

UNC Law Academic Standards, Updated August 2025

The main 2025 updates are: use of numbering and headings to guide readers through the policies; incorporation of the grading system that took effect on August 1, 2025; and edits to account for developments such as UNC’s adoption in 2024 of the Student Code of Conduct.

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I. UNC Student Code of Conduct, Defining Academic & Non-Academic Misconduct, Including Prohibited Discrimination

Every UNC student must comply with UNC’s [Student Code of Conduct](#) (SCC). It obligates students to uphold academic integrity and to refrain from academic dishonesty.

The SCC prohibits multiple types of **academic misconduct**. Familiar types include cheating, plagiarism (“intentionally or recklessly representing another’s words, thoughts, or ideas as one’s own without citation or attribution”), and unauthorized assistance or collaboration. Consequently, students are expected to consult “faculty and other resources to clarify academic requirements, to learn the techniques of proper attribution of sources, and to identify allowable materials to be used for any academic work.”

The SCC also prohibits multiple types of **non-academic misconduct**, including threatening conduct, damage of property, and misrepresentation. Relevant too is the [University Policy on Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment and Related Misconduct Including Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment, Sexual Violence, Interpersonal Violence and Stalking](#), which takes precedence over the SCC when those types of misconduct occur.

A. Generative AI Tool Use

Unless a professor has published different rules, this policy governs students’ use in law courses of generative artificial intelligence tools (“Gen AI Tools”), meaning tools such as ChatGPT that use artificial intelligence to generate texts of multiple sentences or paragraphs in response to prompts. The School of Law’s policy consists of (1) a default prohibition against Gen AI Tool use on submitted assignments and assessments, counterbalanced by (2) a default permission for Gen AI Tool use on other assignments, with students required to document their Gen AI Tool use as the professor directs.

1. Prohibition for Assignments or Assessments Submitted to a Professor; Attestation.

Unless expressly permitted by the professor, no student may use Gen AI Tools to generate text in assignments or assessments that the student submits to a professor, regardless of the task’s name (for example exam, mid-term, test, quiz, paper, project) or format (for example, in-person, take-home, presentation, argument). Consequently, when students sign an Honor Code pledge that they had no unauthorized assistance, they thereby are attesting to not having used Gen AI Tools.

2. Permission for Assignments Not Submitted to a Professor; Documentation.

Unless prohibited by the course professor, students may use Gen AI Tools for other purposes, for example generating ideas or questions, finding paper topics, and assisting research. This permission empowers willing faculty to prepare students to benefit from Gen AI Tools in law study and practice. If students use Gen AI Tools on assignments, they must concisely describe as the professor directs how they used those tools. For example, a professor could require students to attest that “I used Gen AI Tools in the following ways:,” along with a filled-in chart such as the following:

Purpose ↓	Gen AI Tool	Prompts or Queries	Uses of Outputs	Conversation Link
1. Idea or Question				
2. Research				
3. Other, if any				

This policy follows the Usage Philosophy in the University’s recommended Guidelines for students authorized to use Gen AI Tools (Summer 2023), which are, in short: (1) Let AI help you think, not think for you. (2) Use Gen AI Tools responsibly and ethically, respecting privacy and intellectual property. (3) You’re fully accountable for all your work: Gen AI Tools can invent facts and sources (“hallucinate”), and any errors count as your errors. If you can’t verify, delete. (4) Document your Gen AI Tool use as your professor directs. (5) Don’t submit confidential information to Gen AI Tools.

B. Prohibited Multiple Uses of Same or Substantially Similar Written Product

1. The same or substantially similar written product may not be submitted more than once in fulfillment of the writing requirements of any law school course or recognized activity (e.g., journal, moot court, trial team).
2. Writing on the same or a substantially similar topic in fulfillment of multiple law school writing requirements is discouraged, but may be done, provided certain conditions are met. Such writing may occur simultaneously or sequentially. Students are cautioned, however, that they risk not receiving credit for both simultaneous writings or the second sequential writing if the two written products are deemed to be the same or substantially similar.
3. Under this policy, an “evaluating party” is anyone to whom the work will be submitted to fulfill the writing requirement. The evaluating party is thus a course professor or, for credits related to journals or other student organizations, the faculty advisor, collaborating with the Editor in Chief, Chief Justice, or equivalent or designee.
4. If the writing is done in the same semester (simultaneously), the student must (1) notify each evaluating party that the student is writing on related topics for more than one evaluating party and (2) receive from all evaluating parties clearance to proceed. The student is also responsible for submitting to the evaluating parties all final products produced. Each evaluating party shall independently determine if it is a substantially different product and may be used to meet the evaluating party’s writing requirement.
5. If a student is writing on a topic that is the same or substantially similar to which a student has previously received credit from an evaluating party, the student must notify the second evaluating party, provide a copy of the previously credited written product, and receive permission from the second evaluating party to proceed. The second evaluating party shall determine if the proposed final product is substantially different and may be used to meet a writing requirement.
6. Students will not receive credit for both simultaneous writings or for the second sequential writing if any evaluating party determines that the two completed written products are the same or substantially similar. Therefore, students are advised to select different topics for written products required for any law school course or other law school recognized activity.
7. Student organizations that require the submission of writings should provide prominent notice of this restriction to all participating students. Failure to provide such notice does not relieve students of their responsibilities under this policy.

II. Non-Discrimination at UNC Law Generally

The UNC School of Law prohibits discrimination against, faculty staff, or students, including regarding admission of applicants or retention of students, on the basis of protected status, as defined in UNC's [Policy on Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment and Related Misconduct Including Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment, Sexual Violence, Interpersonal Violence and Stalking](#). If a student raises a claim of prohibited discrimination during an academic appeal, the University Compliance Office addresses the student's claim before the law school proceeds. For further information, contact the University Compliance Office:

University Compliance Office
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
214 W. Cameron Avenue, 2nd floor
Campus Box 9160
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27599
Telephone: 919.966.3576
Email: eoc@unc.edu

III. J.D. Requirements: What Students Need to Graduate and to Participate in Commencement

A. Credits: Total, Timeframe, and Minimum Permissible Grade-Point Average (GPA)

To earn the J.D. and graduate, a student must earn at least 86 credits within 60 months, with a minimum GPA of 2.600.

- **Transitional Minimum-GPA Rule for the Classes of 2026 & 2027.** The year-end minimum permissible GPA is necessary for 3Ls to graduate and for 2Ls to avoid academic exclusion. The new 2.600 minimum GPA applies only prospectively: a student in the Class of either 2026 or 2027 will avoid academic exclusion and be eligible to graduate so long as their **GPA from courses begun in or after August 2025** remains at least 2.600 at the end of each relevant spring semester.

B. Required Subtotals and Types of Credits

The 86 credits must include at least:

1. 30 credits for all UNC Law's **required first-year courses** (or an equivalent for transfer students).
2. 2 credits for **Professional Responsibility**—completed either in post-1L summer or the 2L year.
3. 4 credits from upper-level **Rigorous Writing Experience (RWE)** courses and 6 from upper-level **Experiential (E)** courses.
 - a. The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs designates certain courses RWE only when the professor has committed to providing substantial individualized feedback on students' writing aimed at improving their writing and analytical skills.
 - b. Experiential courses are clinics, externships, or simulation courses.
 - c. A course may have **both** RWE and Experiential designations, but a course's credits can satisfy only one or the other requirement for a student, not both. A student also may not divide a course's credits between the designations.
4. 65 credits from **Regularly Scheduled Law (RSL)** courses. This limit is rarely relevant because it permits 21 **Not-RSL** credits, and students could approach that limit only by completing roughly the maximum permissible number of all the following: externship, journal-board, UNC non-law graduate course, and Supervised Research & Writing (LAW 399) credits.

- **Regularly Scheduled.** A course is regularly scheduled if it requires students to meet regularly for direct faculty instruction—in classrooms, a clinic, or elsewhere, even remotely. Almost all UNC LAW courses are regularly scheduled and thus are RSL courses. But the following UNC Law courses are **Not-RSL** courses because they lack a regular class schedule: Externship, Journal (Editorial Board), and Supervised Research & Writing (SRW).
- **Law Courses.** The law school offers only Law courses, and thus every course here has a “LAW” course number. Students sometimes may also earn credit from a limited number of “Inter-Institutional” Duke or NCCU law courses; see § VIII (Enrollment-Related Rules).
- **Non-Law (and Thus Not-RSL) UNC Graduate Courses.** With permission, a student may count toward the J.D. up to 6 credits of eligible non-law UNC graduate courses. To be eligible, and thus count toward the J.D., the non-law UNC graduate course must:
 - have a UNC course number of 400 or higher,
 - be significantly related to legal education, and
 - be approved by the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs before the student enrolls in the course.

The student must earn a grade of P or better (on the graduate school scale of H, P, L, F), and it will appear on the law transcript with the credits. Interested students should consult the Law Registrar. These are **Not-RSL** courses regardless of class schedules and even for dual-degree students.

5. 56 credits from **in-person** courses—because a student may not count more than 28 **distance-education (D)** credits toward the J.D. This limit is rarely relevant because UNC Law offers very few distance-education courses. The law school designates a course “D” for distance education only when “all instruction is delivered exclusively” remotely (even if some in-person, non-instructional activities occur, such as orientation or testing), whether synchronously or asynchronously.

Students need not earn a certain number of graded credits or limit ungraded credits, except that students who transfer to UNC Law after 1L study elsewhere are limited to 4 hours of ungraded courses as a 2L.

C. No Pre-Matriculation Credits; Exceptions

The School of Law does not count credits earned before matriculation here, except that it accepts some J.D. credits for incoming transfer students or credits earned within the preceding three years while the student was enrolled in a UNC dual-degree program.

D. Commencement Participation

To participate in Commencement, students must have successfully completed all required coursework—including, for a dual-degree student, all requirements for both degrees. However, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs may authorize participation in Commencement if a student lacks only 6 or fewer credits, is enrolled in sufficient summer law courses, and has applied for and is eligible to take a July bar examination.

A student who completes his or her law degree requirements in December may participate in either the campus-wide December commencement or the following May commencement.

IV. Course Credits as Measures of Student Work Hours

The ABA regulates course credits (also called credit hours). Credits are measures of a student’s total work hours. Each course must achieve at least the minimum total hours as follows:

<i>Course Credits</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
Hours of Class or Direct Faculty Instruction, Including Exam (if any) ✓ Roughly 50-60 minutes per week per credit	12.5	25	37.5	50
Hours of Outside-Class Work (Estimated) ✓ Roughly 2 hours per week per credit	30	60	90	120
Total Hours (Estimated)	42.5	85	127.5	170

To ensure that every classroom-using course has sufficient class hours per credit, the law school typically schedules the course to have 13 class sessions for each weekday on which the course holds class. To compensate for classes missed to a holiday or equivalent, the schedule may include “Magic Days”: days on which a **different weekday’s** classes meet. For example, if a Monday is designated a Magic Friday, only Friday classes meet on that Monday. UNC Law’s Academic Calendar is available online.

Professors have limited discretion to reduce classroom hours insofar as they substitute other direct faculty instruction (such as a recorded lecture or other instructional exercise or event) or compensate for the reduction by requiring related academic work, in particular research and writing in Rigorous Writing Experience (RWE) or work in simulation courses, clinics, or field placements (externships).

V. Learning Outcomes and Course Syllabi—Communicating What Students Must Learn

A. Programmatic (J.D.) Learning Outcomes; Course-Specific Minimum Learning Outcomes

For the J.D. Program as a whole, the UNC School of Law to fulfill its mission of being a great public law school by pursuing, through its diverse curriculum, the following **programmatic learning outcomes**—that is, the minimum skills, knowledge, and abilities each student shall have upon earning the J.D.:

- Know and be able to apply the core substantive and procedural legal doctrines and rules.
- Find, analyze, and use relevant legal materials (including, among others, statutes, cases, regulations, and other administrative materials) in order to identify and resolve problems and communicate legal analysis in a variety of written and oral formats.
- Identify and think critically about professional and ethical responsibilities that arise in practice including crucial issues facing the legal profession, such as ensuring dedicated and effective representation for different groups and cultures.
- Exercise other professional skills needed for well-rounded, competent, and ethical participation as members of the legal profession, including, but not limited to, applying legal and other scholarship to understand and affect legal policy.
- Recognize, parse, and critically analyze the historical, social, and economic contexts underlying the law, particularly as they relate to racial, gender, or other inequities.

For each individual course, the professor states course-specific **minimum learning outcomes (MLOs)**. MLOs describe the most important knowledge, skills, or competencies that students will be able to demonstrate once they successfully complete the course.

B. Syllabi

In each course, the professor must distribute a syllabus that begins with a Syllabus Cover Sheet, which in a standard format states UNC's mandatory disclosures (which are identical for all courses, though professors may supplement them), references UNC Law's programmatic learning outcomes, and presents the course's essential information, such as credits, designations, meeting times, attendance requirements, and the course-specific MLOs. The professor may add other syllabus information into or after the Cover Sheet.

VI. Minimum Class Attendance; Un/Excused Absences & Makeups; Religious Observances

A. Student Obligations

Students must regularly and punctually attend classes, including online sessions. Failure to do so may result in a No Credit grade (zero points) in the course.

- 1. Regular Attendance: 80% or Higher.** To attend "regularly" presumptively means to attend at least 80% of the classes. Instructors may establish a higher required percentage (but not a lower percentage).
- 2. Communication About Absences.** A student must review each course syllabus and communicate in a timely manner with instructors regarding reasonably anticipated absences.
- 3. Unexcused Absences: No Make-Up.** Unexcused absences cannot be made up. However, the Associate Dean may provide limited waivers in appropriate situations.
- 4. Excused Absences: Make-Up Permitted.** Excused absences may be made up. Until made up, excused absences remain absences and count against the course's attendance requirement. A student also is responsible for providing records that establish an absence as excused.
- 5. How and When to Make Up Excused Absences.** If a student accumulates enough excused absences so that the student does not meet the course attendance requirement (whether 80% or a higher percentage), the student must "make up" a sufficient number of absences as soon as possible, well before the course's final assessments. To "make up" an excused absence requires completing course work as determined by each instructor so that the "excused absence" converts to "attended class."
- 6. Consequences.** First, even if students satisfy the minimum attendance requirement, instructors may account for poor attendance when grading, as explained in their course syllabus. Second, if a student's absences exceed the permitted level and cannot timely be made up, the student will not be permitted to complete the course. The presumptive result is a No Credit grade, but the student may ask the Assistant Dean for Student Development for a late opportunity to drop the course for good cause. The Assistant Dean will consult the relevant professors and the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, and the Associate Dean will rule on the request. A late drop may require the student's cooperation, including clearing any holds that UNC may have placed on the student's account. The student's request, the Associate Dean's approval, and any student action that UNC may require are all prerequisites to a late drop.
- 7. Definition of Excused Absences Generally.** The following are excused absences: personal or family illnesses or emergencies, pregnancy, disability, and absences provided for religious observance under the law school's policy. Excused absences for pregnancy or disability should be approved by the University Compliance Office. Anyone who is experiencing symptoms known to be contagious should not attend in-person classes. Instructors also have discretion to excuse other requested absences, such as for unavoidable scheduling conflicts caused by for-credit law school activities or job interviews.

- 8. Excused Absences for Religious Observances.** Students are permitted up to two excused absences each academic year for religious observances required by their faith. Primary holy days for religious observance appear on the University's [Holy Days and Observances Calendar](#). Students who wish to request more than two excused religious-observance absences in an academic year should notify the Student Development Office and seek the professor's permission. The law school may require documentation of a student's religious observance.
- Students must give their professors written notice for an excused absence for a religious observance two weeks before the relevant class (or as soon as possible if the date occurs within the first two weeks of a semester or summer session).
 - Professors must give students opportunity to make up the excused absence.
 - If students know they need to miss one or more final examinations because of religious observance, they must notify the Assistant Dean for Student Development **in writing no later than the last day to submit an exam rescheduling request** (or immediately if the conflict arises later).

B. Instructor Obligations

Professors must state in each course's syllabus (1) the course's attendance requirements, (2) the grading consequences (if any) of poor attendance, (3) the professor's method for taking attendance, and (4) how students can make up an excused absence to convert it to count as "attended class," to the extent reasonable alternatives are available for students to meet the course's Minimum Learning Outcomes. Professors also must monitor attendance for every required class or activity. If a student is violating this policy, the instructor should promptly notify the student and the Assistant Dean for Student Development, who can try to help.

Professors teaching experiential, RWE, and/or RRWA courses may seek an exemption from the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs from the requirement to make-up excused absences. The Associate Dean shall grant an exemption only if making up the absence would not be possible without fundamentally altering the course's essential nature. In such courses, students with excused absences who exceed the allowable number of absences will presumptively be invited to drop the course.

VII. Class Recordings

Class recordings are for exclusive use of the students enrolled in the UNC School of Law course that was recorded. A student may access and view or listen to their class recordings only by (1) agreeing to access and use the recordings only as directed by the course's professor(s) and (2) acknowledging professors' intellectual-property rights in recordings and class materials, fellow students' privacy rights, and the prohibition on distributing class recordings to students not authorized to use them. The UNC Student Code of Conduct applies to such matters.

VIII. Enrollment-Related Rules, Including for Supervised Research & Writing

A. Maximum and Minimum Credits per Semester or Summer Session

Second- and third-year law students may enroll in no more than 16 credits, and no fewer than 9 credits, in a semester, and no more than 6 credits in a summer session. (Typical enrollment is 12 to 15 credits per semester.) In extraordinary circumstances, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs may:

- Permit a student to enroll in 17 credits (not more) in a semester.
- Require students with burdensome responsibilities to register for as few as 9 credits in a semester unless the student received written permission from the Associate Dean after: (1) consulting the law

school's Student Development and Financial Aid offices about relevant financial, procedural, and related matters; and (2) documenting extraordinary circumstances warranting the lower credit load.

B. Prohibition on More Than Two Rigorous Writing Experience Course Per Semester

A student may not enroll in more than two RWE courses per semester unless the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs grants written permission to do so for exceptional circumstances.

C. Prohibition on Time Overlaps

Students are not permitted to enroll in courses with overlapping times.

D. Priority Enrollment for J.D. Students

J.D. students have priority enrollment in all law courses.

E. Drop/Add of Courses

1. Drop/Add of an Upper-Level (Non-1L) Course Due to Initial Lack of Attendance

Barring an excused absence, a student will be dropped from an upper-level course if (A) a course has a waiting list and (B) the student fails in the first week to attend either:

- the first class of a course meets only once a week or
- at least one of a course's multiple weekly classes meetings.

To avoid such a drop, a student should request an excused absence from the professor, in advance when possible. The student also may consult the Student Development Office for assistance.

2. Deadline; Exception

After the drop/add deadline, students may not drop or add any course except in unusual circumstances, such as extended absence due to a student's or a family member's illness. This may be done only in consultation with the Student Development Office and with permission from the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.

F. Guided Enrollment Policy

A student is subject to the Guided Enrollment Policy (GEP) if, after the spring semester of the student's first year, the student's grade point average (GPA) lies either in the bottom eight percent of GPA that first-year class (or below 2.750 for students who completed their 1L year in or before spring 2025). Students subject to the GEP remain subject to it throughout their law study, regardless of any changes to the student's GPA or the grading system. The GEP requires such students to satisfy additional requirements for continued enrollment, which either the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs or the Associate Dean's designate develops for each student. One GEP requirement is regular communication with the Director of Academic Excellence regarding enrollment. Other requirements may include (1) enrollment in, and completion of, certain courses or types of courses at specific times, including during summers, (2) non-enrollment or dropping of other courses, (3) maintenance of a certain credit and course load, and (4) any other requirements the law school may deem necessary for continued enrollment.

G. Supervised Research & Writing, LAW 399 (RWE)

A student may enroll in Supervised Research & Writing (SRW), LAW 399 (formerly independent research/study) under the supervision of a **full-time** UNC faculty member for one, two, or three credits. No student may count more than three credits total SRW credits toward the J.D. SRW as a Rigorous Writing Experience (RWE).

A faculty member has no duty to accept a student's proposed SRW. A proposed SRW must fall within the study interests of both the faculty member and the student.

Before starting the SRW, the student must (1) obtain a faculty member's consent to supervise it and (2) file with the Registrar a signed SRW Consent Form, available from the Registrar. On the Consent Form, students must certify that they will comply with the policy regarding multiple uses of written product. The Consent Form also must state the number of credits to be awarded, and that credit amount may not later increase or decrease.

Generally, each credit requires no fewer than fifteen pages of substantive writing. Moreover, each credit requires at least 42.5 hours of coursework, which is about 3.3 hours over UNC Law's 13-week semester. That coursework includes periodic meetings with the supervising faculty member. Therefore, students should devote at least 10 hours each week for a three-credit independent study, 6.5 hours a week for a two-credit independent study, and 3.3 hours a week for a one-credit independent study. Students should report to faculty supervisors the amount of work they perform each week. Faculty and students should also meet periodically throughout the semester, though no specific amount of meeting time is required.

Though SRW projects need not follow a specified form, they must satisfy the requirements for RWE courses, including close faculty supervision of legal writing, with significant individualized feedback on both the student's ideas and writing product, a substantial draft, and revision based on the faculty feedback. The SRW project should involve a significant research paper, or series of related papers that are the functional equivalent of a significant research paper, under the faculty member's direct supervision. Grading for SRW projects should be in accordance with general Law School standards.

H. Inter-Institutional Courses (Duke, NCCU) & Credits

If a law course is not offered at UNC during a semester, but the law school of either Duke or North Carolina Central offers the course in that semester, a student may seek to complete it at that law school as an "Inter-Institutional Course." Students should ask the relevant law school's registrar about enrollment availability and consult UNC Law's registrar regarding how and when to register, preferably well before the relevant semester. Students cannot enroll in more than two Inter-Institutional Courses per semester.

These credits cannot fulfill UNC's Rigorous Writing Experience requirement (unless specially permitted by a dual-degree program in which the student is enrolled). But Inter-Institutional Course credits count toward the UNC J.D. as **RSL** credits—earned in regularly scheduled law courses—so long as the student earns at least a C (2.0), or the equivalent. The grade received in an Inter-Institutional Course will appear on the student's transcript, but UNC will not factor the grade into the student's grade point average.

I. Student Certification for Supervised Training & Representation—Training Required for Clinics, Externships, and Some Internships or Employment

The North Carolina State Bar's student practice rules permit law students in limited circumstances to engage in supervised representation of low income individuals, doing permitted activities, under the [North Carolina Rules of Professional Conduct, Subchapter 1C, Section .0200, Rules Governing Practical Training of Law Students](#). A law student must meet the following criteria:

1. Be enrolled as a J.D. or LL.M. student at a law school approved by the Council of the North Carolina State Bar.

2. Be certified in writing by a law school representative—authorized by the Dean—as being of good character and possessing the requisite legal ability and education to perform as a certified law student. This includes having completed any prerequisites required for participation in a clinic, externship, or other student practice placement.
3. Be introduced by an attorney admitted to practice before the tribunal or agency to each judicial official who will preside over a matter in which the student will appear. The student must also obtain consent to appear from the tribunal or agency, subject to any limitations imposed by the presiding official. Introductions need not occur in open court, and consent may be given orally or in writing.
4. Not request or receive any compensation or remuneration from any eligible person to whom services are rendered. However, this does not prohibit compensation from an attorney, legal services organization, law school, or government agency, nor does it prevent such entities from charging or collecting fees for services performed by the student.
5. Attest in writing that they have read and are familiar with the North Carolina Rules of Professional Conduct and the relevant interpretive opinions.

For students enrolled in any of the law school’s clinics or externships, those programs will ensure that those students are certified to practice. For students who need to be certified to practice for an internship or summer job with an outside employer, the Student Development Office handles the certification process. Law students seeking to be certified to practice and who are not enrolled in a clinic or externship can find [certification forms](#) on the North Carolina State Bar’s website. They should submit these forms, or the equivalent if seeking certification out-of-state, to the Law School Registrar.

J. Auditing Courses

UNC graduate students generally may audit law courses only if space is available and the student obtains permission from the instructor and then also from the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. By contrast, persons not enrolled in in the university ordinarily may not audit law classes. Students who audit courses must attend class regularly for the entire semester. No record is kept of courses audited and no fees are charged to full-time students. Students should not ordinarily enroll in a class for credit if they have previously audited the class.

IX. Grading Standards, effective August 1, 2025

A. Grading for Graded Courses; Pass/Fail

Starting August 2025, all graded courses will use a numeric scale with assigned grades ranging from 4.20 (highest) to 2.00 as follows:

4.00	4.10	4.20								
3.00	3.10	3.20	3.30	3.40	3.50	3.60	3.70	3.80	3.90	
2.00	2.10	2.20	2.30	2.40	2.50	2.60	2.70	2.80	2.90	

Performance **below** a 2.00 will receive a grade of zero points, indicating that the student earned no credit for the course and either (1) **must** repeat and successfully complete that course if it is required for graduation or (2) may elect to repeat the course the next time the law school offers that course. If a student repeats a course, the resulting grade is recorded for the semester in which the student earned it; it does not replace the prior grade, which remains as is on the transcript.

See section X for information about grading from 2007 through summer 2025 (when UNC Law instead used letter grades that translated to points separated by 0.30 or 0.40—*e.g.*, B+ 3.30; A- 3.70; A 4.0).

By contrast, some law courses are designated pass/fail, awarding no numerical grade. Students may not change a graded course to a pass/fail course.

B. Course Mean Requirement

Starting August 2025, the required mean range for a course's grades—that is, the average point score awarded to students in the course—is **3.400 to 3.500 in all graded courses** (including small-enrollment and RWE courses).

1. Faculty Option: Non-Law Students & Student Visitors from non-U.S. Law Schools

To calculate the mean, professors must include grades from UNC Law students and visitors from other **U.S.** law schools. By contrast, professors choose as they deem appropriate whether to exclude non-law students or visitors from non-U.S. law schools in calculating the mean.

2. Faculty Option: Potential Ratchet in Upper-Level Courses

If the Registrar confirms that an upper-level course is eligible for an upward or downward ratchet (nudge), the course's professor may deviate from the required mean range by the potential ratchet amount: the difference—if any—between the mean GPA of the course's enrolled students (course-specific GPA) and the mean GPA of all upper-level students (upper-level GPA).

- A **positive** ratchet is possible if the course-specific GPA is **higher** than the upper-level GPA: the professor may—not must—award grades whose mean is higher than 3.500 (the required mean range's normal upper limit) by no more than the positive ratchet amount.
- Conversely, a **negative** ratchet is possible if the course-specific GPA is **lower** than the upper-level GPA: the professor may—not must—award grades whose mean is lower than 3.400 (the required mean range's normal lower limit) by no more than the negative ratchet amount.

For example, if a course-specific GPA were 0.055 higher than the upper-level GPA, then for that course the professor could choose to award grades with a mean as high as 3.555 (because $3.500 + 0.055 = 3.555$). Conversely, if the course-specific mean GPA were 0.019 lower than the upper-level GPA, then for that course the professor could choose to award grades with a mean as low as 3.381 (because $3.400 - 0.019 = 3.381$).

C. Grade-Distribution Requirement for Non-RRWA First-Year Courses

The following distribution of grades is required only in non-RRWA first-year courses (Civil Procedure, Constitutional Law, Contracts, Criminal Law, Property, Torts):

Percent of 1Ls	Grade
30–40%	3.600 or higher
40–55%	3.100 to 3.500
At least 15%	3.000 or lower

D. Incompletes

Faculty members may award a grade of “Incomplete” (“IN” on a transcript) when they believe the Incomplete is warranted because the student participated sufficiently and the professor believes that the student could complete the course before the end of the following semester. A student should complete each course in which the student received an Incomplete by the end of the following semester. The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs may determine that special circumstances justify a later completion deadline. Incompletes not completed within one year convert to No Credit (zero points), unless extraordinary circumstances persuade the faculty member and the Associate Dean instead authorize a student to withdraw with a permanent grade of IN.

E. Grade Changes

Except for grade changes secured through a formal grade appeal, faculty members may change posted grades only due to an arithmetic, recording, or clerical error.

F. Grade Appeals

A student may appeal only a grade of 2.200 or below. The appeal must be filed in writing within 60 days of the student's receipt of the grade and should be addressed to the Dean and emailed or otherwise delivered to the Dean, Assistant Dean for Student Development, and Registrar. One of them should acknowledge receipt of the appeal. Review is limited to determinations of:

1. A plain error in computation.
2. The use of clearly unacceptable standards of professional judgment in grading.
3. Personal bias or prejudice that manifestly influenced the grading process to the student's detriment.

The student will be contacted if further information is needed and when a decision is made.

The University's [Policy on Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment and Related Misconduct Including Sex-Based Harassment, Sexual Assault, Interpersonal Violence and Stalking](#) permits students to report information about allegedly prohibited conduct to University Compliance Office in various ways, including the [electronic reporting form](#). For additional information, contact the University Compliance Office, <https://eoc.unc.edu/>. If a student raises a claim of prohibited harassment or discrimination during an academic appeal, the law school must await action by the University Compliance Office before deciding the student's academic appeal.

X. *Former Grading Policy, in Effect 2007 to July 2025—For Informational Purposes Only*

A. Grading Scale

The grading scale ranges from a high grade of A (4.0), A- (3.7), B+ (3.3), B (3.0), B- (2.7), C+ (2.3), C (2.0), C- (1.7), D+ (1.3), to a low passing grade of D (1.0).

An A+ (4.3) may be awarded in exceptional situations (e.g., an A+ should not be awarded as a matter of course to the top student in each class, but only if the top student's performance is exceptional compared to the next student in the class). There is no D-; a failing grade is F (0.0).

Faculty members will report letter grades (with pluses and minuses, as appropriate) to the registrar. Some designated courses are graded on a pass-fail basis.

B. First-Year Curve

First-year classes are subject to a mandatory curve. The curve has two aspects: a mean requirement and a distributional requirement. All first-year courses are subject to the mean requirement. In addition, large-section first-year courses have the following distributional requirement:

Percent	Grade	
35% (31-39%)	A, A-	• A deviation of 4 percent is permitted in each letter grade category.
55% (51-59%)	B+, B, B-	• A grade of A+ is considered part of the 35 percent of grades to be awarded in the A to A- range.
10% (6-14%)	C+, C	• Grades below C are considered part of the 10 percent of grades to be awarded in the C+ to C range.

C. Mean requirement

In RRWA sections, the mean has a permissible range from 3.300 to 3.500. In courses other than RRWA, the class grade mean is 3.250, with a permissible range from 3.200 to 3.300.

- A grade below a C is considered a 2.0 for purposes of determining the required mean.
- An A+ is counted based on its actual value (4.3) for determining the required mean.

D. Upper-Class Mean

In upper-class courses, the mean GPA should ordinarily fall within a relatively narrow target band, varying by no more than .1 in order to ensure fair treatment of all students. In small-enrollment upper-class courses (16 or less students), a variance of .3 is permitted. In upper-class writing courses (RWE), the mean GPA is somewhat higher, and a variance of .2 is permitted. The bands for upper-level offerings are as follows:

Type of Class	Target Band
Courses (Small-16 or less students)	3.1-3.4 mean GPA
Courses (Larger-more than 16 students)	3.2-3.3 mean GPA
RWEs	3.4-3.6 mean GPA

Faculty members are permitted to deviate from these bands by ratcheting upwards or downwards if the mean GPA of students in the course is higher or lower than the overall mean GPA for upper-class students. For example, if the average GPA of upper-class students is 3.305, but the average GPA of the students in a Federal Jurisdiction class is 3.390 (.085 above the overall mean), the professor MAY but is NOT required to raise the class mean by .085-awarding grades in Federal Jurisdiction pursuant to a mean of 3.200-3.385, rather than 3.2-3.3. Similarly, if a Corporate Tax course draws a class with a mean GPA that is .085 lower than the overall upper-class mean, the professor MAY but is NOT required to ratchet the mean for that course downwards by .085 (3.115-3.300).

E. Retention and Graduation

An annual cumulative grade point average of 2.2 is required to continue in the law school at the end of the first year, and a cumulative GPA of 2.25 is required to continue after the second year and to graduate.

XI. Examination Accommodations, Schedule Adjustments, & Rescheduling Requests

A. Disability Accommodation for Exams

Students whose disability requires them to take examinations with accommodations must make arrangements with the Student Development Office (SDO). Which accommodations will be provided, if any, is determined by the University Compliance Office and communicated by the SDO. Accommodations may include extra time, separate testing rooms, or special software or equipment.

B. Exam Schedule Adjustments Generally by the Student Development Office

After consulting the faculty member involved, the Assistant Dean for Student Development or the Director of Student Services may adjust examination schedules for sound academic reasons, such as illness, emergency situations, or other compelling academic reasons.

C. Rescheduling Requests by Students

Students who seek to reschedule an exam—that is, to schedule a make-up exam instead—must consult the Student Development Office and receive written confirmation of any change in an exam date or time.

1. Medical or Mental Health Concern

Students who want to change an exam date due to a health concern must do one of the following:

- **Medical.** Visit a provider at either [Campus Health Services](#) (CHS) for illness, or injury or at [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (CAPS) for mental health concerns, and follow their instructions to be considered for the “Excused Examination List.”
- **Mental Health.** Visit a non-CHS or non-CAPS provider, send documentation of that visit to CHS, and then follow subsequent instructions from CHS or CAPS.

Further information is at <https://caps.unc.edu/services/academic-interventions/final-exam-excuse-request>.

2. Religious Observance, Emergency, or Unforeseen Events

Students who want to change an exam date due to religious observance or to a personal or family emergency must contact the Student Development Office as soon as possible.

3. Requests Due to a Recognized Exam Conflict

An upper-level (2L or 3L) student may ask to reschedule an exam—that is, to schedule a make-up exam instead. The student must submit to the SDO a timely **Reschedule Request** indicating one of the law school’s **Recognized Exam Conflicts**, which are:

- Two exams on the same day.
- One exam that **begins after noon** plus another exam that **begins the following morning**. (Thus a Friday afternoon exam followed by a Monday morning exam does **not** qualify. Nor does an exam that begins Tuesday **before** noon followed by a Wednesday morning exam, even if the Tuesday exam were to end early Tuesday afternoon. The start times are decisive for all students, regardless of testing accommodations.)
- One exam each day for three consecutive days.
- Four exams within five consecutive days.

For two exams on the same day, or on an afternoon plus the following morning, the exam that may be rescheduled is:

- The later exam (if they are scheduled at different times).
- If the exams begin simultaneously either (1) the longer exam or (2) if the exams have the same length, the exam of the professor whose last name comes later in alphabetical order.

Otherwise, the exam that may be rescheduled is either the second of three exams on three consecutive days or the third of four exams within five consecutive days.

The student must complete the rescheduled exam during the next available regular make-up period that does not create another conflict under these rescheduling rules. If necessary, the SDO may designate an alternative.

D. Reminder: Makeup Exams & Student Code of Conduct

The Student Code of Conduct is in effect for the entire exam period. Students thus may not ask for or give one another any information about administered exams, even statements such as whether an exam seemed “easy” or “hard.”

XII. Academic Exclusion & Readmission

A. Automatic Exclusion Due to Insufficient GPA After the Spring Semester

A student who fails to maintain the required grade point average (GPA) for any academic year is automatically excluded from the school at the close of the relevant year's spring semester and cannot graduate. Beginning in August 2025, the cumulative GPA required to continue in law school is 2.600.

- The 2.600 minimum GPA applies only prospectively: a student in the Class of either 2026 or 2027 will avoid academic exclusion and be eligible to graduate so long as their **GPA from courses begun in or after August 2025** remains at least 2.600 at the end of each relevant spring semester.

B. Opportunity to Petition for Readmission After Academic Exclusion

UNC Law permits readmission after exclusion for academic reasons only if the excluded student complies with the Readmission Regulations and Procedures (Appendix E from the Faculty Reference Manual) and affirmatively shows that the student has capacity to complete UNC's J.D. program and be admitted to the bar, which will require that the Dean certify the student for bar admission.

If the readmission committee receives a petition, it will give due consideration to all relevant factors. At the committee's discretion, such factors may include, without limitation:

- The academic and admission test credentials, attrition rate, and bar passage rate of UNC Law's students.
- The degree and type of diligence exhibited by the student while previously enrolled as a law student.
- The existence, while the student was enrolled, of extraordinary circumstances beyond the student's control (serious illness, unusual hardship, or qualitatively similar circumstances) that adversely affected the student's diligence or otherwise contributed to the exclusion.
- The extent of any improvement in grade point average attained by the student from earlier to later semesters.
- The student's understanding of the reasons for the exclusion, the extent to which those reasons have been alleviated, and the student's experiences since exclusion.
- The effectiveness of UNC Law's Academic Excellence Program, and the student's willingness to participate in that program.
- The student's understanding of the bar exam and other criteria for bar admission.

If the readmission committee grants a petition, it may impose any conditions that it deems appropriate to improve the student's chances of success after readmission.

XIII. Honors & Order of the Coif

The law school awards honors designations to students who graduate with high grade point averages. Honors designations are not made until the registrar has received all spring grades, and students who graduate with honors receive a diploma so noted near the end of the summer.

- Highest Honors = any student achieving a 4.0 or higher.
- High Honors = the top 10 percent of the class.
- Honors = the top one-third of the class.

An August or December graduate will be awarded honors, high honors or highest honors if the graduate's GPA was equal to or higher than that of the lowest students who graduated the previous May with honors, high honors, or highest honors.

In addition, the top 10 percent of the graduating class is eligible for election by the faculty into the **Order of the Coif**, the national legal honorary scholastic society. Only students who have completed at least 75

percent of their law studies in graded courses are eligible for consideration. The Order of the Coif defines “graded courses” as those for which academic accomplishment is recorded on the basis of educational measurement involving four or more discriminators. Because UNC accepts transfer credits but not grades, it is unlikely a transfer student can meet the 75 percent rule and qualify for Order of the Coif.

XIV. Transfer of Non-UNC Credits Toward the UNC J.D.

A. Transfer Students Entering UNC; Limit on 2L Ungraded Credits; Journal Participation

UNC admits only a transfer applicant who met the admission requirements for the class that began when the applicant began a J.D. program. UNC School of Law can accept up to 30 transfer credits for coursework completed as a student matriculated in a J.D. program. For credits to transfer:

- The student must have received a grade of “C” or better in the course.
- The course must either be one of, or roughly equivalent to, UNC Law’s typical first-year courses (Civil Procedure, Constitutional Law, Contracts, Criminal Law, Legal Research & Writing, Property, Torts) or law courses for which an upper-level UNC Law student would receive credit.

The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (1) reviews an admitted transfer student’s law credits case by case using the student’s transcript and other relevant information, if any; (2) determines which credits to accept or not accept; and (3) notifies the applicant and UNC Law’s registrar before the applicant enrolls in UNC Law courses.

After enrolling, transfer students are limited to 4 hours of ungraded courses as a 2L, with no limit thereafter.

Journals select and invite new members during the summer, after the Joint Journal Competition (JJC) in May. Transfer student participation in UNC journals is governed by the chart below:

Journal	Eligibility	Transfers are accepted if they meet these requirements:
North Carolina Law Review	Transfers Eligible for staff membership	<i>In first year at UNC:</i> Class standing of top 5% in prior law school, or student would have qualified for leading law journal at previous school. <i>After two semesters at UNC:</i> Accepted through the Joint Journal Competition (JJC) or if two-semester UNC cumulative GPA is higher than the GPA any student in his or her class who received an invitation to staff membership.
First Amendment Law Review	Transfers Eligible	Submit (1) a resume that indicates the student’s class rank, (2) a writing sample, and (b) a few paragraphs describing why FAILR is the journal they prefer to join.
N.C. Banking Institute Journal	Transfers Eligible, including for Board membership	Either (1) top 15% of class in previous law school, (2) submit acceptable piece written while a law student with legal citations for review, (3) write a recent development using the present year’s JJC competition packet, or (4) submit written statement why want to be staff member.
N.C. Journal of International Law	Transfers Eligible	No formal procedures
N.C. Journal of Law and Technology	Transfers Eligible	Either qualify for grade-on (top 15%) of class in previous law school, or (2) submit unedited writing piece for review, or (3) complete journal preference form.

A student who seeks to resign as a journal staff member must submit a resignation request in writing to the journal's Editor in Chief and faculty advisor and also to the Assistant Dean for Student Development. If the resignation is approved, the student must send a letter via email to all employers and the Assistant Dean indicating the resignation. The Assistant Dean works with the Career Development Office to ensure that the student updates his or her resume and all CDO accounts. A failure to remove journal information from a resume may violate UNC's Student Code of Conduct. The student's updated documents and the Assistant Dean's response letter, if any, will be placed in the student's file.

B. UNC J.D. Students: Summer Study or Visits at Other Law Schools, Including Study Abroad

1. Advance Permission

Students must seek advance permission from the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs before enrolling in courses whose credits the student intends to transfer toward the J.D. Permission may be granted only to a student in good standing at UNC. In deciding whether to approve particular courses for transfer credit, the Associate Dean will principally approve courses that are similar in content and academic rigor to those offered at UNC Law for upper-level students. Students may be required to document the course's academic value by providing course syllabi and a list of required readings and assignments.

2. PR, RWE, & Experiential Credits

Students must complete Professional Responsibility, all their Rigorous Writing Experience credits, and an Experiential course at UNC Law School. In extraordinary circumstances, however, students may seek advance permission from the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs to complete such courses elsewhere.

3. Minimum Grade

Generally, credits can transfer to UNC only if the student receives a grade of C or better in the course. The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs may make exceptions, for example for courses completed outside the USA.

4. Summer Courses Offered by an ABA-Accredited Law School

A student may earn no more than 12 transfer credits per summer for summer courses at an ABA-accredited United States law school. The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs must approve the institution before the student matriculates, except for North Carolina Central Law School because it is pre-approved.

5. Semester or Year-Long Visit an ABA-Accredited Law School in the USA

Permission to visit at another ABA-approved United States Law School may be granted for reasons of personal or family hardship and medical conditions. Examples of such situations include a student's spouse being indefinitely transferred to another state and a student needing medical treatment away from Chapel Hill. By contrast, seeking employment opportunities in another location is not a sufficient justification.

The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs must approve in advance (1) the visit, (2) the law school to be visited, and (3) the courses to be taken at that law school. From the visit, students may earn no more than 16 transfer credits in any semester, and no more than 30 transfer credits total toward the J.D. Before the visit, the student must have completed all UNC-required courses, including Professional Responsibility, and all required Experiential and RWE credits.

Requests to visit must be made in writing as early as possible, and absent exceptional circumstances no later than March 31 for a proposed fall visit or October 31 for a spring visit.

A student approved to visit at another law school must be accepted at the approved school. Visiting students are not eligible for scholarships and grants from Carolina Law during semesters in which they visit at another school. Because of the time period required for receiving final grades from the visiting institution, graduating students may participate in UNC's Commencement but may not receive an actual diploma at the same time as other students.

6. Study Abroad: Global Opportunities

A student may earn no more than 12 credits per summer or 16 credits per semester from either one of [UNC's established foreign exchange programs](#) or an ABA-approved law school's study-abroad program. The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs must approve in advance any credits the student proposes to transfer toward the J.D. The Associate Dean reviews the request principally concerned that the student gain the critical competencies needed to pass the bar examination and to engage in law practice. The Associate Dean also considers the proposed courses' potential benefits for the student's academic development, the student's cumulative GPA, and the nature of elective courses the student has completed.

For credits to be counted toward UNC's J.D. but to be earned in a different ABA-approved law school's study-abroad program, the educational program's academic content must meet the same standards, including evaluation of student performance, as the law school's on-campus program.

XV. Leaving UNC: Leave of Absence, Voluntary Withdrawal, Transfer Away

A. Leave of Absence

A student who seeks a leave of absence from the law school must receive advance approval from (1) the Assistant Dean for Student Development and (2) the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. The law school grants a leave of absence only for one or two semesters, except possibly in extraordinary circumstances. The student granted a leave must return no later than the approved return time and give the registrar and Assistant Dean for Student Development advance notice of the student's actual return. Students need no readmission application unless they do not comply with their notice or return requirements.

B. Voluntary Withdrawal from the UNC School of Law; Refund Limit

A student who seeks to withdraw must submit to the Assistant Dean for Student Development a written request for voluntary withdrawal. That dean will investigate the circumstances and consult the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, who will rule on the request. Voluntary withdrawal requires the student's cooperation, including clearing any holds that UNC may have placed on the student's account. The student's request, the Associate Dean's approval, and any student action that UNC may require are all prerequisites to honorable dismissal from or readmission to UNC.

A student may appeal to the School of Law Dean following an adverse decision on a request for voluntary withdrawal. The Dean's decision is final.

Students who withdraw voluntarily from the law school before successfully completing a minimum of one full-time semester may not seek readmission but must instead submit a new application for admission.

The University permits a student who withdraws within the first nine weeks of a term to receive a pro rata refund of tuition paid.

1. Transferring Away from UNC School of Law

A student who seeks to transfer to another law school must first consult the Assistant Dean for Student Development regarding the transfer request. Only thereafter will the Registrar process a transfer application. UNC will prepare no more than 2 transfer applications due to the work required to process them. The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs may grant exceptions for good cause, but each additional application would require at least 60 days advance notice.

XVI. Student Complaints

The ABA Standards related to student complaints may be found at [the ABA's website](#). Any student at the law school who wishes to bring a formal complaint to the law school administration regarding a significant problem that directly implicates the school's program of legal education and its compliance with the ABA Standards should do the following:

1. Submit the complaint in writing to the Assistant Dean for Student Development. The writing may consist of e-mail, U.S. mail, or fax. If it is submitted by e-mail, which is the preferred form, the subject line is to read "Formal Student Complaint" to ensure appropriate attention.
2. The complaint should describe in detail the behavior, program, process, or other matter that is the subject of the complaint and should explain how the matter implicates the law school's program of legal education and its compliance with a specific, identified ABA Standard(s).
3. The complaint must provide the name, official law school e-mail address, and street address of the complaining student, to aid further communication about the complaint.
4. Within three weeks after a complaint is received by the Assistant Dean for Student Development the student will be advised of the resolution of the complaint and further investigation or action, any, by the law school regarding the matter.
5. The complaining student may appeal the law school's decision or action to the Law Dean within ten days of being advised of the law school's response to the complaint. The Dean's decision shall be final.
6. A copy of the complaint and a summary of the process and resolution of the complaint shall be kept in the office of the Dean for a period of eight years after the date of final resolution of the complaint.