

ACADEMIC POLICY
Pepperdine Law Online Programs
Effective Fall 2021

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ACADEMIC POLICY

1.00 Academic Standards Policy Objectives

1.10 Objectives: The objectives to be achieved by the academic standards of the School of Law are as follows:

- A. Providing The Best Education: To provide the best possible legal education to each student, including, but not limited to, knowledge about the nature and sources of law, legal principles, legal methods, legal analysis and reasoning, legal writing and advocacy skills, factual knowledge in selected fields, and professional attitudes.
- B. Meeting Accreditation Standards: To meet all professional and appropriate accreditation standards in the field of legal education for purposes of academic credit and recognition in the fields of both law and education.
- C. Enhancing The School's Reputation: To enhance the professional reputation of the School of Law as a producer of highly qualified graduates so that the degrees the School of Law issues will be recognized and accepted as evidence of excellence and achievement by the public and profession.
- D. Encouraging Personal Integrity: To provide a climate of professionalism, personal integrity, and responsibility of the highest order based upon academic excellence, industry, ingenuity, dependability, and honesty.

2.00 General Requirements

2.10 Approval by Dean or Academic Dean: All academic matters requiring the decision or approval of the Dean may, in the alternative, be decided or approved by the Academic Dean. Unless otherwise stated, any reference to the Dean means the Dean of the School of Law. All academic matters requiring the decision or approval of the Academic Dean may, in the alternative, be decided or approved by the Dean.

- 2.20 Requirement of Make-up Class: When a scheduled class does not meet or is dismissed significantly early, the lost time must be made up with another class period or comparable assignment.

3.00 Academic Enrollment

- 3.10 Academic Program and Calendar Year: There are three terms per calendar year. Each term is comprised of two eight-week sessions.
- 3.20 Definition of Enrollment Status: Students can complete the online MLS or online MDR degree on a full-time or part-time basis. Enrollment status is determined by the number of units enrolled during any given term. Full-time status requires 8 units of enrollment per term, and part-time status requires a minimum of 4 units per term.
- 3.30 Regular Class Attendance Requirement: Regular and punctual class attendance is required. All students are expected to attend all live sessions unless otherwise outlined in the course syllabus.

If a student is absent from a live session, the student is required to view the recording of the missed session. In the event three live class sessions are missed, absent a waiver from the Academic Dean (or designee), the student will be assigned an F for the course and will be required to take the course again at his or her own expense.

It shall be the responsibility of the professor to monitor attendance and to provide appropriate documentation as needed. Students missing more than two class sessions may not be allowed to sit for any scheduled exams and may not be given academic credit for the course. Whenever a student notifies a professor in writing of any absences arising from the observance of religious holidays, those absences shall not be counted as “sessions missed” for the purposes of this section.

- 3.40 Attendance in Assessing Grades: Individual professors have the discretion to use attendance in assessing grades for the non-examination portion of the course grade.
- 3.50 Enrollment Requirement: No student may attend classes or receive credit for any course for which such student is not enrolled, and no classes may be audited.
- 3.60 Class Participation: Students must come to class prepared and ready to

participate. Students must complete each unit's asynchronous coursework prior to that unit's live session. Class participation may make up a percentage of the overall course grade as determined by the professor.

- 3.70 Withdrawal from a Class: Students may withdraw from any course only by completing the Registration Adjustment Add/Drop Form. **The add/drop deadline is the end of the first week of each session.** Approval of the Academic Dean (or designee) is required to drop a class without a "W" after the add/drop deadline, and all requests must be made 24 hours before the final exam.

Students who drop a class after a session is underway will ordinarily receive a tuition refund, less the \$150 withdrawal fee, based on the date the courses were dropped as follows:

- During 1st (first) week of classes ... 100%
- 2nd (second) week of classes 50%
- After 2nd (second) week 0%

- A. Notation of W: A notation of W for withdrawal will appear on the transcript for any withdrawal after the add/drop deadline. The notation of W does not affect the student's grade point average. In case of rare and extenuating circumstances after the add/drop period, the Academic Dean (or designee) may extend the period allowed for withdrawal *without* the notation of W appearing on the transcript. In this instance, the student would be assigned an Incomplete (I).
- B. Grade of Incomplete: Students who have regularly attended a course but, due to circumstances determined by the Academic Dean (or designee) as being excusable, have failed to take a required examination, produce a required paper or assignment, or meet some other criterion necessary to the proper assessment of a course grade shall be given the grade of "Incomplete" ("I") for the affected course. The grade "I" shall not be computed in the hours completed or in the cumulative or term grade point average.

- 3.80 Time Limits on Completion: Students will have a 3-year (9-term) maximum to complete a single degree. If additional time is needed, it

must be approved by the Academic Dean (or designee). Required military deployment does not count as time towards this 3-year requirement.

- 3.90 Leave of Absence and Program Withdrawal: Students must speak with their Student Success Advisor (SSA) about any leaves of absence from the program and must then speak with the Student Success Manager to complete a Leave of Absence (LOA) form for any term, including summer, in which the student does not wish to enroll. Students will work with the SSA to develop a re-engagement plan.

Students may take only three leaves of absence during the duration of their program. After three consecutive terms of absence, the student will be withdrawn from the program and must reapply if they wish to complete their course of study.

Students wishing to withdraw must speak with their SSA and any other program administrators or faculty as the Student Success Advisor deems necessary. Students are required to complete the Leave of Absence/Withdrawal Form.

4.00 Program Curriculum & Requirements

- 4.10 General Requirements: The online MLS and online MDR degrees require a minimum of 32-units that include four major curricular components: Foundation Courses, Core Courses, Elective Courses, and Residency Courses. The online LLM degree program requires a minimum of 26 units and the dual MLS-MDR degree requires a minimum of 50 units. The charts below set forth the different courses of study.

All students will complete both Residency courses. The curriculum will typically be completed in 16 months, with four terms of eight units per term.

Undergraduate coursework must be completed prior to the start of classes.

- 4.20 Official Transcripts: Final official transcripts showing degree conferral are required for all applicants and admitted students.

In special circumstances, when official transcripts showing degree conferral are not available at the time of application, conditional

admittance may be granted, but the University must receive complete official transcripts prior to registration for the second term to continue in the program. Students in this category who cannot provide final official transcripts showing degree conferral prior to second-term registration will not be permitted to enroll in any subsequent term until their application file is complete.

For all others, including those with a conferred degree at the time of application, final official transcripts are required prior to the first day of the program.

4.30 Curriculum Requirements for Graduation: For degree requirements for all online programs refer to the current year's Academic Catalogue.

5.00 Tuition and Student Accounts

5.10 Financial Responsibility Agreement: Students must agree to the Financial Responsibility Agreement every term before enrollment in classes is allowed.

5.20 School's Security Interest in Student's Academic Record: A student may not graduate, nor may such student receive any diploma, certificate, or transcript until all accounts, current or otherwise, have been satisfied in accordance with policies announced by the School of Law. Pepperdine University shall retain any diploma, certificate, or transcript, as security for such obligations until they are satisfied. This security interest shall not be discharged in bankruptcy or other creditor arrangements. Release of any such security interest prior to, or subsequent to, any default by the debtor shall not be considered a binding precedent or modification of this policy.

6.00 Maintenance of Academic Standards

6.10 Minimum Grade Point Average Requirement for Graduation: Students are required to maintain grades evidencing a satisfactory level of competence at all times. No student may graduate with a cumulative grade point average of less than 2.3.

Students who finish their online degree requirements with a grade point average below the required minimum for the degree may petition the Academic Dean (or designee) for permission to take up to ten (10)

units, at their own cost, to increase the students' overall average to above the required minimum. Students not able to raise their overall average to the required minimum after completing additional units will not be awarded a degree.

7.00 Bases for Awarding Academic Credit:

- 7.10 Final Exams: Examination week will typically be the eighth week of each session. Final exams will typically be available from Friday afternoon through Sunday evening of the eighth week. All exams must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. Pacific time on Sunday of the eighth week. Unless otherwise stated in the syllabus, all final examinations shall be timed and open book/open note. Students are required to adhere to Pepperdine Law's Honor Code applicable to these programs at all times.

Professors may hold a live session during the examination week for any makeup class sessions or for a final review.

Students are required to take final examinations at the scheduled dates and times unless the Academic Dean (or designee) approves an exception. Students may petition the Academic Dean (or designee) up to 24 hours before the final examination to request a Withdrawal or an Incomplete in the course. If a petition is granted and the student receives a W in the course, the student will be withdrawn from the course and required to retake the course at his or her own expense. If a petition is granted and the student receives an Incomplete, the student will take the final exam the next time the course is offered.

Faculty cannot authorize any changes to the final examination schedule. However, students wishing to petition to reschedule a final exam should notify their professor, who will convey their request, when appropriate, to the Academic Dean (or designee). Students should not make arrangements solely with their faculty to reschedule final exams. A student may be excused from scheduled exams only under the following circumstances:

- A. A student may petition for a rescheduled final exam in the case of serious illness, personal hardship (such as the death or serious illness of a spouse, significant other, parent, child, sibling, grandparent, or other close family member), accident, or other emergency that arises during the examination period. The student requesting a rescheduled exam for such an emergency

must have appropriate documentation demonstrating that the student was unable to take the examination at the scheduled time. In the case of an examination that is rescheduled for medical reasons, the student must be examined by a physician prior to or within 24 hours after the scheduled examination. Rescheduling in such genuine emergency situations beyond the student's control shall be governed as per below.

- B. All requests to reschedule final examinations must be made in writing using the "Petition for Examination Schedule Change" form. All requests must be approved by the Academic Dean (or designee).

Final examinations deferred under Section (A) must be made up as soon as possible, but no later than 10 days after the end of the examination period. If a student cannot take the examination within that time, the student will receive an Incomplete in the course and will be required to take the examination the next time the course is offered.

The intent of the above policy is to regulate only final exams.

7.20 Midterm Exams: Midterm examinations will typically occur the fourth week of each session. Midterms will typically be available from Friday afternoon through Sunday evening of the fourth week. All exams must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time on Sunday. Unless otherwise stated in the syllabus, all midterm examinations shall be timed and open book/open note.

Students are required to adhere to Pepperdine Law's Honor Code at all times.

Students are required to take midterm examinations at the scheduled dates and times. Midterm and other interim exams may be rescheduled at the professor's discretion. Pursuant to Section 7.40 (F), students failing to take a required exam shall receive a grade of F on the exam.

7.30 Assignment of Letter Grades:

- A. Distinguishing Levels of Competence: The grade assigned to examinations, papers, and other indicia of learning progress are intended to facilitate meaningful evaluation of the relative degree to which the student has achieved the course objectives and to make a relative distinction between the levels of competence demonstrated by students.

- B. Discretion of the Professor: All grades assigned to examinations, papers, and other indicia of learning progress shall rest within the sound discretion of the professor(s). All such grading will be done according to the grading policies stated herein.
- C. Numerical Weight of Letter Grades: Letter grades shall be assigned the following numerical weights in the computation of grade point averages:

A+	4.33
A	4.00
A-	3.67
B+	3.33

B	3.00
B-	2.67
C+	2.33
C	2.00
C-	1.67
D+	1.33
D	1.00
D-	0.67
F	0.00

- D. Medians: All courses must have a median grade of B+.
- E. Interim and Final Examinations: The final course grade shall be based on a final examination (or paper) and any of the following: class assignments, papers, participation, and other forms of assessment.
- F. Grade Upon Failure to Take Required Examination: Students who fail to take a final examination (or submit a final paper) or meet any other criterion necessary to make the proper assessment of a course grade and who fail to show circumstances excusing such failure will be assigned a course grade of F for the affected course.

Students who fail to take any required exam (including a midterm examination) or produce a required paper or assignment will receive a grade of F on that assignment. (See subsection 3.70 (A) for treatment of “Withdrawals” and subsection 3.70 (B) for grades of “Incomplete.”)

- G. No Credit for Grade of F: No credit shall be given for any course in which the student receives a course grade of F. A student must retake any required course in which such student fails to receive credit at his or her own expense.

When a student repeats a course, credit will be given for the course, and the letter grade received in the repeated course will be calculated into the student’s overall grade point average. The student’s original grade or notation will remain on the student’s transcript and shall be calculated into the student’s overall grade point average.

Absent extraordinary circumstances and the approval of the Academic Dean (or designee), students who fail foundation courses in Session 1 of their first term will be dropped from Session 2 classes and required to successfully complete their first two foundation courses before advancing in the program.

- H. High Pass/Pass/Credit/Fail Courses: The Residency courses may be designated as High Pass/Pass/Credit/Fail courses. Because it is the purpose of the School of Law to reflect adequately the level of competence achieved by students, a student will achieve a grade of High Pass (“HP”) if that student’s work would have received a grade of at least A- and a grade of Pass (“P”) if that student’s work would have received a grade of less than A- and at least C. Students will be given the grade of credit (“CR”) if the student’s work would have received a grade below C but above F. Students shall be assigned the grade of Fail (“F”) if the student’s work would have been F. High Pass/Pass/Credit/Fail grades will appear on the transcript but will not be computed in the grade point average.

7.40 Modification of Grades: Grades recorded on the student’s permanent record may not be modified except due to an arithmetic error or a specific, demonstrable grading error. In connection with a specific, demonstrable grading error, it is the school’s policy that a professor may not increase a grade based upon an overall reappraisal of the quality of the examination once the course grade has been assigned. No grade change will be made until a memorandum from the professor detailing the change, and the specific basis for the change, has been approved by the Academic Dean (or designee). Such changes will be approved only in rare circumstances.

7.50 Procedure for Challenging Grades: The procedure for challenging a grade in a particular course is as follows:

- A. Professor to Evaluate Student’s Examination: It is the school’s policy that the person best able to evaluate the student’s examination is the professor who taught the course. This policy is based upon the belief that evaluation is affected by participation in the course, by the course objectives, and by reference to the level of response of the class as a whole.

- B. Student Challenge of Examination Grade: If a student believes that the grade given on an examination is a grossly unfair assessment of the student's performance on the examination, the student shall first consult with the professor who assigned the grade unless the professor is unavailable.

- C. Review of Challenged Grade by Academic Standards Committee: If, after discussion with such professor, the student still believes the grade given on an examination is a grossly unfair assessment of the student's performance on the examination, the student may submit a timely petition to the Academic Dean (or designee) challenging that particular grade and stating fully the bases upon which relief is sought. Grade petitions must be made prior to the end of the following session.

Such petitions will, unless impracticable, be referred to the Academic Standards Committee for evaluation and recommendation. If the professor in question is a member of the committee, the remaining members of the committee shall decide the issue. In those instances where referral to the Academic Standards Committee is impractical, the Chairman of the Committee or the Academic Dean may act upon the petition.

- D. Professor Submits Documentation to Committee: The reviewing party shall next contact the professor whose grade is being called into question and shall ask the professor to submit to the committee the examination in question along with an explanation of the grade given and any other information which may be pertinent to the committee's review.

- E. Recommendation of Remedy to Academic Dean: The committee shall consider the student's petition, the examination, and all relevant information supplied by the professor and shall determine whether there was a gross abuse of grading discretion. The committee shall report its findings to the Academic Dean. Only upon a finding of gross abuse of grading discretion will the committee recommend to the Academic Dean that the grade be changed.

7.60 Release and Review of Examination Grades: Because grades are considered to

be tentative until approved by the Academic Dean, final course grades will not be released by the professor. The professor will submit course grades to the Registrar as soon as reasonably possible, but in no event later than two (2) weeks from the date of the final examination. Course grades will be released to students by the Student Information and Services Offices soon thereafter.

7.70 Student Work Product Rule: The standards of the University and the School of Law demand that each student be graded and credited only upon the basis of such student's own work product.

A. Presumption Against Collaboration: It will be presumed that students are not allowed to collaborate on the preparation of work product (examinations, research papers, assigned problems, etc.) unless the professor specifically authorizes such collaboration.

B. Violations of this Section: Any attempt by a student to obtain credit for any activity, examination answer, or other work product not actually performed by such student, or to a degree not reflective of the actual activity or performance of such student, whether or not such attempt is successful, will be subject to administrative discipline. Such discipline may include, *inter alia*, the forfeiture of all or part of any credit obtained by such cheating, and such forfeiture may be cumulative with any other penalty imposed.

C. Prohibition on Submitting Papers for Credit Multiple Times: Students may not submit their own work product for credit in more than one course. Credit will not be awarded for a student's own work product that has already been submitted to obtain academic credit in another course, either at Pepperdine University School of Law or elsewhere.

7.80 Disability: Any student with a documented disability (physical, learning, or psychological) needing academic accommodations should contact the Office of Student Accessibility as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential.

8.00 Independent Studies: In special circumstances, the Academic Dean (or designee) may approve an Independent Study course in lieu of a required course or elective.

8.10 General Statement of Value: Independent studies, with proper planning, provide a valuable opportunity for individual study by a student in an area of special interest.

8.20 Faculty Participation: Faculty members are encouraged to participate in the independent study program when they feel they can offer direction and supervision. Faculty members should not agree to supervise an independent study when they possess no expertise in the area of the law involved or do not feel their schedules will permit proper supervision. Normally, a faculty member will not be supervising more than three independent studies at any time. Only full-time faculty members may supervise independent studies.

8.30 Credit for an Independent Study: Independent Studies may be for one or two units. No student will be allowed to do more than one independent study.

8.40 Procedures: Students should petition and obtain approval for the independent study prior to the academic period for which the study is approved and register for the study in the normal manner. Students may first register for an independent study and submit the petition after classes have begun. Petitions will not normally be approved after the late registration period. The student should discuss the proposed independent study with the proposed faculty supervisor. If the faculty member agrees to supervise the study, the student should complete the petition, including a detailed outline, and submit it to the faculty member. If approved, the petition should be forwarded to the Academic Dean, for approval. If approved by the Academic Dean, the original of the petition will be sent to the Records Office and copies will be given to the student and to the supervising faculty member.

8.50 Paper Requirement: All students enrolled in independent studies are required to produce a paper of substantial merit which is of publishable quality and in a form suitable for law review publication. Proposed subjects that can be easily completed from secondary sources or existing literature are not appropriate. The subject matter for independent studies, therefore, will be specific rather than general, and will require independent thought and analysis by the student. Students are expected to review existing literature in the area of proposed study prior to petitioning for the study and prior to the beginning of the minimum number of hours. The independent study must not be based on research and study done for other purposes such as law review, moot court, clerking in law offices, clinical law or clinical projects. The Honor Code will apply to papers prepared for independent studies. While students may confer with others concerning their study, their work product must be their own. All independent study projects must be completed and turned in to the supervising faculty member no later than the last regularly scheduled class day for the semester in which credit is to be awarded. A copy of the paper shall be submitted simultaneously to the Academic Dean.

8.60 Grade: Independent studies are graded on a high pass/pass/credit/fail basis.

8.70 Time Commitment: In addition to the student's initial discussions with the supervising faculty member, the student is expected to confer regularly with the

faculty member. Before the student begins writing the paper, the faculty member must approve a detailed outline of the proposed paper. Normally, twenty per cent (20%) of the total time commitment for the study will be utilized prior to the submission of this outline.

8.80 Duration: Independent studies normally will be for one semester.

8.90 Student Eligibility: Absent compelling reasons for an exception, students on academic probation (or those with a GPA below 2.5) are not eligible to participate in independent studies.

9.00 Transfer and Advanced Standing

9.10 Limitation of Advanced Standing Credit: The Academic Dean will determine the amount of advanced standing credit to be allowed. Typically, 10 such transfer credits will be accepted. Typically no transfer credit will be allowed for courses unless the student earned at least a B- in such course. In some circumstances, students may be waived out of courses to ensure academic integrity and will then be required to take alternate elective units.

9.20 Transfers Between Online Masters Programs: Students may petition to transfer from one Pepperdine Law online masters program to another Pepperdine Law online masters program by submitting the Online Program Transfer Request Form. All Online Program Transfers must be approved by the Academic Dean (or designee), and students should work with their Student Success Advisor (SSA) to submit any such request.

9.30 Transfers Between On-campus and Online Program Modalities: Students may petition to transfer from an online Pepperdine Law masters program to an on-campus Pepperdine Law masters program up to 8 units into any program. Absent approval of the Academic Dean (or designee) based on demonstrated compelling circumstances, students who have completed more than 8 units may not switch program modalities. The Academic Dean (or designee) must approve all modality transfer requests.

9.40 No Transfers from the MLS Program to the JD Program: MLS students cannot apply units from the MLS program to the Pepperdine JD Program.

9.50 Transfers from JD to MLS Program: JD students who have been

admitted to the MLS program may be eligible, with approval, to transfer units from the JD program to the MLS program.

- 9.60 Bar to Repeating Courses: No student may repeat any course in which such student has already received credit, except when approved by the Academic Dean (or designee).

Students may be granted permission by the Academic Dean (or designee) to repeat a course completed as a JD student at any law school only when there is a significant difference in the description and substance of the course. In such instances, the student shall supply course descriptions, syllabi, and any other documentation requested by the Academic Dean (or designee) necessary to determine whether the course may be repeated.

10.0 Program Policy and Procedure

10.10 Waiver of Policies:

- A. Dean's Authority to Consider Waiver: In some cases, regulations and policies may work undue hardship. For good cause, certain regulations may be waived by the Academic Dean, provided that the quality of the student's academic program is not impaired and that the waiver is consistent with the goals and objectives set forth in Section 1.00.
- B. Requirements of Written Petition for Such Exception: To preserve an accurate record of the basis upon which such exceptions are granted, a petition must be submitted to the Academic Dean requesting the waiver and outlining the reasons therefore.
- C. Requirement That Exception to Policy Be in Writing: No exception to the policies stated in the Catalog of this statement shall be allowed unless approved in writing by the Academic Dean and placed in the student's file.

- 10.20 Prospective Application of Changes to Academic Programs or Policies: Any changes made to any academic program or policy will only be prospectively applied unless otherwise stated.