Law School Academic Regulations FAQs

Q—What are the Academic Regulations?

A—The Regulations are the rules of your academic life while in law school. They reflect our insistence that students behave professionally, and they state our standards for academic excellence. At orientation, you signed a statement acknowledging that you read and understand the regulations and agree to abide by them. If you have a question about the regulations or a question on an interpretation of the regulations, please see David Romantz, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.

Q—Suppose a full-time law student enrolls in six hours in the fall semester. Dean Romantz tells him he is in violation of Rule 5.1 of the Academic Regulations. The student says, “But I didn’t read that regulation, so you can’t hold me to it.”

A—See above.

Q—What is Appendix I all about?

A—The appendix titled Standards for the Attainment of the J.D. Degree is the backdrop to the Regulations. The Standards do two things. They explain the essential analytical and communication skills that we believe every student must master in law school; and they set out some essential student obligations. For example, each student must “behave honestly, responsibly, fairly, and professionally.” Additionally, each student must “regularly and punctually be prepared for and attend scheduled obligations” and must “meet deadlines.”

Q—Why is Academic Regulation 21 so important?

A—Academic Regulation 21 is the law school’s Honor Code. The Rule describes the Honor Council and sets a standard for student academic and professional conduct—The Honor Code. Rule 21 also explains the process for reporting, investigating, and prosecuting alleged offenders. Be sure you clearly understand Rule 21.

Q—Am I allowed to withdraw from law school? If so, how do I re-enroll?

A—Rule 4 deals with withdrawals and re-enrollment. While you may withdraw from law school and—in some circumstances—may re-enroll, you must be able to complete the degree requirements within six years from the date of enrollment.

Q—What is the maximum number of credit hours I can take in a semester?

A—Rule 5 discusses course minimums and maximums for part-time and full-time students. A full-time student must take at least 12 credit hours and may not enroll in more than 18 hours. If a student has less than a 2.5 GPA, a student may not enroll in more than 16 hours without Dean Romantz’ permission. A part-time student must enroll in at least 8 hours and not more than 11 hours in each semester.
Q—How do I drop or add a course?

A—Rule 6 discusses dropping and adding courses. Generally, a student has up to 10 days after the start of classes in the fall or spring semesters to drop or add a course. Please note a student who enrolls in a course after the start of classes may be counted absent for the missed classes.

Q—What happens if I fail a required course?

A—Rule 7 requires students to pass each required course. If a student fails a required course, he or she must retake the course at the next regular semester in which the course is offered. If a course is repeated after a failing grade, the original failing grade remains on the student’s transcript. No grade is removed.

Q—Am I allowed to switch to part-time if I start law school as a full-time student?

A—Rule 8 explains how a part-time student can convert to full-time status and vice versa. Please note, once a student changes his or her status, the student cannot revert back to the original status.

Q—Will my professors take attendance in class?

A—Yes. Rule 9.1 discusses class attendance. Class attendance is required. A student who exceeds the allowable number of absences may be penalized and could fail the course. Dean Romantz will not grant exemptions from class attendance policies. The ABA, our accrediting agency, requires class attendance. Both the ABA and the law school agree that class attendance is critical to achieving the essential level of mastery of essential legal skills.

Q—Can I work while a law student?

A—Yes but with limits. Rule 9.2 explains the limitation on working outside the law school. Per our accrediting agency, the American Bar Association, a full-time student may NOT work more than 20 hours per week. 1Ls are discouraged strongly from working at all.

Q—Where can I get information about examination policies?

A—Rule 10 discusses exams and exam procedures. Please note students may not register for courses with conflicting exams without Dean Romantz’s permission. Prior to the close of registration, a student must submit a written request to Dean Romantz asking to register for classes with conflicting exams.

Rule 10.5: Exam grading is anonymous. Each student will receive an examination ID number from Pat Crowell (Registrar) before the start of exams.

Rule 10.8: Taking an exam is conclusive. A student cannot sit for an exam and then decide after the fact that he or she was too sick to take it.
Rule 10.9: If there’s an illness or similar emergency, students must notify Dean Romantz or Pat Crowell before the exam if at all possible or as soon as the student is able. Please do not contact the professor in order to maintain anonymity.

Q—If I’m not happy with a final grade, will my professor ever consider a grade change?

A—Probably not. Rule 11 explains grade changes. A professor may change a student’s grade only for computational or objective errors. All other grade changes must be approved by the Academic Affairs Committee.

Q—Does the law school use letter grades or numeric grades?

A—Rule 12 discusses our grading system. You will receive a letter grade for each graded course. The grade is converted to a numeric grade in order to determine your GPA. Your GPA is truncated to two decimal places with no rounding. So, a GPA of 2.769 is recorded as a 2.76. In most classes, your grade is based exclusively on a final examination. But professors may take other factors into account, such as a mid-term, attendance or class participation.

Q—Other than my class grades, how else can I tell how well I’m performing in law school?

A—Rule 13 discusses class rank. Each student is ranked with her or his classmates at the end of the fall and spring semesters. There is no rank after the summer semester; summer grades are calculated with the fall grades.

Q—Do students fail out of law school?

A—Unfortunately, yes. Rule 14 explains the law school’s academic eligibility requirements. A student must be in good academic standing to remain in law school. Good academic standing is a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or better. A student whose cumulative GPA falls below a 2.0 may be eligible for probation or an exception to Rule 14. Please carefully review Academic Regulation 14.1. Please be aware that there are no appeals from academic exclusion.

Q—What courses do I need to take to graduate?

A—Rule 16 explains the requirement for graduation. For students beginning law school in the fall semester of 2012, the graduation requirements have changed. Please review carefully Rule 16 and see the registrar for more information.

Q—Can I take a semester abroad or at another law school?

A—Yes. Rule 17 explains the rules for transferring credit from another law school. The law school must be ABA-approved. Students must earn a C or better, and the transferred grade will show on the transcript, but is not calculated into the cumulative GPA.
Q—Why does the law school require students to disclose all past admonitory actions (arrests, terminations, suspensions, etc.)?

A—The law school admits some students who have had legal or other admonitory problems in the past. We are required to report these incidents to the Board of Bar Examiners when students make application for admission to state bars. Even though we admit students with one or more admonitory incidents, we make no guarantee that any state’s Board of Bar Examiners will find the student admissible. If you have any questions, you should contact the Bar Examiners in the state where you intend to practice.

A more serious problem is when a student fails to report an admonitory incident to the law school that the student was required to report in the law school application. If a student did not report an incident that he or she should have reported, the student must report it to Dean Romantz immediately.

Q—What happens if I get arrested or face other legal problems while in law school?

A—You must report the incident to Dean Romantz. Bar examiners are more tolerant of legal problems prior to law school than they are with legal problems occurring during law school. Law students are rightly held to a higher standard of conduct and breaches of law are taken seriously.

Q—If I have a physical or learning disability what should I do?

A—A student with a disability should contact Dean Romantz. Individual faculty members cannot award an accommodation to a student for a disability. The University of Memphis’ Disability Services Office determines whether a student has a disability. When the office enrolls eligible students in the disability program, it contacts the law school regarding suggested accommodations. Students with disabilities may be eligible for class and examination accommodations.

Q—What should I do if I can’t figure out what the rules (or a particular rule) means?

A—Please see Dean Romantz.