



Academic Policies and Procedures

Faculty policy. Effective immediately.

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

Related policies: SCALE Program Policies; Master of Laws Program Policies; Student Honor Code; Grading Policies, Honors, and Specialized Courses; Academic Disqualification, Academic Probation, and Academic Improvement Program Policies ; Registration Policies and Procedures

Scheduled Review Date: February 2024 (Student Services Office)

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A. General Policies

This policy is designed to enhance each student’s legal education and should be referred to frequently. SCALE and LL.M. students should refer to the SCALE Program Policies and Master of LAWS Program Policies for specific academic policies governing those programs. SCALE and LL.M. students are subject to any of the following policies that are not explicitly delineated in the SCALE Program Policies and Master of LAWS Program Policies

1. Submitting transcripts

All students must submit copies of their official transcript(s), with degree conferred, from all undergraduate degree-granting institutions within 30 calendar days of their start term. Per [ABA Standard 502](#), all students must submit copies of their official transcript(s), with degree conferred, from all undergraduate degree-granting institutions. Southwestern requires that students submit all transcripts within 30 calendar days of their start term. Students who fail to submit their official transcript(s) by the deadline are subject to administrative withdrawal from Southwestern. Official transcripts should be submitted directly to the Law School Admission Council. The Registrar at Southwestern has discretion over granting or denying an extension request.

2. Academic status

A student is in good academic standing unless the student:

1. Is on academic probation as defined in the Academic Disqualification, Academic Probation, and Academic Improvement Program Policies
2. Has been academically disqualified

3. Grade point average requirements

Students must maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 2.330. See the Academic Disqualification, Academic Probation, and Academic Improvement Program Policies for information regarding failure to maintain a GPA of at least 2.330.

4. Computation of units

An academic year for continuing students is based on the summer term (if taken), the following fall semester, the January intersession (if taken), and the spring semester. To compute the GPA, units earned in the summer term and the January intersession are applied to calculate the cumulative GPA. Grades earned in the summer session and intersession are not averaged with semester grades. Grades earned in the summer session and intersession do not count toward determining academic disqualification based on a minimum GPA in two consecutive evaluation periods.

5. Unit overload and underload

Full-time students may enroll in no more than 16 units per semester (or eight units in the summer session) and no fewer than ten units per semester. Parttime students may enroll in no more than 11 units per semester (or six units in the

summer session) and no fewer than eight units per semester. Written approval must be obtained from the Associate Dean for Student Services for any deviation. Students must be in good academic standing to receive permission to overload for one semester.

6. Minimum number of classroom credits required for J.D. students

[ABA Standard 311\(a\)](#)

the semester that was not previously passed.

4. When a student repeats any course, both grades appear on the transcript and are given full weight for computing cumulative GPA unless otherwise approved by the Dean in extraordinary circumstances.

C. Course Sequence

Absent extraordinary circumstances, each student is responsible for completing courses in the sequence indicated on the Southwestern website, Self-Service, and registration materials available on the portal.

1. Legal Analysis, Writing, and Skills (LAWS) I is a 3-credit course (LAWS 101) and is a prerequisite for LAWS 102.

D. Length of Course Study

SCALE students are expected to complete their course of study in two years, full-time students in three years, and part-time students in four years.

To be eligible for the J.D. degree, a law student must complete the course of study required for the degree in no fewer than 24 months and no more than 84 months after the student has commenced law study at Southwestern or at a law school from which transfer credit has been accepted.

This policy is per [ABA Standard 311\(b\)](#). Exceptions to the 84-month rule must be approved by the Associate Dean for Student Services and per [ABA Standard 311\(b\)](#) for extraordinary circumstances.

Students are expected to maintain

the Student Services Office to obtain approval. Only a student in good academic standing is eligible for a leave of absence unless special permission is granted by the Associate Dean for Student Services. Any student requesting a leave of absence must complete the Leave of Absence form and have an exit interview with the Student Services Office and the Financial Aid Office before submitting the paperwork to the Registrar's Office. Those students requesting a leave of absence from Southwestern who have an outstanding tuition balance are required to visit the Financial Aid Office and Accounting Office to schedule repayment arrangements.

A student who has been granted a leave of absence is responsible for registering for the semester following the expiration of the leave. They must notify the Registrar's Office in writing to have their student account reactivated to register. Notation of the leave is recorded on the student transcript.

Students may request a leave of absence once they have completed the first semester of study. A leave of absence will be allowed solely in the discretion of the Associate Dean for Student Services and only under compelling circumstances or as an approved disability or pregnancy accommodation. A leave of absence will generally be granted for no more than one academic year.

Any student who does not return following the expiration of their leave will be assumed to have permanently left Southwestern. They will be readmitted only upon filing a new application for admission with advanced standing following regular admission channels. The application will be considered on the same basis as transfer applications received that year.

administrative leave of absence.

3. Leave of absence for students called to military service

Students seeking a leave of absence to enter U.S. military service should contact the Association Dean of Student Services to coordinate a formal leave of absence from Southwestern.

The student must intend to return to Southwestern within the granted leave period, which typically should not exceed one calendar year. Under extenuating circumstances, an extension can be granted.

A copy of the orders to report or proof of active service must be attached to the leave of absence request form.

For periods of less than 30 days, students should contact the Associate Dean for Student Services to see if appropriate accommodations can be made or whether a leave is necessary.