

SOUTHWESTERN

LAW SCHOOL
Los Angeles, CA

SCALE® Program Policies

Mixed faculty and administrative policy.

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 June 2024.

Related policies: Academic Disqualification, Academic Probation, and Academic Improvement Program Policies; Attendance Policy; Academic Policies and Procedures; Externship Program Policies and Guidelines; Grading and Scholastic Honors Policy; Criteria for Final Course Grade Policy; Graduation Requirements Policy; Incomplete Grade Policy; Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy

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When not explicitly delineated in this policy, SCALE students are governed by all other policies on the [Institutional Policies webpage](#).

A. Attendance

SCALE requires significant student collaborative effort. Students complete assignments and perform roles to benefit themselves and their classmates. A student's failure to complete required assignments disrupts the learning process. Therefore, at the discretion of each SCALE faculty member, students who are unprepared for a class will be marked absent.

If a student in the first year of SCALE (Periods 1, 2, 3, and 4) is administratively withdrawn from all courses in a given period, that student will be considered as having withdrawn from the law school and may return only if admitted following submission of a new application for admission. If a student who has completed the first year of SCALE is administratively withdrawn from all courses in a given period, that student will be considered on an involuntary leave of absence and must return for the next period, or they will be withdrawn from the law school.

See *Attendance Policy* for other attendance requirements.

B. Evaluation Periods and Schedules

The SCALE two-year program comprises four evaluation periods in the first year, a mandatory summer session, and four evaluation periods in the second and final year. The SCALE 2.5-year program, which is optional, has an added evaluation period during the fall semester of the third year.

At the start of each academic year, the schedule of classes, final examinations for all SCALE courses, and the SCALE Curriculum Charts are posted on [SCALE – Current Students CANVAS page](#). The SCALE Curriculum Charts specify the units allocated to each SCALE course in the curriculum for the year.

The SCALE schedule is subject to change. The unique curricular construct of SCALE requires the schedule to be flexible and adaptable. Students should expect the SCALE schedule to change as circumstances dictate. Any changes will be communicated to students in a timely fashion via email.

C. Grading

SCALE uses an alphabetical grading system in which the actual grade earned is represented by an alphabetical letter. Grades are assigned from A+ to F. No unit credit is granted when the grade received is an F.

Exceptions to the alphabetical grading system are Foundations of Law & Practice, Trial Advocacy, Independent Study: the Profession, and the SCALE II Period 8 externship, which are graded Credit/No Credit. See *Grading and Scholastic Honors Policy*. Unless otherwise provided in this policy, courses offered on a Credit/No Credit basis are not included in the computation of the GPA.

In courses that span multiple terms, the mark of "M" will appear for each term, other than the final term, where the course grade will appear. The "M" mark does not impact a student's GPA.

All students must maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 2.330. The GPA is a mathematical depiction of a student's law school grade performance carried out to the first three decimal places. The GPA is derived by multiplying the number of grade points earned in each graded course by the number of units assigned to that course. Those numbers are then added, and the resulting figure is divided by the total number of graded units attempted in the applicable period. The quotient is carried out only to the first three decimal places.

To ensure equity in multiple-section courses and uniformity of grades, all alphabetical grades awarded for Period 1, Period 2, and Period 3 must be calculated based on a mean of 2.800 (plus or minus 0.05). A minimum of 15 percent of grades in the A range (A+, A, and A-) must be awarded. The minimum standard deviation is .70. All grades awarded for the SCALE summer session, Periods 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 must be calculated based on a mean of 3.000 (plus or minus one-tenth) and a median of B. A minimum of 15 percent of grades in the A range (A+, A, A-) will be awarded. In courses with fewer than 30 students enrolled, the mean and median standards are to be used as guidelines.

The GPA for each SCALE period is calculated based on the points earned for each grade and the number of units allocated to each course. See *Grading and Scholastic Honors Policy*. This GPA is comprised of both SCALE and non-SCALE residential courses.

All final grades are made available to students on Self-Service.

Official class rankings, provided in 10 percent increments, are based on cumulative GPA and are computed for each class at the end of each academic year. SCALE I students also receive an unofficial mid-year class rank based on Period 1 and 2 grades.

D. Incomplete Work

An "Incomplete" or "INC" grade is a temporary, non-evaluative grade indicating the student has not yet completed assigned work in the course. The grade may be assigned only with the approval from the Associate Dean for SCALE and Associate Dean for Student Services.

The appropriate use of an Incomplete grade, the process for requesting, converting, or removing an Incomplete grade, and the impact of an Incomplete grade on financial aid, graduation, and class rank, as well as other policies relevant to an Incomplete grade can be found in Southwestern's *Incomplete Grade Policy*. SCALE students are subject to Southwestern's *Incomplete Grade Policy*, with the addition that any policy that requires approval by the Associate Dean for Student Services will also need to be approved by the Associate Dean for SCALE.

E. Externships

1. Summer externships

SCALE students may participate in the Externship Program during the SCALE summer session described below. Please see the [Externship Office](#) portal page for more information. SCALE students who elect to participate in the optional summer session externship must adhere to the *Externship Program Policies and Guidelines*.

2. SCALE II Period 8 externships

The SCALE II Period 8 externship completes the SCALE experience and begins in March, following the completion of Period 7. The Externship Office administers Period 8 externships. For more information, please visit the [Externship Office](#) portal page.

The Co-Directors of the Externship Program must approve each externship before the commencement of the externship. Externships are graded Credit/No Credit. A grade of Credit is not included in the computation of the period grade point average (GPA) or the cumulative GPA. (See *Academic Probation* and *Academic Disqualification* in this policy for an explanation of the period and cumulative GPA requirements.) A grade of No Credit is computed as a SCALE course with a grade of F and will be included in the computation of the period and cumulative GPA.

Unlike the elective externships in the non-SCALE residential program, the Period 8 externship is required for all SCALE students. Each student must complete 40 hours per week during the Period 8 externship, totaling 300 hours.

Each student must attend and complete the required hours for the Period 8 externship. A student who fails to complete the Period 8 externship with a grade of Credit is not eligible for graduation.

The Co-Directors of the Externship Program may require students to complete additional written or oral assignments in response to absences. See *Attendance Policy* for other attendance requirements.

F. Summer Session

The summer session for SCALE students will occur following Period 4 and before the commencement of Period 5. SCALE students are required to complete a minimum of 6 units during the summer session comprised of the 2-unit course Independent Study: The Profession and an additional 4+ units consisting of at least one of the following options:

- participating in the summer externship program;
- taking at least one Southwestern summer session course; or
- participating in a Southwestern summer-abroad program or non-Southwestern ABA-approved summer-abroad program.

SCALE students may take a maximum of eight units in the summer session, absent special permission granted by the Associate Dean for SCALE. For the purpose of academic standing calculations, grades earned during the SCALE summer session will be part of the SCALE Period 5 term GPA. Academic standing calculations are calculated at the end of Period 5. Grades earned during the SCALE summer session will also be part of

the student's cumulative GPA calculation.

G. Upper-Level Writing Requirement

SCALE students are required to fulfill Southwestern's upper-division writing requirement. Absent extraordinary circumstances and approval by the Associate Dean for SCALE, all SCALE students must enroll in and satisfactorily complete Independent Study: The Profession. The Independent Study: The Profession takes place during Period 4 and the SCALE summer session and is a Credit/No Credit course. A grade of Credit is not included in the computation of the period grade point average (GPA) or the cumulative GPA. A grade of No Credit is computed as a SCALE course with a grade of F and will be included in the computation of the period and cumulative GPA. As the Independent Study: The Profession satisfies the upper division writing requirement, SCALE students are not required to enroll in a seminar or equivalent writing course in the non-SCALE residential program.

H. Experiential requirement

SCALE students must complete at least six credit hours of coursework specifically approved and designated as meeting the experiential requirement. Select courses in the SCALE curriculum may be eligible to meet the experiential requirement; however, in some cases, students must complete courses in the non-SCALE residential program to fulfill the required six units. The SCALE II Period 8 externship provides five units toward the experiential requirement if completed satisfactorily. See the *Experiential Requirement* section of the *Graduation Requirements Policy*.

I. Enrolling in Non-SCALE Residential Courses

Second-year SCALE students may register for no more than two courses in the non-SCALE residential fall and spring semesters and one course in the January intersession instead of certain designated SCALE courses and subject to course availability. Students who desire to take more than two non-SCALE residential courses in a semester will require permission from the Associate Dean for SCALE. The non-SCALE residential course grades will be averaged with the SCALE grades and become part of the student's cumulative grade point average. The grade in a non-SCALE residential course will be awarded when the non-SCALE residential course grade is awarded. Students will not be charged for the added non-SCALE residential electives.

SCALE students are required to fulfill course attendance requirements as outlined in the *Attendance Policy*. SCALE students registered in non-SCALE residential courses must abide by the add/drop dates published in the non-SCALE residential academic calendar. If a student wishes to make a schedule change before the add/drop deadline, they can change their schedule via Self-Service. Any schedule changes after the add/drop deadline must be made by filling out a Student Action Report (SAR), obtaining approval from the Associate Dean for Student Services and Associate Dean for SCALE, and submitting the completed and signed SAR to the Registrar's Office. Students wishing to add a non-SCALE residential course after the non-SCALE residential "add" deadline date of the semester may do so only after obtaining written approval from the Associate Dean for Student Services and Associate Dean for SCALE.

Non-SCALE residential courses may be dropped through the "drop" deadline date published in the non-SCALE residential academic calendar. Students wishing to drop a

non-SCALE residential course after the non-SCALE residential “drop” deadline may do so only after obtaining written approval from the Associate Dean for Student Services and Associate Dean for SCALE. If the course is dropped after the non-SCALE residential program’s semester “drop” deadline date, a notation of “W” will be listed on the student’s transcript for that course. After the non-SCALE residential “drop” deadline date, any course not dropped and not completed by the student will be recorded as an Administrative Fail (*F) unless otherwise approved in writing by the Associate Dean for Student Services and Associate Dean for SCALE.

J. Academic Good Standing

A student is in good academic standing unless the student:

- is on academic probation, as defined in *Academic Probation* of Section M of this policy; or
- has been academically disqualified under *Academic Disqualification* in Section M of this policy.

K. Graduation Requirements

To be certified for graduation and eligible for the Juris Doctor degree, a student must:

- have satisfactorily completed all required courses in the SCALE curriculum;
- have satisfied the upper-division writing requirement;
- have satisfied the 6-unit experiential course requirement;
- be in good academic standing;
- have a cumulative GPA of at least 2.330 or higher at the end of the 2 or 2.5 years of SCALE;
- have completed 87 units;
- have removed any approved Incomplete grade; and
- have met any other requirements outlined in the *Graduation Requirements Policy* not explicitly delineated in the *SCALE Program Policies*.

L. SCALE Program Honors

Eligibility for the invitation to Law Review, Law Journal, the Moot Court Honors Program, or the Negotiation Honors Program is based on class standing or GPA at the end of the first year of SCALE (Evaluation Periods 1, 2, 3, and 4) and participation in the summer write-on competition, intramural competition, or try-outs, as applicable. Students may be invited to participate in the Trial Advocacy Honors Program in their first year of SCALE. Students may be invited to participate in the Negotiation Honors Program and Moot Court Honors Program in their second year of SCALE. To participate in an honors program, students must be in good academic standing and meet all other requirements required by the individual honors programs.

SCALE students are eligible for scholastic honors as outlined under *Scholastic Honors* section of the *Grading and Scholastic Honors Policy*.

M. SCALE Academic Policies

SCALE students are required to abide by the rules governing academic disqualification and academic probation as indicated below.

For the purpose of academic standing calculations, (i) grades earned during fall semester non-SCALE residential courses will be part of the SCALE Period 6 term GPA (academic standing calculations are calculated at the end of Period 6); and (ii) grades earned during spring semester non-SCALE residential courses will be part of the SCALE Period 8 term GPA (academic standing calculations are calculated at the end of Period 8). See also Section F above regarding how grades earned during the SCALE summer session will be handled for the purpose of academic standing calculations.

1. Academic disqualification

A student is academically disqualified when a student fails to achieve the following:

a. A minimum cumulative GPA

SCALE students are disqualified if they do not maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.330 at the end of Period 3 and thereafter, excluding the mandatory summer session and the January intersession. The minimum cumulative GPA requirement is initially calculated at the end of Period 3.

b. A minimum GPA in two consecutive evaluation periods

SCALE students are disqualified if they do not achieve a GPA of at least 2.330 in two consecutive evaluation periods commencing at the end of Period 3 and thereafter, excluding the mandatory summer session and the January intersession.

2. Academic probation

A SCALE student is placed on academic probation when the student's term or cumulative grade point average is less than 2.330 in any evaluation period commencing at the end of Period 2 and thereafter, excluding the mandatory summer session and the January intersession. SCALE students with a GPA less than 2.330 after Period 1, while not on academic probation, are required to meet with the Associate Dean for SCALE to discuss their academic performance. Students on academic probation may not participate in externships, honors programs, or leadership positions. This restriction does not apply to the mandatory SCALE Externship in Period 8.

N. Federal Financial Aid Eligibility Impact

The satisfactory academic progress standards under federal regulations governing federal student aid may differ from Southwestern's academic policies (see *Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy*). Students receiving federal student aid with questions about the potential impact of academic probation and academic disqualification under this policy should contact the Financial Aid Office.

O. 2.5-Year Modified Curriculum

Before commencing the second year of SCALE, SCALE students may petition the Associate Dean for SCALE to participate in the 2.5-year modified curriculum. Under the modified curriculum, students will take fewer units during their second year of SCALE. Students will complete the remainder of the units required to graduate during an additional semester of fall courses and be eligible to graduate in December. Additional tuition will not be

charged to accommodate the modified curriculum.

P. Leave of Absence

1. Petition for a leave of absence

A student must have completed Periods 1, 2, 3, and 4 and be in good academic standing to seek a leave of absence. The student must also submit a leave of absence petition for approval by the Associate Dean for Student Services and Associate Dean for SCALE. A leave of absence will be granted for no more than one academic year. A student who fails to return at the agreed-upon time or otherwise fails to meet the leave of absence terms may be withdrawn from the law school. Exceptions to this policy are allowed solely at the discretion of the Associate Dean for Student Services and Associate Dean for SCALE and only under compelling circumstances or as an approved disability, pregnancy, or Title IX accommodation. SCALE students are subject to all leave of absence policies stated in the *Academic Policies and Procedures* when not explicitly outlined in the *SCALE Program Policies*.

2. Involuntary leave of absence

A student precluded from commencing an evaluation period for failure to remove an Incomplete grade may be placed on an involuntary leave of absence for up to one year. A student placed on such involuntary leave will be notified of the duration of the leave and the reasons for its imposition. A student who fails to return to SCALE at the time specified in such notice may be withdrawn from the law school.

3. Explanatory note

SCALE's continuous scheduling makes it extremely difficult for a student to drop a SCALE course and complete it later without jeopardizing timely graduation from SCALE. Therefore, a student who has been administratively withdrawn from a SCALE course for failure to comply with Southwestern's *Attendance Policy* or who has not satisfactorily completed the work required to progress to the next SCALE course may have to wait until the following year to begin that SCALE course.

Q. Readmission Following Academic Disqualification

A student who has been academically disqualified from SCALE will be deemed to have been academically disqualified from Southwestern Law School.

Any SCALE student who is academically disqualified for failing to maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 2.330 or for failing to achieve a GPA of at least 2.330 in each of two consecutive evaluation periods under Section M.1a or b commencing at the end of Period 3 (excluding the mandatory summer session and January intersession) may petition for readmission according to the rules and procedures of the Academic Standards Committee as stated in *Academic Disqualification, Academic Probation, and Academic Improvement Programs Policies*. Any SCALE student who is disqualified under Section M.1a or b and is permitted to petition may continue in courses in which they are currently enrolled pending notification by the committee of its decision. If the petition is denied, the student will be withdrawn from all courses, and no credit will be granted, even if courses have been completed before the denial of the petition. A student whose petition is denied and

currently enrolled in on-campus courses at Southwestern will automatically receive a full tuition refund for the period in which the student is enrolled.

Per the *Academic Disqualification, Academic Probation, and Academic Improvement Programs Policies*, students who have been disqualified and fail to meet the conditions of readmission will be automatically disqualified and will not be eligible to petition a second time to the Academic Standards Committee. The disqualification will be final, and the student will be withdrawn from the law school.

R. Admission into a Non-SCALE Residential Program

1. Withdrawing from SCALE

If a student wishes to withdraw from SCALE and enroll in the non-SCALE residential program but is unable to transfer under the *Transfer into non-SCALE residential program* rules below or qualify for a leave of absence pursuant to the *Leave of Absence* section of this policy, the student must re-apply through regular admission channels for admission to the law school for enrollment the following academic year. If admitted, such students are not eligible for unit credit for work completed in the SCALE program.

2. Transferring into a non-SCALE residential program

A student currently enrolled in the SCALE program may petition to transfer into the non-SCALE residential program when the student is in good academic standing and has completed at least Period 4. The Associate Dean for SCALE and the Associate Dean for Student Services must approve the transfer decision. If the petition is granted, the transfer will become effective starting with the following non-SCALE residential academic year. Transfer before successful completion of Period 4 or when the student is not in good academic standing will be allowed only under exceptional circumstances and following approval by the Associate Dean for SCALE and the Associate Dean for Student Services.

Withdrawals from SCALE before the completion of Period 4 are governed by the *Leave of Absence* and *Withdrawal from SCALE* portions of this policy. The Associate Dean for Student Services and Associate Dean for SCALE will make a non-binding recommendation to the Office of the Dean regarding the number of unit credits to be granted and waivers from required courses consistent with the student's academic performance while enrolled in SCALE. A student transferring from SCALE to the non-SCALE residential program must enroll in the law school within one year of their withdrawal to receive unit credit for work completed in SCALE.

S. Policy Revisions

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