

Juris Doctor – Academic Advising Guide

QUICK SNAPSHOT	
<input type="checkbox"/>	87 Credit Hours (individual grades of D or higher; overall average grade of 2.000 or higher)
<input type="checkbox"/>	First-Year Required Courses
<input type="checkbox"/>	Upper Level Required Courses
<input type="checkbox"/>	Professional Skills or Experiential Learning Requirement
<input type="checkbox"/>	6 Residence Credits (1 credit is earned per 12 term hrs. or more; ¾ credit is earned per 9-11 term hrs.; ½ credit is earned per 6-8 term hrs.; ¼ credit is earned per 3-5 term hrs.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	30 Hours of Public Service

What courses do I take my first year of law school? The first-year curriculum is set. It is designed to teach the fundamentals of legal analysis, to introduce you to legal subjects on which most of the law is built, and to give you a strong foundation in legal research, writing and advocacy skills. Please see the appropriate Juris Doctor Degree Self-Audit form (based on when you were admitted to law school) for more information on your specific first-year requirements.

What other courses are required? In addition to the first-year classes, all students must take Professional Responsibility, Constitutional Law II, an Edited Writing Course (denoted with an EW in the Registration Materials), and a General Writing Course (GW).

Students who were admitted before fall 2016 must take a Professional Skills Course (PS). Students admitted fall 2016 or later must satisfy the “Experiential Learning” (EL) requirement. This means they must complete one or more experiential courses totaling at least six credit hours.

<i>Required Course</i>	<i>Hours</i>
Constitutional Law II	3.00
Professional Responsibility	3.00
1 Edited Writing Seminar (EW)*	3.00
1 Professional Skills Course (students admitted before fall 2016)	1.00 - 4.00
Experiential Learning (students admitted fall 2016 or later)	At least 6.00

Do not wait until your last semester to satisfy these graduation requirements. Scheduling can become problematic if you need too many required courses in your last semester when there may be scheduling conflicts.

And 1 of the following:	2.00 - 3.00
General Writing Course (GW);	3.00
Law Review (if selected); OR	2.00 - 5.00
Directed Research Paper	2.00 - 3.00

If a student fails to receive a minimum passing grade in any required course, the student must repeat the course the next time it is offered. A failing grade is never replaced by a subsequent grade in the same course.

What elective courses should I take?

SMU Dedman Law offers a rich variety of elective courses each semester in a number of areas. Choose courses that interest you or that you think might help you in your practice. Most students take Business Enterprises, Evidence, and Income Taxation, which are prerequisites to other courses, academic programs, and clinics. Therefore, you should consider taking these as soon as possible.

Except with special permission of the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs, J.D. students may enroll for elective courses only after they have completed all required first-year courses.

You are encouraged to explore different areas of the law, but also make sure you have the necessary foundational courses to later be successful on the bar exam and in your legal practice. Please refer to the practice area guides in the Registrar’s Office and on our website for more information. These guides suggest courses in each of the following practice areas and identify clinics, externships, and public service opportunities to enhance students’ skills and understanding.

Antitrust Law	Health Law
Bankruptcy Law	Immigration Law
Business and Corporate Law	Intellectual Property
Civil Litigation and Dispute Resolution	International and Comparative Law
Commercial and Consumer Law	Labor and Employment Law
Criminal Law	Real Estate Law
Estate Planning	Tax Law
Family Law	

What is the maximum number of elective course hours taken on a pass/fail basis? A student may not apply more than six hours of upper-class elective courses on a credit/no-credit basis (*i.e.*, non-graded or pass/fail hours) toward the 87 hours required for graduation. Students cannot elect to take a class pass/fail. The pass/fail hours include Law Review, Moot Court/Mock Trial and BOA for a total of 6 hours. Although externships are pass/fail, these are not included in the 6-hour limit.

What is an edited writing seminar? An Edited Writing Seminar is an intensive, scholarly expository writing project. It may take the form of a single paper, of at least 30 pages, or several shorter papers, as the professor may direct. These seminars are designed to be a “capstone” experience for third-year students, although second-year students are allowed to take edited writing classes if space is available.

Enrollment in each seminar is limited to 20 students. Classes that fulfill this requirement will be labeled “EW” in the registration materials.

What is a general writing requirement? A student must complete a general writing unit, in addition to the first-year Legal Research, Writing and Advocacy course and the Edited Writing Seminar. The writing unit can be satisfied through a General Writing Course (GW), through Law Review Hours (if selected) or through a 2 or 3-hour Directed Research paper. Courses that fulfill this requirement will be labeled “GW” in the registration materials.

Writing courses can be an opportunity to research and explore, in depth, an area of the law and then to write a scholarly paper under the guidance of our outstanding faculty. This is a luxury it will be very difficult, if not impossible for many, to experience after they leave law school.

I am interested in the course identified as a paper course, but is also listed on the exam schedule. Will this course require a paper or an exam? Generally courses are listed this way when the course has a paper/exam option. The Professor will give you further instructions regarding this option in his or her syllabus or on the first day of class.

Why are there so many different course listings for Trial Advocacy? Trial Advocacy has two components. First, there is one large lecture section that meets once a week that all students who register for the course are required to attend. Second, there are several small "practice" sections scheduled at various times throughout the week where students actually practice the different parts of a trial, and, ultimately, do an entire trial. Students must register for the large section AND the small section of their choice. The number of small sections varies depending on the total enrollment in the course.

What opportunities do I have to attain practical experience? There are many opportunities to obtain practical experience while you are in law school. We have an excellent clinical program where you will get hands on experience working with real clients under excellent supervision from the clinic professors.

In addition, we have three approved externship program: Corporate Counsel Externship, Federal Judicial Externship, and Government & Public Interest Externship. Each is connected to a number of field placements. Please see the Experiential Courses – FAQ handout for more information.

What bar courses should I take? It is important to take enough Bar Courses so that the Bar Review course you take is truly a Bar REVIEW and not a Bar NEW! It is impossible to take all the courses we offer that are tested on the Texas Bar Exam.

Generally, upper-class students should take at least two bar courses each semester. Students in Mandatory Academic Counseling (i.e., students with a cumulative GPA below 2.7) must take at least two (and preferably three bar courses).

SMU Dedman Law offers a course on bar exam preparation called Advanced Legal Reasoning. This is not to be taken in lieu of taking a commercial bar preparation class. Rather, it is an opportunity to refresh your knowledge of some of the subjects tested on the Texas Bar Exam and to gain experience in the testing format of the bar exam. The course places a heavy emphasis on first-year classes tested on the Multi-State Bar Exam portion of the Texas Bar Exam.

Please see these handouts for more information:

- What Bar Courses Should I Take?
- General Bar Exam Information
- Texas Bar Exam
- UBE Bar Exam Information

What opportunities are there to earn credit beyond the classroom?

Directed Research - A student may register for a total of three hours of directed research while in law school.
Study Abroad in Oxford - Students may earn five hours of credit in this summer program by taking one course taught by an SMU professor and one Oxford-style tutorial taught by an Oxford tutor.
Courses Outside the Law School – Students may earn up to six hours by taking graduate-level courses in other schools at SMU. Prior approval by the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs is required.
Law Reviews – Students may earn up to five hours of academic credit for work as a staff editor and board member on one of our law reviews.
Moot Court and Mock Trial - A student may receive one hour of academic credit for service on the BOA executive board or the Jackson Walker Moot Court Board.

Can I take courses outside the law school? Graduate-level courses in other graduate or professional schools of the University that are relevant to the student's program may be taken with approval of the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs, who will also determine the law school credit equivalents to be awarded for such study. Students may not take courses that are designed to teach an area of law (*i.e.*, business law), nor may students take a course the subject matter of which is taught in a law school course.

A student may earn no more than six total credits toward the JD degree in other graduate or professional schools of the University. Students must earn a "C" or better to receive credit toward their law school degree. The grade will not, however, be included in calculating the student's law school grade point average. Request for Permission forms are available on-line as well as, in the Registrar's Office.

You must receive permission from the Law School prior to attempting to register at the other graduate or professional school. Receiving permission from the Law School, however, does not guarantee that you will be permitted to enroll in the course at the other graduate or professional school.

Law students may take undergraduate courses at SMU (*e.g.*, Spanish or undergraduate engineering classes to become patent bar eligible); however, no credit or grade is awarded for such classes.

Can I receive credit for work completed at other law schools? Yes. While enrolled at the Law School, students may earn up to eight credit hours at other ABA-approved law schools outside the Dallas-Fort Worth area during the summer. Students interested in this option must make application through the Registrar's Office to the assistant dean for student affairs.

In extraordinary circumstances, a student may be granted permission to attend another law school for his or her final term or year of law school while still receiving an SMU degree. Permission will not be granted without evidence of compelling personal circumstances.