

# SOUTHWESTERN

## LAW SCHOOL Los Angeles, CA

### Student Concerns Policy

#### Administrative policy.

**Revision history:** Formerly a part of the annually revised Student Handbook; established as a standalone policy August 2022; revised September 2023 after receiving BPPE approval to operate; technical edits made in June 2024; technical and substantive edits made in April 2025.

**Related policies:** Policy to Prevent Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation; Sexual Misconduct Policy; Student Honor Code; Code of Student Professionalism and Conduct; Academic Freedom Policy; Free Expression Policy.

**Scheduled Review Date:** February 2027 (Student Services Office)

#### A. General Student Concerns

Southwestern Law School takes concerns and complaints regarding the institution seriously.

Southwestern encourages students with a concern to attempt to resolve the concern informally by communicating directly with the individual or department involved before pursuing a formal complaint.

A student with a concern or complaint not otherwise addressed by a specific Southwestern policy or procedure may meet with or address them in writing to the Associate Dean for Student Services. A written response will generally be provided within 10 to 15 working days after receiving the written complaint.

Concerns or complaints by residents regarding The Residences at 7th should be directed to the property manager at [housing@swlaw.edu](mailto:housing@swlaw.edu) or Ext. 5500.

#### B. Complaints Implicating ABA Standards (ABA Standard 510)

As an ABA-accredited law school, Southwestern complies with the American Bar Association Standards and Rules of Procedure for Approval of Law Schools ("ABA Standards"), including ABA Standard 510 regarding student complaints implicating compliance with the ABA Standards. The ABA Standards may be found at [http://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal\\_education/resources/standards.html](http://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/standards.html).

##### 1. Filing a complaint

Any Southwestern student, prospective student, or former student who wishes to bring a complaint to the attention of the law school about a significant

problem that directly implicates the school's compliance with the ABA Standards should take the following steps:

- a.** Submit the complaint in writing to a Vice Dean. If a Vice Dean is unavailable, the complaint should be submitted to the Associate Dean for Student Services (the Vice Deans or the Associate Dean for Student Services is referred to as the "administrator"). The writing may be submitted via e-mail, U.S. mail, or personal delivery.
- b.** The writing should describe in detail the practice, program, or other matter that is the subject of the complaint. The writing should also explain how the matter directly implicates the law school's compliance with one or more specific ABA Standards.
- c.** The writing must provide the student's name and e-mail address for further communication about the complaint.

## **2. Addressing a complaint**

If the administrator determines that the complaint does not directly implicate the law school's compliance with an ABA standard, the administrator will inform the student in writing. If the administrator determines that the complaint directly implicates the law school's compliance with an ABA Standard, Southwestern will follow the steps noted below.

- a.** The administrator will acknowledge receipt of the student's complaint in writing via e-mail, U.S. mail, or personal delivery within 5 business days. The administrator, or the administrator's designee, will meet with the student or respond in writing. In this meeting or writing, the administrator will respond to the complaint's substance or describe steps being taken by Southwestern to address the complaint or further investigate the complaint. Usually, a student can expect a meeting or written response to the complaint within three to four weeks of submitting the complaint.
- b.** Within 60 calendar days of receiving a decision, a student may appeal a decision on a complaint to the President & Dean (Dean). The appeal must be in writing and explain the basis of the appeal; it should be submitted to the Dean via e-mail, U.S. mail, or personal delivery to the Dean's Office. The Dean will meet with the student or respond to the substance of the appeal in writing. Usually, a student can expect a meeting or written response to the appeal within three to four weeks of submitting the appeal. The Dean's decision will be final.
- c.** Southwestern's Student Services Office will retain a copy of the complaint and a summary of the response and resolution of the complaint for at least 10 years or until the next regular comprehensive review by the Council of the Section of Legal Education and Admissions of the American Bar Association.
- d.** Starting in June 2025, every three years, the Vice Deans will review all complaints received during the prior three years to determine if a pattern of complaints exists that implicates compliance with an ABA Standard. The Vice

Deans will conduct a similar review in connection with Southwestern's preparation of any ABA Site Evaluation Questionnaire. The Vice Deans will report their findings to the Dean no later than August 15.

**C. Complaints to the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education**

Southwestern is approved to operate by the California Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education (BPPE). Approval to operate means the institution complies with the minimum standards in the California Private Postsecondary Education Act of 2009 and the California Code of Regulations.

Anyone, including students, may file a complaint with BPPE if they believe Southwestern has violated the laws and/or regulations governing the school's operation, including unlicensed activity. Complaints may be filed by using BPPE's [online complaint submission link, here](#) (preferred) or by downloading the [complaint form](#) and mailing it to:

Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education  
P.O. Box 980818  
West Sacramento, CA 95798-0818 or

calling 888-370-7589.

More information concerning BPPE's complaint procedure can be found at:  
<https://bppe.ca.gov/enforcement/complaint.shtml>.

If Southwestern receives notice of a complaint filed with BPPE, it will respond as and when appropriate. Southwestern will cooperate with any BPPE investigation. Southwestern's response may include an investigation. The Dean will determine whether an internal or external investigator should be appointed. Any investigator will coordinate with Southwestern's General Counsel.

**D. Complaints by Students Residing Outside of California**

Students in Southwestern's Online J.D. Program who reside in a state other than California should refer to [Southwestern's State Student Concern Contact Information](#) chart for additional information on filing complaints in their jurisdiction.

**E. Confidentiality**

Southwestern treats student complaints and concerns as confidential matters and shares information about the complaint or concern only with individuals who have a legitimate need to know (e.g., the person against whom the concern or complaint is made, witnesses, or others with information needed to investigate or resolve a concern or complaint, individuals who would help implement any resolution).

**F. Protection Against Retaliation**

Southwestern will not retaliate against or tolerate any harassment or retaliation directed toward an individual who, in good faith, makes a complaint or cooperates in the investigation of a complaint under this policy.

**G. Policy Revisions**

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