
Residency - Law Students

The School of Law residency rules satisfy the requirements of the American Bar Association and the Association of American Law Schools. The purpose of the residency requirements is to assure that the study of law will be spread evenly over a minimum period of six semesters or the equivalent.

The rules regarding the size of a student's course load -- the number of hours a student enrolls in for a given semester -- and residency rules are not the same.

The residency requirement means that students may not graduate in less than six semesters or the equivalent. Most students attend law school for six semesters. However, some students plan to graduate after only five semesters by attending summer school. Students who plan to attend summer school for two years and graduate a semester early should visit with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs concerning their summer course load requirements.

For residency purposes, a minimum load of twelve hours is required for a semester. Thus, each student generally needs at least 12 hours each semester to meet residency requirements. (NOTE: An average of 12 credits per semester is not sufficient to complete the 89 credit degree requirement.) For purposes of accelerated graduation, the law school's residency rules require students to take a minimum of five hours in one summer session and combine it with another summer session of no less than seven hours. Two summer sessions of six hours each serve the same purpose. This approach gives students five semesters of at least 12 hours and two combined summers of 12 hours, which satisfies our residency requirements. If fewer hours are taken in a summer session, they may not be used toward residency for the purpose of accelerated graduation.

A student may combine any summer hours with an appropriate number of hours in a regular semester in order to fulfill a 12-hour semester residency requirement if they should fall below 12 hours during a semester for some reason. Students completing more than 12 hours in a semester may not use surplus hours over 12 toward residency in any other session; hence the three surplus hours from a 15-hour semester cannot be added to a subsequent nine-hour semester to give residency for two semesters. On the other hand, a nine-hour semester can be combined with a three-hour summer session to give residence for one semester.

A student in their final semester only can take less than 12 hours provided that the number of credits being taken is sufficient to satisfy the remainder of the 89 credit degree requirement. In cases of extreme hardship the Faculty may make a slight variance in the residency requirements, but cannot go below the standards set by the American Bar Association and the Association of American Law Schools.