University of Minnesota Law School Exam Process
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

This FAQ form includes information on the following questions:

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WHEN IS MY EXAM?

- Standard (*non*-take-home) exams will be administered in accordance with the Exam Schedule. The most up-to-date version of this schedule can be viewed at: http://www.law.umn.edu/current/courseschedules.html

- Be sure to note whether your exam is scheduled for the MORNING (8:30 AM) or AFTERNOON (1:00 PM). If you have sought an exam variance from the stated schedule, follow the specific instructions in your variance letter.

- Plan ahead to ensure safe and timely arrival at the Law School before a scheduled exam. In bad weather, this may require leaving as much as an hour earlier. Late arrival due to non-emergencies or foreseeable delays will result in a reduction in exam time or inability to sit for an exam altogether. Students arriving late must check in with an exam proctor on the Sub Plaza or at the Information Desk, or if significantly late, with the Assistant Dean of Students Office. If you have an exam-day emergency, call 612-625-2456 or 612-625-1845 to leave a message for the Dean of Students office, AND follow up with a written explanation to lawdos@umn.edu.

- Generally:

    - All standard MORNING exams start at 8:30 AM in classrooms on the Law School Sub Plaza. Students must arrive at the Sub Plaza with all allowed materials **no later than 8:10 AM**. Students who do not arrive in time to set up their materials in a classroom delay the start for the rest of the class. Late arriving students may also lose exam time.

    - All standard AFTERNOON exams start at 1:00 PM in classrooms on the Law School Sub Plaza. Students must arrive with allowed materials **no later than 12:40 PM**.

- TAKE-HOME exam materials should be picked up from the Information Desk [or other location as designated by the Registrar or exam instructions] at the appointed time, based on the exam instructions and the exam schedule:

    - Check the exam schedule to determine if your take home exam is administered **only on a specific day** (noted on the exam schedule in a given time slot) **OR** on **any day** of the exam period (listed at the bottom of the exam schedule). Some instructors limit the days available for completing take-home exams, so be sure to consult exam instructions.

    - For 8-hour take-home exams, pick up your exam between 8:00 and 8:30 AM. If you arrive after 8:30 AM, you will still be required to turn in your exam materials by 4:30 PM, and thereby have fewer than eight hours to complete your exam answer.

    - For longer take-home exams, make sure you pick up your materials so that the deadline does not fall outside normal business hours (8:00 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday) OR on a weekend. For example, do not pick up a 24-hour take-home exam on a Friday because staff will not be available at the Information Desk on Saturday to accept your materials. The latest an exam can be turned in to the Information Desk is **4:30 PM on the last day of the exam period**.

HOW MUCH TIME WILL I HAVE FOR MY EXAM?

- Instructors for each course determine the total exam time, which does not necessarily track with the number of credits in the course. Standard exams are often three- or four-hours. Many take-home exams are 8- or 24-hours. The instructor-determined exam length will be included on the exam instructions pages that will be emailed to all enrolled students in advance of the exam. Proctors administering standard exams are instructed to ensure all students stop typing when time has been called, and to refer for an Honor Code investigation any students who continue working after time has been called.

- If a student applies for and receives an exam variance that adjusts the total time allowed to complete an exam, the time adjustment will be reflected in the written exam variance response which will be sent to the qualified student via email. A cover sheet with the student's exam materials will include the adjusted length, if applicable, and the time by which all exam materials must be submitted.

- For all take-home exams and exams administered under a variance, **students are responsible for tracking their time and ensuring that all exam materials are timely submitted**. The final time when all materials are due will be clearly written on the exam cover sheet, and students are expected to strictly adhere to that deadline. Failure to submit exam materials in accordance with pre-established timelines will result in a referral for an Honor Code investigation.

WHERE WILL MY EXAM TAKE PLACE?

- All STANDARD (non-take home, non-variance) exams are administered in classrooms in the Law School Sub Plaza. Exam rooms for a particular class are posted at the Information Desk and on signs in the Sub Plaza on the day of the exam. You do not need to determine the assigned room until you

arrive for the exam. In most cases, there will be more than one available room assigned for a given exam so that students have room to spread; when you take a seat in a classroom, ensure there is one empty seat between you and other students.

- TAKE-HOME exams are picked up from and returned to the 2nd Floor Information Desk, unless you receive specific instructions regarding an alternate location. Take-home exams may be typed anywhere, but you must allow enough time for travel and printing so that all your exam materials can be returned by the deadline. Whenever possible, the Law School will make classroom space on the Sub Plaza available for students who are working on take-home exams, so that you need not travel far from the Law School.

- VARIANCE exams are administered as described in your variance letter, and **the date, time, or location of your exam may change depending on the variance you have been granted**. You may be assigned to a specific classroom, seminar room, or a library study room. Consult your letter for details on when and where to pick up your exam materials. Contact the Dean of Students Office at lawdos@umn.edu, NOT your instructors, with questions about variance exam procedures.

HOW DOES "BLIND GRADING" WORK?

- To preserve anonymity in the exam grading process, students are not identified on their exam answers. Instead, students receive a unique number card for each exam, and the three-digit number from this card is used to track all exam materials.

- The number card is the ONLY place a student's name should be written. For all other exam materials, including the exam questions, exam answer, scantron sheet, and exam supplement, if applicable, the student must clearly indicate the exam number from his or her card.

- When exams are processed, the Registrar must sort all materials to ensure receipt of a number card, exam answer, exam questions, scantron form, and any other applicable materials for EACH student. Failure to write the correct exam number on all of these materials will cause delays in processing, or in correctly identifying and scoring your exam answers.

- Failure to turn in exam questions at the end of the exam may be considered an Honor Code violation. Exam questions may not be shared with others, whether in hard copy, electronically, orally, or through other forms of communication.

- Including personally-identifiable information on an exam answer is also subject to referral for an Honor Code investigation.

WHERE CAN I FIND WRITTEN EXAM INSTRUCTIONS IN ADVANCE OF THE EXAM?

- Instructions for each exam are emailed to all students enrolled in the class shortly after they are received by the Registrar. Consult the written instructions to determine the exam format, length, and what specific materials you are allowed to bring with you to the exam.

- If the written exam instructions differ from oral instructions you received from an instructor, the exam will be administered in accordance with the WRITTEN exam instructions. If you have questions or concerns, please contact your professor BEFORE the exam is administered. Any changes or clarifications to the written instructions will be disseminated to the entire class.

- Students with variance exams are bound to the same general requirements as other students, though the date, time, length, or other logistical detail may be altered as appropriate. Students with variances should carefully review both the standard exam instructions and their written variance message and refer questions/clarifications to the Dean of Students Office (lawdos@umn.edu).

WHAT EXAM MATERIALS WILL I RECEIVE FROM THE LAW SCHOOL WHEN I ARRIVE FOR MY EXAM?

- For EACH exam, you will receive:
  - A number card (this is the ONLY PLACE you will write your name)
  - Exam Questions (place the number from your number card on the upper corner of your exam questions. We MUST account for each set of questions from every single student, and without your number, we cannot ensure you have submitted your questions.)
  - Scratch paper (Students may not write on scratch paper before the exam start is announced, and all scratch paper must be turned in at the conclusion of the exam with your other exam materials.)

- You may also receive:
  - Supplemental exam readings
  - A scantron form for multiple-choice exams
  - Blue exam answer sheets, if you are handwriting a standard exam

CRITICAL NOTE: ALL MATERIALS YOU RECEIVE AT THE START OF THE EXAM MUST BE TURNED IN AT THE END OF THE EXAM. YOU WILL BE CONTACTED BY THE DEAN OF STUDENTS IF ALL MATERIALS ARE NOT SUBMITTED. KEEPING YOUR EXAM QUESTIONS AFTER THE END OF THE EXAM MAY BE CONSIDERED AN HONOR CODE VIOLATION.

WHAT SHOULD I BRING WITH ME TO THE EXAM ROOM?

- **Course materials SPECIFICALLY permitted by the exam instructions.** The **ONLY** materials you may bring to an exam (or consult during take-home exams) are those specifically permitted by the written exam instructions. This is why it is important to review instructions before the exam, in case you have questions about what is permitted. Questions about permissible materials may go to the instructor, and a clarification to written instructions will be sent to the entire class.

- **Printed, hard-copy class notes, outline, or other permissible materials you would normally access electronically on your laptop**. For standard (non-take-home) exams, you will not be able to access these on your laptop while an ExamSoft/SofTest exam is in progress.

- **Laptop AND power cord**. The Law School does not have spare power cords, and you will handwrite the remainder of your exam if your laptop loses power before the exam is finished.

- **Pens and pencil (with eraser)** to take notes during your exam and to complete any multiple choice answer sheets.

- **Earplugs (foam or wax only).** Headphones or other attachments to electronic devices are NOT permitted, even if they are not connected.

WHAT SHOULD I NOT BRING WITH ME TO THE EXAM ROOM?

- **All electronic devices other than a laptop computer are barred from the exam room**, including: cell phones, smart phones, personal data assistants, tablets, ipods/MP3 players, music players, headphones of any kind, programmable calculators, etc. The only exceptions are:
    - a simple calculator IF permitted by the written exam instructions.
    - a separate mouse tool, so long as its only capability is screen navigation.
- Do NOT bring any materials, books, publications, etc. that are not specifically permitted by the written exam instructions.
- Do NOT bring food or drink that may be disruptive to other students taking the exam.
- DO NOT bring any item, including a backpack, computer bag, or other item into any classroom for a CLOSED BOOK exam.

DO I HAVE AN OPTION TO TYPE OR HANDWRITE MY EXAMS?

- **JD students** are required to type standard exams using a laptop computer equipped with the ExamSoft SofTest program. LL.M, Humphrey, Exchange, and non-degree students are encouraged but not required to type exams. Recommended laptop specifications are posted at: https://sites.google.com/a/umn.edu/law-tech/students/rex.
    - The following laptop limits and prohibitions apply:
        - Any laptop with **dual-boot technology may not be used** during administration of a standard exam due to the possibility of accessing prohibited materials. If a student's laptop is found to have dual-boot capability, it may result in an Honor Code investigation.
        - The definition of "laptop" does not extend to tablets, smart phones, or devices running the Windows Mobile, iOS, or Android operating systems.
        - Students are cautioned against adopting new operating system updates during the semester until confirming that the new OS will support the ExamSoft SofTest program that is used to administer exams.
- **ExamSoft's SofTest is the software product used for secure administration of standard (NOT take-home) exams**. When installed and used correctly, SofTest enables students to type their exam answers without accessing any other content from their laptops, and then to securely submit exam answers wirelessly at the conclusion of each test. SofTest includes basic word processing functions, including word count and spell check, and saves exam answers every 60 seconds. SofTest also provides specific records to the Registrar's Office about when the exam file is opened and closed, to ensure compliance with the Law School's Honor Code.
- To comply with the laptop requirement for standard exams, students are responsible for:
    - **Reading and following all instructions and deadlines** for the SofTest program and exam file download process, which are disseminated to students' University email accounts. *Students who fail to properly download ExamSoft materials and exam files prior to posted*

download deadlines will handwrite their exams. Instructions for the download and installation process can be reviewed at: https://sites.google.com/a/umn.edu/law-tech/KB/es/install.

- New students should be sure to attend calendared trainings on how to download and use SofTest. All students in need of SofTest download assistance should contact the **Law Technology** team at law-tech@umn.edu, or visit their office in Room 260 of the Law Library BEFORE the download period concludes.

- During the exam period, Law Technology staff are available to assist students with SofTest issues at tables in the Sub Plaza near Room 25.

- **Maintaining a laptop in good working order**. General laptop care and maintenance tips can be reviewed at: https://sites.google.com/a/umn.edu/law-tech/KB/do/maint. Students with Law School Laptop Program laptops may obtain warranty assistance from Law Technology Staff in Room 260. Students with non-program laptops can seek assistance at their own cost via that University's TechStop site or campus locations, or another vendor.

- **In rare cases, if a student fails to properly download the SofTest program and exam files OR experiences a technical problem with SofTest functioning just before or during a standard exam that cannot be remedied by Law Technology staff after 15 minutes, students will be assigned to handwrite standard exams using blue exam answer sheets**. Handwriting students will receive the same amount of time as prescribed by the course instructor or variance. Students handwriting exams SHOULD NOT NOTIFY their professor of that fact, given the very small number of hand-written exams and the risk of self-identification.

- **Take-home exams are NOT administered via the SofTest program and should be typed** using a standard word processing program. Students are responsible for printing take-home exams either at the Law School or off-site. All take-home exam materials must be turned in together within the allotted time limit. Students should plan ahead for travel and printing. Students who encounter printing problems should bring their laptop and all exam materials to the Information Desk BEFORE the exam deadline, where they will receive further instructions from Student Services staff.

WHAT TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR EXAMS?

- Law Technology staff post and regularly update laptop and technology-related instructions and trouble-shooting resources at: https://sites.google.com/a/umn.edu/law-tech/home.

- Law Technology staff provide trainings for new students (1L, transfer, LL.M, Exchange, and Humphrey) as part of Orientation and in advance of exams to assist with the download process for the SofTest program and required exam files. Download instructions and deadlines for the SofTest program and exam files are sent to all students' University email addresses, and are posted at: https://sites.google.com/a/umn.edu/law-tech/KB/do/es.

- Any student with SofTest download questions or problems should seek help from Law Technology staff BEFORE posted SofTest download deadlines. Law Technology staff can be reached at:

  Room 260
  law-tech@umn.edu

(612) 625-0740

- **Students who do not follow the SofTest program and exam file download instructions and timelines will be required to handwrite their exams.**

- During the final exam period, students may seek limited assistance with SofTest functioning from Law Technology Staff who are stationed on the Sub Plaza near Room 25. Students with Law School Laptop Program computers may receive support covered under their current warranty.

- **Students with non-Laptop Program laptops who seek hands-on assistance with a SofTest problem during a pending standard exam will be required to review and sign the waiver below:**

    - *By signing below, I grant explicit permission to allow Law Technology staff to work on my laptop in order to restore access to my exam answer file.*
    - *I understand and agree that I will not hold Law Technology, Student Services, the Law School, or the University of Minnesota liable for any damage to my device or data lost in their efforts to recover my exam file or troubleshoot my exam program.*
    - *I understand and agree that Law Technology's efforts will be limited to basic troubleshooting of my exam software and/or searching for and recovering my exam file.*
    - *I understand and agree that, if they are able to solve my problem within five (5) minutes of presenting my computer at the Technology desk in the Sub Plaza, I will not receive additional time to complete my exam.*
    - *I understand and agree that, if they are unable to solve my problem within fifteen (15) minutes of presenting my computer at the Technology desk in the SubPlaza, I will handwrite the remainder of my exam, whether or not they are able to recover and print out earlier portions of my exam file.*
    - *I understand and agree that I will not receive any additional time for efforts spent trying to troubleshoot the problem on my own before presenting my computer to the Law Technology desk in the Sub Plaza.*

- Students who agree to hands-on assistance, or who have Laptop Program computers under warranty, will receive the following support if a problem arises during a pending standard exam:

    - <u>Attempts to establish or restore access to a pending exam file</u>.
        - If access is restored within five minutes of a student leaving the exam room, the student will return to the exam room to complete the test in the time allotted to the rest of the class.
        - If access is not restored within five minutes, the student's time will be stopped and he or she will be instructed to retrieve all belongings from the exam room. Law Technology Staff will work for up to an additional 15 minutes to restore access to the student's pending exam file.
            - If access is restored, the student will be moved to a separate exam space and will receive the time remaining at initial departure from the exam room to continue typing in the restored SofTest file.
            - If access is not restored, the student will be moved to a separate exam space and will receive the time remaining at initial departure from the exam room to complete the exam by handwriting on blue exam answer sheets.

- Attempts to access and retrieve any portion of the exam already completed in SofTest at the time of the problem. If Law Technology staff successfully access and print the exam file after the student has started hand-writing, the typed exam answer will be provided to the student if the exam is still in progress, or to the Registrar to be included with the student's blue exam answer sheets.

WHAT IF I HAVE A "TAKE-HOME" EXAM?

- Unless you receive specific instructions to the contrary, all materials for take-home exams are picked up from the 2nd Floor Information Desk. This is where you will also return all your exam materials within the time allotted.

- ExamSoft is NOT used for take-home exams; however, you should plan to type your answer on a computer using a standard word processing program. Your answer should be printed and brought to the Information Desk by the deadline. Plan ahead to ensure you have enough time for travel and printing. If you experience a printing problem, take your laptop and all exam materials to the Information Desk before the deadline, where you will receive further instructions.

- Take-home exams are just like standard exams in that the Honor Code applies at all times. Students SHOULD NOT discuss any part of the exam with any other person or student either while the exam is in progress, or afterwards. It may be an Honor Code violation to seek or provide information about the exam before all students in the class have completed it.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT THE HONOR CODE APPLIES TO ALL EXAMS?

- The Honor Code binds all students at all times, and can be found on the Law School website under Rules, Policies and Requirements. It is a good idea to read it BEFORE exams.

- Specifically, the Honor Code imposes the following restrictions:

    - You should not talk to any other person about the exam while you are taking it, except that you may seek clarification from the professor (or proctor) regarding a specific question while you are taking the exam. The answer to your question will be provided to the entire class;

    - You may not exceed the time allotted for completing your exam. Students who continue typing/writing after time has been called for a given exam, or who turn in a take-home or variance exam after the deadline, will be referred for an Honor Code investigation;

    - You may not include your name on your exam answer or other information that would indicate your identity to the instructor reading the exam;

    - Your work must be your own and not be copied from any other materials or other students' work;

    - You must not consult any materials that are not specifically permitted by the written exam instructions, including online or in-person resources;

- You must not retain any exam materials, including the exam question, after the end of the exam. You are also prohibited from copying any exam materials to retain for yourself or to distribute to other people;

- You must not disseminate, orally or in writing, ANY information about the content of the exam after you have taken it, to ensure that exam information is not purposefully or inadvertently provided to students taking make-up exams. The best policy is to avoid discussing an exam with other students, even if you have already completed it; if the other student has not yet taken the exam and you reveal information about it, you will have given this student an unfair advantage, in violation of the Honor Code;

- You MUST report to Professor Nancy Cook any Honor Code violation that you witness by another student;

- You may NOT take any other action that would give you an unfair advantage over other students taking the exam.

WHO SHOULD I TALK TO IF I HAVE AN EMERGENCY THAT INTERFERES WITH MY ATTENDANCE AT AN EXAM?

- Contact the Dean of Students office by email (lawdos@umn.edu) or phone (612-625-2456) to explain your circumstances. If you need to reach the Dean of Students office during business hours, call the Information Desk at 612-625-1845 and ask for assistance.

- DO NOT contact your professor about any variations from the normal exam schedule. This is to protect the blind grading protocol.

WHAT IF MY EXAM APPEARS TO INCLUDE A MISTAKE, OR IF I NEED CLARIFICATION FROM AN INSTRUCTOR?

- If you are taking a standard or variance exam in the Law School Sub Plaza, please contact a proctor. There will be a proctor outside of Room 25 throughout the exam period.

- If you are working on a take-home exam, you may, unless specifically barred from doing so by the exam instructions, email your professor directly for a clarification or question. Otherwise, you can contact a Student Services staff person at the Law School Information Desk in person, or by phone during business hours at 612-625-1845.

- If you are taking a variance exam, please contact the Information Desk staff for assistance with an exam-related question.

WHAT IF I NEED AN EXAM VARIANCE?

- Pursuant to Academic Rule 11.2.4, a request for variance from the published exam date, time, length, or other exam details is granted rarely, and only in limited circumstances, including;
    - Exam start times that are LESS than 24 hours apart;
    - Non-native English proficiency and a documented need for additional time;
    - A documented disability as verified by Disability Services; OR
    - Emergency or other extenuating circumstance beyond the student's control.

- Variance instructions are disseminated to students via University of Minnesota email addresses in November for Fall exams and in April for Spring exams. Students seeking variances must ensure variance applications are complete by the deadline.

- **Rescheduling requests** are granted only if two exams start LESS than 24 hours apart. Multiple exams with at least 24 hours between start times are not grounds for a variance. If a variance is granted for an exam conflict, the rescheduled exam will move to the next available exam period, even if in the same day. In no circumstances will an exam be rescheduled to a date prior to the posted exam date.

- **Language variances** are provided only for non-native English speakers without substantial experience living, working, or learning in an English-language setting.

    - JD students who receive a language variance will have additional time reduced over the course of a maximum of three semesters, after which no further accommodation is provided. Students' initial time adjustment will depend on their established language variance need, as reflected in supporting documentation. For example, if eligible for maximum extended time, a JD student may follow the variance schedule below:
        - First semester: One third (1/3) additional time
        - Second semester: One quarter (1/4) additional time
        - Third semester: One fifth (1/5) additional time

    - To determine language variance eligibility for JD students, the Law School will review the information reflected in students' academic records and exam variance applications. Factors considered when determining need for a language variance include:
        - Non-native English-language proficiency
        - TOEFL score and/or performance on other standardized tests without accommodation
        - Past educational experience in an English-language setting
        - Past professional experience in an English-language setting
        - Other sustained opportunities to develop English-language skills
        - Representations made in the admissions process regarding English-language proficiency and/or fluency

    - When considering eligibility for a language variance, the Law School will consistently apply the above factors to all members of a given JD class, though slight differences between classes may arise for cohorts that began law studies under a previous policy.

- **Disability Accommodations** are determined by the Law School upon recommendations from the University's Office of Disability Services, which receives, reviews, stores, and makes recommendations based upon medical documentation of one or more disabling conditions and the impacts on a student's abilities. Exam variances for disabilities must not undermine the fundamental requirements of the exam or evaluation exercise. As the Law School is a professional program preparing students to represent client interests, accommodations may be less than what students experienced in other educational settings.

- **For Emergencies or significant illness** near in time to an exam, students should immediately contact the Dean of Students Office at 612-625-2456 (lawdos@umn.edu) with a full explanation of

the nature of the emergency. Students with an illness or medical issue should immediately seek appropriate medical care and must provide the Dean of Students office with documentation from a provider. The student is responsible for updating the Dean of Students Office about his or her condition and for cooperating to find the soonest alternate exam time.

- **Students with approved variances will receive a written notice via email** with full details regarding the variance exam. Where general exam instructions, exam schedule, or these exam guidelines may vary with the written variance exam notice, the notice prevails. Questions about variance exams should be forwarded only to the Dean of Students office, NOT to the student's instructor.