

SOUTHWESTERN

LAW SCHOOL

Los Angeles, CA

Determination of Credit Hours for Coursework

Faculty policy approved December 2021. Effective immediately.

Revision history: Formerly a part of the annual revised Student Handbook; established as a standalone policy August 2022; London Summer-Abroad Program added and other technical revisions made in March 2023; Online J.D. Program added and other revisions made in February 2024.

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

Scheduled Review Date: Vice Deans, January 2026

A. Credit Hours to Graduate

J.D. students are required to complete 87 credit hours to graduate.

Regardless of the course modality, one credit hour requires a minimum of 44 hours of coursework.

Southwestern will not offer a course that does not meet the minimum minutes of instruction per credit hour or does not involve the appropriate combination of in-class instruction, direct faculty instruction, and out-of-class student work as required by ABA Standard 310.

B. Credit Hours for In-Person and Synchronous Online Courses

1. Overview

Section B applies to in-person and synchronous online courses.

With one exception for the first-year Legal Analysis, Writing, and Skills courses (LAWS), each unit of credit is equivalent to 14 (60-minute) hours and totals 840 minutes of instruction. Based on a determination by the LAWS Director and the Vice Deans, LAWS I and II may be based on a 50-minute hour with a total of 750 minutes per credit hour, which still complies with ABA Standard 310.

For each class hour, students will spend a minimum of 2 hours on out-of-class work

for 14 weeks, plus at least 2 additional hours on end-of-term exams or other assessments, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time.

For example, in a 3-unit course in the full-time day program that meets 3 hours per week for 14 weeks, a student would be expected to spend a minimum of 6 hours per week on out-of-class work for the course plus a minimum of 6 hours preparing for and completing an exam or other required assessment (for a total of 90 hours of out-of-class work). In SCALE, a 3-unit course may meet 4 hours per week to accommodate the different structure of the term, and a SCALE student would be expected to spend 90 hours of out-of-class work, which will be distributed appropriately within SCALE's shorter term.

The full-time Law Faculty, upon the recommendation of the Curriculum Committee, establishes the number of credit hours allotted for each course. To assess whether a course proposal meets these requirements, the Curriculum Committee reviews the number of credit hours suggested in the course proposal, the course syllabus, reading assignments, and assessments to determine compliance with the accreditation requirements for instruction time and out-of-class preparation time. If it appears the instruction hours or out-of-class preparation time may be insufficient, the Curriculum Committee will request that the course proposal or syllabus be modified to comply with the applicable standards before approval.

The Vice Dean's Office is responsible for monitoring this Policy to ensure consistency and compliance with ABA accreditation standards.

2. Fall and spring term courses

A 4-credit course will meet for a total of 3,360 minutes of instruction. Most 4-credit courses are scheduled to meet for 240 minutes each week over the 14-week semester. Students are expected to spend a minimum of 8 hours on out-of-class work per week during the semester, plus at least 8 additional hours on end-of-term exams or other assessments.

A 3-credit course will meet for a total of 2,520 minutes of instruction. Most 3-credit courses are scheduled to meet for 180 minutes each week over the 14-week semester. Students are expected to spend a minimum of 6 hours on out-of-class work per week during the semester, plus at least 6 additional hours on end-of-term exams or other assessments.

A 2-credit course will meet for a total of 1,680 minutes of instruction. Most 2-credit courses are scheduled to meet for 120 minutes each week over the 14-week semester. Students are expected to spend a minimum of 4 hours on out-of-class work per week during the semester, plus at least 4 additional hours on end-of-term exams or other assessments.

A 1-credit course will meet for a total of 840 minutes of instruction. One-credit courses are scheduled to meet for 60 minutes each week over a 14-week semester or the equivalent minutes over fewer weeks. Students are expected to spend a minimum of 2 hours on out-of-class work per week during the semester, plus at least 2 additional hours on end-of-term exams or other assessments.

3. Summer term (other than London)

A 3-credit course will meet for a total of 2,520 minutes of instruction. Most 3-credit courses are scheduled to meet 360 minutes each week over the 7-week summer session, followed by an examination period. Students are expected to spend at least 90 hours on out-of-class work during the term, including on end-of-term exams or other assessments.

A 2-credit course will meet for a total of 1,680 minutes of instruction. Most 2-credit courses are scheduled to meet 240 minutes each week for 7 weeks, followed by an examination period. Students are expected to spend at least 60 hours on out-of-class work during the term, including on end-of-term exams or other assessments.

A 1-credit course will meet for a total of 840 minutes of instruction. One-credit courses are scheduled to meet for 120 minutes over 7 weeks or the equivalent minutes over fewer weeks, followed by an examination period. Students are expected to spend at least 30 hours on out-of-class work during the term, including on end-of-term exams or other assessments.

4. SCALE courses

A 4-credit course includes 14 hours of instruction per credit for a total of 3,360 minutes of instruction. For each hour of classroom instruction, students are expected to spend a minimum of 2 hours (based on a 60-minute hour) on out-of-class work plus at least 2 additional hours on end-of-term exams or other assessments for a total of at least 30 out-of-class work hours per term per credit.

A 3-credit course includes 14 hours of instruction per credit for a total of 2,520 minutes of instruction. For each hour of classroom instruction, students are expected to spend a minimum of 2 hours (based on a 60-minute hour) on out-of-class work plus at least 2 additional hours on end-of-term exams or other assessments for a total of at least 30 out-of-class work hours per term per credit.

A 2-credit course includes 14 hours of instruction per credit for a total of 1,680 minutes of instruction. For each hour of classroom instruction, students are expected to spend a minimum of 2 hours (based on a 60-minute hour) on out-of-class work plus at least 2 additional hours on end-of-term exams or other assessments for a total of at least 30 out-of-class work hours per term per credit.

A 1-credit course includes 14 hours of instruction for a total of 840 minutes of

instruction. For each hour of classroom instruction, students are expected to spend a minimum of 2 hours (based on a 60-minute hour) on out-of-class work plus at least 2 additional hours on end-of-term exams or other assessment for a total of at least 30 out-of-class work hours.

5. Intersession courses

An intersession course will require a total of 840 minutes of instruction per credit, and students are expected to spend a minimum of 30 hours of out-of-class work per credit, including on end-of-term exams or other assessments.

6. London Summer-Abroad Program courses

A 3-credit course will meet for 120 minutes each day, over 19 days, for a total of 2280 minutes of instruction, followed by an examination period. Students are expected to spend a minimum of 94 hours on out-of-class work during the term, including on end-of-term exams or other assessments.

A 2-credit course will meet for 120 minutes each day, over 14 days, for a total of 1,680 minutes of instruction, followed by an examination period. Students are expected to spend a minimum of 60 hours on out-of-class work during the term, including on end-of-term exams or other assessments.

A 1-credit course will meet for 120 minutes each day, over 7 days, for a total of 840 minutes of instruction, followed by an examination period. Students are expected to spend a minimum of 30 hours on out-of-class work during the term, including on end-of-term exams or other assessments.

C. Credit Hours for Asynchronous Online Courses

Asynchronous online courses must meet the minimum credit hour requirement of at least 44 hours of student work per credit hour, consistent with ABA Standard 310(b) and Southwestern's credit hour requirement for in-person and synchronous online courses. This coursework may include, but is not limited to, reviewing video presentations, completing quizzes, participating in asynchronous discussions, engaging in collaborative work, and completing other learning activities, end-of-term exams, or other assessments. The 44-hour calculation includes only mandatory activities and not activities designated on the course syllabus as optional.

The Associate Dean of Online Education will annually certify each course approved for the Online J.D. Program and other distance education courses that are more than one-third asynchronous. The Associate Dean of Online Education will review the course syllabus and content to ensure that the course (1) is balanced between video lecture and other coursework and (2) meets the minimum credit hour requirement of at least 44 hours of student work per credit hour.

D. Credit Hours for Blended Courses

Courses that combine in-person or synchronous online instruction and asynchronous online instruction must comply with Sections B and C of this Policy for each respective part

of the course. The blended course will be evaluated on a proportional basis. For example, if a 2-unit 14-week fall or spring course is 50% online synchronous and 50% online asynchronous, then (1) the synchronous online portion must include meeting for 60 minutes each week for a total of 840 minutes of instruction, where students are expected to spend a minimum of 2 hours on out-of-class work per week during the semester, plus at least 2 additional hours on end-of-term exams or other assessments and (2) the asynchronous online portion must include at least 44 hours of student work such as reviewing video presentations, completing quizzes, participating in asynchronous discussions, engaging in collaborative work, and completing other learning activities, end-of-terms exams, or other assessments.

E. Clinics, Externships, Practica, and Independent Studies

For clinical courses, externships, and independent studies, an equivalent amount of work with an appropriate combination of faculty instruction and out-of-class student work is included in the following calculation as required by ABA Standard 310:

1. Clinical placements

Clinical placements require 3.5 hours per week of work for each credit granted.

A 3-credit clinical placement requires 10.5 hours of work per week over 14 weeks for a total of 147 hours of work.

A 5-credit clinical placement requires 17.5 hours of work per week over 14 weeks for a total of 245 hours of work.

2. Externship placements

Externship placements require approximately 60 hours of work per credit.

3. Independent studies and the Amicus Project Practicum

Independent studies and the Amicus Project Practicum require 90 hours of work per credit, with 2 credits awarded.

F. Policy Revisions

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