

Minnesota Law Grading F.A.Q.s (Frequently Asked Questions)

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WHEN WILL GRADES BE POSTED?

Grades are visible to students via MyU.umn.edu and appear on transcripts after they have been submitted by faculty, checked for compliance with grading rules, and posted by Student Affairs staff. Grades are usually processed and posted within two business days of receipt from faculty if they comply with grading rules (See Academic Rule 12).

Faculty deadlines for grade submission to the Registrar are based on the final exam date and number of students in a class. Most grades are due within three weeks from the exam date. The last grade deadline for Fall 2019 is January 11, 2020.

Fall semester grades in 1L courses are initially held, and then posted after the last 1L course grading deadline. For Fall 2019, all available 1L course grades will be posted on **Wednesday, January 15, 2020**. If all 1L grades are received earlier, they will be posted earlier. Grades *received from instructors after the release day* will be posted as soon as they are checked for compliance with grading rules. The 1L grade release policy is designed to: give 1Ls a full picture of their performance; reduce anxiety by providing a date certain for grade release; and preserve equity between 1L sections.

Upper division grades are posted on a rolling basis, as soon as they have been received and checked.

HOW DO I VIEW MY FINAL COURSE GRADES?

To access posted course grades, visit www.MyU.umn.edu (x500 login required); click on the Academics tab and then click on "Grades".

WHAT ARE THE LAW SCHOOL'S RULES ON GRADING?

The **Law School Academic Rules** (accessible via the [Support & Standards](#) page) govern grading requirements for all Law School coursework. Grading and performance are addressed by: Rule 3.2 (standards for satisfactorily completing credited exercises); Rule 5.6 (consequences of failure to satisfactorily complete required courses); Rule 6 (academic dismissal, probation, and watch); Rule 11.4 (blind grading); Rule 11.5 (grade changes); and Rule 12 (general rule on grading, transcript notations, GPA calculation, standard distributions, ranks and quartiles).

WHAT IS THE LAW SCHOOL'S GRADING SCALE?

Most Law School classes, including all 1L courses except Legal Research and Writing and Law in Practice, are graded on the A/F grading basis, which equates to a numerical scale ranging from 0 (F) to 4.333 (A+). A/F grades earned at the Law School are used to compute your cumulative grade point average (GPA). Grades earned in courses originating outside Minnesota Law are not included in cumulative GPA calculations (See Rule 12.1 and Rule 12.3). The A/F grading scale breaks down like this:

A+	4.333	
A	4.000	Excellent to outstanding performance
A-	3.667	
B+	3.333	
B	3.000	Substantially better than adequate through
B-	2.667	very good performance
C+	2.333	
C	2.000	Minimally acceptable through adequate and
C-	1.667	somewhat above adequate performance
D	1.000	Inadequate performance
F	0	Failing performance

In certain classes, performance may be measured on a Satisfactory/No Credit (S/N) or Honors/Pass/Low Pass/Fail (H/P/LP/F) scale, as detailed in Rule 12.1.

HOW ARE LAW SCHOOL CLASSES CURVED?

Under Rule 12.4, required grading distributions apply only to JD students enrolled in Law School classes. Non-JD students are evaluated on the same grading basis (A/F), but are not included in the required distribution. Faculty have discretion regarding evaluation standards for non-JD students.

For 1L courses graded on the A/F basis, instructors must assign grades so that the mean (not median) for JD grades in the class falls between a 3.200 and a 3.333 (B+). D and F grades are excluded from mean calculation. In addition, faculty must assign A-range grades (A-, A, A+) to at least 33% of JD students and no more than 39% of JD students in the class. This provision ensures equity between 1L sections.

In upper division courses, grading distribution requirements are reflected in Rule 12.4 (c), (d), and (e). The mandated grading distribution varies in accordance with the number of JD students enrolled in the upper division course:

Upper division course size (JD students only)	Mean grade range (excluding D and F grades)	A-level grades (A-, A, A+)
35 or more students (Rule 12.4(c))	3.200 to 3.400	must be assigned to at least 33% and no more than 39% of JD students
17-34 students (Rule 12.4(d))	no mean requirement	must be assigned to at least 30% and no more than 50% of JD students
16 or fewer students (Rule 12.4(e))	no mean requirement	instructors encouraged (not required) to assign to at least 30% and no more than 50% of JD students

HOW DOES “BLIND GRADING” WORK?

The evaluation process is protected from bias through a “blind grading” protocol applied when an assignment or exam can be submitted anonymously. For midterm and final exams, students are assigned an ID number. The Registrar compiles the exam answers and tracks both ID numbers and student names, but the answers forwarded to instructors for grading include only the student’s exam ID number. Instructors assign grades according to exam ID and return them to the Registrar’s Office, where grades are then correlated back to student names. Certain non-anonymous factors, such as participation points, class presentations, projects, or papers, may be factored into a final grade, but will be combined in a fashion to protect anonymity. Note that some courses cannot be graded using the blind grading protocol (e.g., Law in Practice, Trial Practice, clinics, etc.). (See Rule 11.4)

Exams taken under an approved variance are NOT identified as such to instructors.

CAN INSTRUCTORS GIVE “EXTRA CREDIT” OR FACTOR IN PARTICIPATION OR ATTENDANCE AS PART OF A GRADE?

To maintain fairness, all students must have the same opportunity to participate in any exercise that may influence a final course grade. If made explicit in a course syllabus, an instructor MAY increase or reduce a final grade based on factors such as class attendance, class discussion, participation in activities of a professional nature, or oral examination. Non-exam grade adjustments are factored separately from exam grades so that students’ exam performance does not influence decisions on participation, or vice versa. Non-exam adjustments to final course grades must be considered in determining the grading mean for JD students in the class. (See Rule 1.1(b) and Rule 11.1) “Extra credit” opportunities not offered to all students in a course and/or noticed in a syllabus may not be factored into a final grade.

HOW ARE FINAL GRADES IMPACTED BY LATE EXAM SUBMISSION?

Under the Minnesota Law [Honor Code](#), a late student-submitted midterm or final exam is assigned a .333 ($\frac{1}{3}$) grading penalty. "Student-submitted" exams include variance, take-home, and remote exams. For example, if a student earned a B+ (3.333) on the late-submitted exam, the exam grade would be lowered to a B (3.000). An exam grade reduction may or may not cause a student's final posted course grade to be reduced, depending on the value of the exam as compared to other graded course components.

If the late submission is 5 minutes or less, the grade penalty is the only sanction. If the late submission exceeds 5 minutes, the grade deduction will be made AND the matter will be referred to the Honor Code Investigator for determination of whether additional sanction should be imposed. Matters referred for an Honor Code investigation must be disclosed in future bar applications, even if an investigation concludes that there was no Honor Code violation.

Late submission penalties are addressed through notice to the professor of those exams that should have penalties made. Penalties are referenced by student exam number, not by name, so that blind grading is preserved. The instructor then determines how the penalty will impact the final course grade, considering the student's overall performance in the graded components of the class. Whenever possible, late submission penalties will be factored into a student's final grade before that grade is posted.

WHAT IS THE LOWEST POSSIBLE GRADE TO PASS A CLASS?

For courses required for the JD degree, the lowest possible grade is a C- (1.667) on the A/F grading scale; an LP (Low Pass) on the H/P/LP/F grading scale; or an S on the S/N grading scale. (See Rule 12.1 for definitions of available grading bases.) 1L Spring elective courses are considered "required" for the purpose of this rule. While an LP is considered satisfactory for the 1L Legal Writing and Law in Practice programs, an LP in either course will trigger placement of the student on academic probation in the following semester (See Rule 6.2(b)(3)).

For other elective courses, the minimum passing grade is a D (1.000) on the A/F grading scale; an LP (Low Pass) on the H/P/LP/F grading scale; or an S on the S/N grading scale.

Generally, students may not repeat a course for any reason unless the course was required and the student did not receive a passing grade. (See Rule 3.22 and Rule 5.6)

HOW AND WHEN IS ACADEMIC STANDING DETERMINED?

Academic standing is evaluated at the end of each semester. Students are considered to be in good academic standing unless they are placed on academic probation.

Under Rule 6.2, students will be placed on academic probation if in the previous semester the student:

- has a cumulative GPA below 2.600;
- receives a grade of D or F in a required course;
- receives a grade of LP in First-Year Legal Writing or Law in Practice; OR
- receives two or more grades of D or F in a single semester.

Academic probation is designed to be rehabilitative rather than punitive and to address concerns that may negatively impact a student's academic performance or development of essential practice skills. Students on probation work with the Dean of Students office or other assigned advisor for one or more semesters until the student satisfies probationary requirements, is dismissed, or graduates. (See Rule 6.4)

Students on probation are not eligible to enroll in Law School clinics until they are removed from probation.

WHAT IS "ACADEMIC WATCH"?

Under Rule 6.8, "Academic Watch" is a non-probationary status designed to provide structure and support to improve student performance. Students will be placed on Academic Watch if they have a cumulative GPA between 2.600 and 2.6999 after at least one semester of Law School. Academic Watch requires at least two meetings with an academic advisor through Student Affairs, and compliance with an Academic Success Plan. Students who do not comply with Academic Watch requirements will be placed on academic probation. Students are removed from Academic Watch status when their cumulative GPA reaches 2.700 or higher.

WHAT IS THE AUTOMATIC DISMISSAL THRESHOLD?

A cumulative GPA below 2.000 (C) will result in automatic dismissal from the Law School, with relief only available by petition to the Faculty Consultative Committee. (See Rules 6.6, 14.4) The automatic dismissal threshold is 1.667 for students who matriculated before 2014. 1L students are not subject to dismissal until after completion of the Spring semester.

ARE THERE ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS TO MAINTAIN A LAW SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIP?

The [Law School Scholarship Policy](#) does not suspend student scholarship support based on academic performance. A student on academic probation is eligible to continue receiving scholarship support so long as the student complies with probation requirements under Academic Rule 6. Policies for outside scholarships vary, so check with the funding organization directly on their expectations.

CAN LAW SCHOOL GRADES BE CHANGED AFTER THEY ARE POSTED?

Once posted, grades may only be changed at the *instructor's* request due to mathematical/computational error or a "clear error in the evaluation process" as approved by the Faculty Consultative Committee. (Rule 11.5) Grade changes are EXTREMELY rare. Students are instead encouraged to seek feedback about their performance and to adjust future exam-taking strategies.

WHAT DOES AN "X" MARK MEAN ON MY TRANSCRIPT?

For two-semester courses (Legal Writing, journals, moot courts, and some clinics), an "X" mark for "extension" is entered at the end of the first semester as a placeholder for the ultimate year-end grade. When a final grade is assigned at the end of two semesters, the final grade replaces the X and is applied to both semesters. (Rule 12.2).

WHAT DOES AN "I" MARK MEAN ON MY TRANSCRIPT?

If you did not complete all course requirements by the end of the semester, you may be assigned an "I" or "incomplete" mark. Students are responsible for satisfying all course requirements and meeting any revised deadlines established by a faculty member in writing. If a specific revised deadline has not been established in writing, an instructor may enter a failing grade any time. Failure to timely complete outstanding work may result in a reduced or failing grade. All incompletes automatically convert to failing grades after one year. A failing grade will also be entered for an incomplete if the student is otherwise eligible to graduate and be certified for the bar but has not completed outstanding requirements for a course with an incomplete.

WHAT DOES AN "NR" MARK MEAN ON MY TRANSCRIPT?

"NR" is a neutral marker automatically applied to grades that are "not reported" yet when the University runs grade audits mandated by federal financial aid guidelines each semester. The "NR" grades are replaced with a final grade once submitted by the instructor and posted by the Registrar.

HOW IS MY GPA CALCULATED?

Law School GPA is determined at the end of each semester based ONLY on University of Minnesota Law School classes (see Rule 12.1(b)(1) and Rule 12.3). Only A/F grades and failing grades in H/P/LP/F courses are included. (Rule 12.3) Classes cross-listed in Law and another department are calculated into the Law GPA only if the course is taken under the Law School registration number. Classes taken outside the Law School, in another department, or at another institution, do not factor into Law GPA.

HOW SHOULD MY GPA BE REPORTED TO EMPLOYERS OR OTHERS?

When reporting Law School GPA and academic performance, students should carefully review and follow the requirements of Academic Rule 12.5(c) and the Law School's Honor Code. GPA should always be reported to three decimal places, and should NOT be rounded up. For example, if a student's cumulative GPA as reflected on the Law School transcript is 3.499, it may NOT be reported as "3.5". As noted in the Honor Code, students are specifically prohibited from "[m]aking material misrepresentations of academic performance including, but not limited to, grades, grade point average statistics, honors, publications, or participation in scholarly projects".

WHEN AND HOW CAN I FIND OUT MY CLASS RANK OR QUARTILE?

Only JD degree candidates are ranked at the Law School. Under Academic Rule 12.5, JD class ranks are calculated by the Registrar after the Fall and Spring semesters for upper division students and after the Spring semester for 1Ls who complete at least 24 credits. After ranks have been computed, the Registrar determines quartile thresholds for each class cohort, which are provided to students and posted on the Law School's website. Ranks and quartiles are determined based on students' cumulative Law School GPA, calculated to three decimal places.

Students may obtain and share their rank only in limited circumstances described in Rule 12.5(b), such as application for judicial clerkships or academic teaching positions. For all other purposes, students report performance based on their quartile placement at the time of the most recent ranking in which they were included. Academic Rule 12.5(c) provides detailed instructions for disclosing a rank or quartile.

To obtain a class rank for a permitted purpose, students may submit a [Rank Request form](#) available on the Student Forms page of the [Current Students website](#).

NOTE – If a potential employer requests your rank, you can refer them to the [Class Ranks & Quartiles information](#) and also request that the Registrar's Office provide a letter verifying the policy. Most employers know that rank and quartile policies vary between schools.

HOW CAN I GET FEEDBACK ON MY PERFORMANCE IN A CLASS?

Each instructor sets his or her own policy on viewing past exams and providing feedback. Some provide model answers or grading rubrics for review, often through the help of faculty administrative assistants. Others schedule exam review sessions during the following semester. Inquire with your instructor directly about how to receive feedback that you can use to understand the basis for your grade and more importantly, adjust your approach to future exams. Instructors can also verify whether your final grade was adjusted for class participation or factors other than exam performance.

Direct feedback from your professor is THE BEST way to put your performance in context and improve on future exams. Approach instructors respectfully, with the goal of learning more about your exam performance, not challenging the grade. Your goal should be to determine where you are regularly losing points compared to other students, and to adjust exam strategies accordingly for future tests.

As noted above, grades may be changed only because of mathematical or computational error, or because of clear error in the evaluation process (e.g., failing to add in the grade for a submitted assignment) and may only be initiated by the instructor, not a student.

HOW CAN I GET HELP IMPROVING MY PERFORMANCE?

The first step is to use your past exams, and feedback from professors, to diagnose your strengths and areas for improvement. It is recommended that you review at least two of your exams to get a better picture of your academic skills and needs.

After you have received feedback from your professors, it may be helpful to complete the attached Study Skills and Exam Performance Assessment document to discuss with an advisor. Degree-seeking students should reach out to advisors as follows:

Degree Cohort	Office/Advisor	Email	Support Available
JD	Student Affairs	lawdos@umn.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Academic Assessment and strategy - Referral for academic and bar support - Referral to personal/mental health support
LLM & SJD	International & Graduate Programs	llmadm@umn.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Academic Assessment and strategy - Referral to personal/mental health support
LLM & SJD	Professor Karen Lundquist	kalundqu@umn.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - English language reading and writing
MSPL	Masters of Science Patent Law Program	PatLaw@umn.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Academic Assessment and strategy - Referral to personal/mental health support

HOW CAN I APPROACH CAREER PLANNING IF MY GRADES AREN'T WHAT I HAD HOPED FOR?

In addition to directly addressing possible impediments to your academic performance, you can:

- Meet with your Career Counselor to do short- and long-range career planning, focusing on gaining experience to share on your resume and making networking connections.
- Build skills through volunteer legal opportunities through the [Minnesota Justice Foundation \(MJF\)](#) and earn hours towards the 50-hour Law School Public Service Program challenge.
- Check out state and local bar associations and organizations to get involved with general practice groups or committees. Many recruit student members to participate in their activities, which is a great way to meet attorneys in the area. More information and links available at www.mnbar.org.