Academic Handbook Credit-Hour Requirements for Students Matriculating Prior to Fall 2026

Section III - Degree Requirements

Upon favorable recommendation of the faculty, the degree of Juris Doctor (J.D.) will be conferred upon those students who have successfully completed the academic program of the Law School. Successful completion of the academic program requires the following:

A. Credit for All First-Year Courses.

The first-year curriculum is designed to accomplish two objectives. First, it introduces students to the various fundamental areas of the law: civil procedure, constitutional law, contracts, criminal law, property, torts, and legal research and writing. These courses provide the foundation on which most second- and third-year work is based. Second, the coursework as a whole is designed to teach students legal analysis, synthesis, and argumentation

Fall Semester		**Spring Semester**	
Intro to the Legal Profession	1 hr.	Civil Procedure	4 hrs.
Contracts	4 hrs.	Constitutional Law	4 hrs
Criminal Law	3 hrs.	Property	4 hrs.
Torts	4 hrs.	Legal Research, Analysis and Writing II	3 hrs.
Legal Research, Analysis and Writing I	3 hrs.		
	15 hrs.		15 hrs.

The first-year program is a lockstep program; no first-year student may drop a first-year course or alter their assigned schedule. Students must complete all courses in the first-year curriculum and earn a grade of D or better. A first-year student who receives a grade of D- or F in a first-year course receives no credit and is required to repeat the course. The Associate Dean, however, may waive for good cause the requirement that the student retake the course.

Academic Handbook Credit-Hour Requirements for Students Matriculating Prior to Fall 2026

B. Upper-Level Credit Hour Requirements.

During the second and third years, students must take no less than 12 and no more than 16 hours each semester. During summer school, students may take no more than six hours.

After the drop/add period, students must contact the Office of the Law Registrar and Academic Services prior to adjusting their schedules, including withdrawing from or adding a course. Students who wish to take additional hours must file a petition with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (see § VI.J). A form for this petition is available in the Office of the Law Registrar and Academic Services, room 128.

C. Upper-Level Course Requirements.

The goals for the second-and third-year curriculum, as defined by the Curriculum Committee, are as follows:

- to expand the student's substantive knowledge of basic subject matters.
- to expand the student's range of legal skills.
- to expand the student's perspective on law and the legal process.
- to permit the intensive pursuit of specialized subjects by the student.
- to permit faculty to teach courses related to areas of individual research, interest, and expertise, and
- to allow for experimentation in subject matter and pedagogical methods.

NOTE: The Office of the Law Registrar will hold a meeting for students during the fall and spring of each year, prior to registration for the following year, to guide students in selecting courses and to answer any questions they may have. Students have the responsibility of complying with all requirements for their degrees. The Office of the Law Registrar and Academic Services does not maintain a "running audit" of any student's progress through Law School. The Office of the Law Registrar and Academic Services will catch deficiencies only when checking the records of would-be graduating law students.

While most upper-level courses are electives, the following courses are required for graduation:

1. **Professional Responsibility.**

Students must earn a grade of C or better in Professional Responsibility (two credit hours) or Problems in Professional Responsibility (three credit hours). A student who receives a

grade of C- or below is required to repeat the course, but the original grade will remain on the transcript and included in the GPA calculation.

2. **Experiential Courses.**

Students must earn a grade of Satisfactory if the course is graded on a pass/fail basis or a grade of C or better if the course is graded on a letter basis, **in at least six credit hours of courses designated as experiential courses**. Courses taken to fulfill the experiential requirement cannot fulfill the graduation writing requirement.

Students must obtain the prior written approval of the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs to satisfy the experiential course requirement by taking courses outside the Law School.

3. **A Perspective Course.**

All students must earn a grade of D or better in at least one perspective course. Students must understand the law in its broader social context, have some sense of its history, and appreciate the underpinnings of its operation. Perspective courses are designated in the registration materials and vary each academic year.

Courses taken outside the Law School may not be used to satisfy the Law School perspective course requirement except where:

a. There is good cause for not taking a perspective course at the Law School; and

b. The course involved is equivalent in educational value to a perspective course offered in the Law School.

Students must obtain the prior written approval of the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs to satisfy the perspective course requirement by taking a course outside the Law School.

A perspective course taken by a student prior to enrollment in the Juris Doctor program will not satisfy the perspective course requirement.

4. **Writing Requirement.**

To satisfy the writing requirement, a student must complete a substantial legal research project that meets the requirements below. A course taken to fulfill the writing requirement cannot fulfill the graduation experiential course requirement.

To satisfy the writing requirement a paper must:

a. Be in the form of a law review article, brief, or legal memorandum.

b. Be prepared under the supervision of a member of the faculty. The supervision requirement may be satisfied by:

   i. taking a course identified in the registration materials as a "writing seminar"; or

   ii. through independent research supervised by a faculty member. No faculty member shall supervise more than five papers in any semester.

c. Be submitted in final written form of approximately 30 to 50 pages in length, after the submission of an outline and draft that has been critiqued by the course instructor.

d. When graded, receive a grade of at least a C. If written under a pass/fail election, receive a grade of S. Note that under a pass/fail election, a grade of C or higher is recorded as an S, and a grade lower than a C is recorded as a U.

A brief submitted in a moot court competition can satisfy the writing requirement if: (1) an outline and a draft of the brief have been critiqued and approved by a supervising faculty member; and (2) the student contributes at least 30 pages to the brief. If the rules of the competition in which the brief was submitted preclude faculty involvement, the student must revise the brief to the satisfaction of the supervising faculty member after it has been submitted to the competition. This revision can include an outline and a preliminary draft. If a student's contribution to the brief is less than 30 pages, the student may satisfy the page requirement by submitting a supplemental memorandum.

A note submitted to a law journal by a member of that journal can satisfy the writing requirement if it meets the requirements of § III.C.4.a. and the student does not receive degree credit for the note under §IV.E.1.

a. The Curriculum Committee is authorized to approve on a case-by-case basis other Faculty proposals for satisfying the writing requirement, such as a series of shorter memoranda, problems, or drafting exercises. The Committee will approve only those proposals involving as much legal writing, in any appropriate form, as does the traditional 30-50- page paper.

<u>Deadline for completion of the writing requirement.</u>

- **May graduates must submit their papers in final form by January 15, unless the paper is written in a course that a student takes in their final semester.**

Academic Handbook Credit-Hour Requirements for Students Matriculating Prior to Fall 2026

- **December graduates must submit their papers in final form by September 1, unless the paper is written in a course that a student takes in their final semester.**
- **Graduates may not satisfy the writing requirement with Supervised Legal Research in their last semester.**

D. Passing Grade in 90 Semester Hours of Course Work; Failure to Meet Graduation Requirement.

Students must satisfy all graduation requirements and successfully complete at least 90 semester hours of course credit, 64 credit hours of which must be earned through in-class instruction.

Students failing to meet these requirements are required to repeat the courses, but the initial grade will remain on the student's record. Law school courses taken by a student prior to enrollment in the Juris Doctor program will not be included in determining whether a student has met the 90-credit-hour requirement. For good cause, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs may waive the requirement to retake a required upper-level course.

E. Cumulative Grade Point Average of Not Less than 2.200.

* Please note the grade range and normalization policies applicable to incoming 1Ls (effective fall 2024) have changed. For incoming first-year students, the cumulative grade point average standard is below. For students who enrolled prior to fall 2024, the applicable can be found in an earlier version of the handbook, available here.

Students must have a cumulative grade point average of 2.200 or better for all work taken for Law School credit.

F. Satisfaction of the Residency Requirement.

Students must complete the equivalent of six full semesters of law school residency, four of which must have been completed while matriculating as a student at the University of South Carolina School of Law. A student obtains residency credit for a semester if the following requirements are met:

a. The student maintains registration for a minimum of 12 law hours; and

b. The student receives a grade of Satisfactory or a letter grade of D- or better in at least ten credit hours of coursework.

If the student does not comply with either of these requirements, residency credit will not be granted for the semester in which the noncompliance occurs.

Merely complying with the minimum residency requirement of 12 credit hours per semester for each semester in the second and third years will not enable a student to meet the 90-credit hour requirement for graduation.

By attending summer school students may reduce their course loads during either the fall or spring semesters but are still subject to the 12 law hours per semester rule.

To accelerate graduation by one semester (December graduation), a student must enroll in two summer sessions and satisfactorily complete not less than 12 hours in the two sessions, with a minimum of six hours required during each summer session. To satisfy this requirement, students taking Maymester courses must also take at least one course each summer that meets during the regular seven-week summer session.

G. Completion of Course Study for Degree Requirement.

Students must complete all degree requirements no later than 84 months (seven years) after first beginning as a law school student either at the University of South Carolina School of Law or at a law school from which transfer credits have been accepted.