combined). A student must be in good academic standing to receive permission to exceed 17 combined units.

A student in a concurrent-degree program should note the maximum cross-credits allowed in each degree program (e.g., CGU will accept up to 12 units of appropriate transfer credit toward its 48-unit M.B.A. program, and Southwestern will accept up to 12 units from the CGU M.B.A. program toward the J.D. degree; see Interdisciplinary Programs Policy for more information, including the grades required to transfer credit).

F. January Intersession

The January intersession program is held for one week each year, typically over four days, following the fall semester's conclusion and before the spring semester's start. J.D. students may not enroll in more than one unit in any single intersession, although students may take courses in multiple intersessions.

G. Honors Programs

Units earned for participating in an Honors Program (Law Review, Law Journal, Moot Court Honors Program, Negotiation Honors Program, and Trial Advocacy Honors Program) are included in the maximum units permitted under Sections A and C above. Only units from the classroom component of an Honors Program will count toward the 64 credit hours of regularly scheduled classroom sessions described in Section D.

H. Limits on Distance Education Course Credits for Residential Students

Students who are not enrolled in the Online J.D. Program may earn no more than 43 of the 87 units required to earn the J.D. degree in distance education courses. For purposes of this policy, a "distance education course" is one in which more than one-third of the instruction is conducted online, whether synchronously or asynchronously.

I. Course Work at Other Law Schools

Except as detailed in the Transfer and Visiting Students Policy, Southwestern will accept up to 6 units of coursework taken at another approved school toward the 87 units required to earn the J.D. This 6-unit maximum includes all coursework completed during any term, including study-abroad programs, summer sessions, or intersessions.

J. Study-Abroad Programs

Southwestern will accept credit for study-abroad programs completed through other ABA-approved law schools only if the Associate Dean for Student Services has approved the program before the student's departure. In the case of students who attend both a Southwestern-sponsored summer-abroad program and a summer-abroad program sponsored by another ABA-approved law school, a maximum of 8 units from summer-abroad programs of any kind may be applied toward the J.D. degree.

K. Policy Revisions

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