



Professional Standards for the J.D. and LL.M. Degrees University of San Diego School of Law

Law school prepares students to enter a profession whose members are expected to, and, in many cases, required to adhere to certain professional standards. These standards may differ from undergraduate education, post-graduate study in fields other than law, or careers other than law. Lawyers are professionals and are held to professional standards. Their status confers obligations but few legal enticements other than certain legal protections that extend to workers generally. Performance is the metric of success.

Law school prepares students to enter this profession with the knowledge and understanding that they must adhere to these professional standards. The University of San Diego School of Law and its students will adhere to professional standards including, but not limited to, the following:

1. **Civility and Collaboration.** The school is a community dedicated both to principles of free inquiry and expression and to collaborative learning and civil discourse. Just as judges or licensing authorities may take adverse action for conduct or expression that violate professional bounds, the school may do so as well. This principle does not create an entitlement to be free from disagreement or criticism, but to learn in an environment with civility and mutual exchange.

This principle applies not only to interactions among students but also to interactions between students and the law school faculty and staff. USD faculty and staff are here to help, but they are charged with upholding professional standards, and their assistance can only be extended within those bounds.

Effective lawyering requires working effectively and collaboratively with others and engaging with opposition and authorities with civility. Students are expected to be able to work collaboratively and respectfully with their peers, faculty, and staff.

2. **Deadlines, punctuality, modes of instruction.** Lawyers, and especially new lawyers, must maintain an accurate calendar of deadlines and meet those deadlines. Lawyers must also be punctual in attending meetings, scheduled events, or appointments. The school will enforce deadlines for course work and dates for exams absent good cause for a change. The same is true for modes of instruction in class and for class attendance. Our goal is to place students on an equal footing. Lawyers must also respond to communications promptly. As such, students must also be prompt in responding to school-related emails and phone calls in a timely manner.

Adopted April 20, 2026

3. **Honor.** The law is a self-regulating profession whose members are required to behave ethically and, in some circumstances, to report ethical misconduct of other members. The School of Law expects members of its community to adhere to this principle by adhering to the honor code themselves and reporting misconduct of which they become aware.
4. **Communication Skills.** Effective communication is a core lawyering skill. All students are required to communicate with others in a manner that is respectful, truthful, mature, and professional. It is expected that students will engage in regular and proactive communication when issues arise. Students must be able to understand and respond effectively to oral and written communication. Students must be able to attend to lectures and presentations in different formats.
5. **Participation and Public Speaking.** Students may be called on without advance warning in classes. If so, they are required to respond extemporaneously. Students must be able to make public oral responses to questions from the instructor, from guest speakers, or from other students. Students must be able to make public oral presentations and publicly answer questions.
6. **Organization.** Students must be able to manage heavy workloads and competing deadlines. They must be able to set goals and develop and implement plans to accomplish their goals. Students must be able to follow directions and synthesize large amounts of information.
7. **Evaluation and Performance.** Students must be able to complete assignments, exams, essays, and other required course content in compliance with directions from the instructor. For example, and without limitation, students may be required to complete such work without access to notes or other course materials, and such work may be subject to character or word limits.

ADA Accommodations

In some cases, students may be legally entitled to reasonable accommodations in order to adhere to, though not to displace, the professional standards. If students need accommodations in order to equitably access the curriculum and meet the professional standards, they may elect to seek accommodations. The University of San Diego assesses such requests as follows.

Requests for accommodation are approved through the University of San Diego's Disability & Learning Differences Resource Center ("DLDRC"). The School of Law only accepts accommodations that are reasonable in relation to our goal of preparing students to enter the legal profession by teaching both the knowledge and skills needed in that profession. Requests for accommodation that would materially alter an academic requirement essential to this purpose or the fundamental nature or core learning objectives of a course will not be granted. Because of the skills required in the practice of law, an accommodation that was reasonable in high school,

college, or for standardized tests may not be appropriate for law school, just as it may not be appropriate for our alumni attorneys in the workplace.

Instructors will be notified of accommodations approved by the DLDRRC that they play a role in implementing. Implementation of approved accommodations must not interfere with the fundamental nature of the program/course and its requirements. Notification to the instructor alone will not excuse the student from any course requirements. Students need to engage in regular and proactive communication regarding their needs. Students must reach out proactively and at the earliest opportunity if they are requesting to implement their accommodation.

Non-ADA Accommodations

Language-based adjustments for non-native English speakers will only be considered in the non-J.D. programs.

Non-disability related requests for extensions or accommodation must be supported by documentation sufficient to establish a compelling rationale to the relief requested. The School of Law requires documentation as a simple matter of fairness to students who do not receive adjustments to exam dates or modes. Failure to document facts warranting accommodation will result in enforcement of the default dates or modes applicable to students generally.

Professional Standards Are Not Waivable

Students must enter the University of San Diego School of Law able to meet these professional standards, with or without reasonable accommodation, and must maintain these abilities throughout law school. If a student cannot meet these requirements, with or without reasonable accommodation, the student will not be able to enroll or continue in the J.D. or LL.M. programs.