

**WE ARE NEW YORK'S LAW SCHOOL****NEW YORK LAW SCHOOL POLICY**

Academic Engagement as a Measure of Credit Hours

How to Use This Policy

This policy is intended to help New York Law School faculty design and evaluate their courses and syllabi with accurate expectations of total time and effort related to in-class instruction and work performed outside of the classroom. This total time is considered a student's academic engagement. In addition, this policy will help students understand the amount of time and effort they will be required to dedicate to a variety of activities considered academically engaging during the semester in order to achieve the course's learning goals. This policy governs all existing and new courses within the NYLS curriculum and helps guide ongoing management of the academic program by the faculty. The Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and Student Engagement shares primary responsibility with the Curriculum Committee for updating, interpreting, and enforcing this policy. This policy outlines the minimum standard but in no way precludes faculty from expecting and recommending more.¹

The NYLS Student Handbook section on "Expectations and Guidelines" reinforces the substance of this policy and encourages students to become familiar with the policy and how it applies to each of their courses. In conjunction with this policy, students are encouraged to participate in the programs offered by Academic Success and Bar Success Initiatives—a primary resource for developing and improving upon study skills and approaches to most effectively learn the law. The School and the faculty recognize that the amount of time dedicated to academically engaging activities will vary by student due to a range of factors.

Non-Binding Guidance on Academic Engagement

The faculty are encouraged to use their prior experience and that of their colleagues in determining the appropriate amount of out-of-class work that is required by a student to supplement faculty instruction and to achieve the articulated learning goals for the course. The collection of activities performed by a student inside and outside the classroom in furtherance of the learning goals is considered time spent in academic engagement.

Activities that constitute academic engagement include, but are not limited to, any single action or combination of the following: substantive instruction by a member of the faculty; independent reading, writing, or research related to the course; direct client interaction under faculty supervision; simulated legal practice such as negotiation, arbitration, client interviewing and counseling, etc.; self-reflection on a simulation or field placement; working through practice questions and hypotheticals; meeting with teaching assistants and attending office hours; participation in study groups and review sessions; cumulative review such as outlining the course; and completing an examination in class or as a "take home."

¹ ABA Standard 310. DETERMINATION OF CREDIT HOURS FOR COURSEWORK (a) A law school shall adopt, publish, and adhere to written policies and procedures for determining the credit hours that it awards for coursework. (b) A "credit hour" is an amount of work that reasonably approximates (1) not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and two hours of out-of-class student work per week for 15 weeks, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or (2) at least an equivalent amount of work as required in subparagraph 1 of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution, including simulation, field placement, clinical, co-curricular, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

The following benchmarks are provided as additional non-binding guidance²:

- Reading case law for 1L doctrinal course: 5–10 pages per hour
- Reading case law for upper-level doctrinal course: 10–12 pages per hour
- Reading secondary sources: 15–20 pages per hour
- Writing, depending on content, analytical demands, and research: up to 4 hours per typed page
- Preparing for and reflecting on a simulated lawyering skills exercise: 3 hours per 45-minute exercise
- Reviewing class notes immediately after the class: 45 minutes–1 hour for each class meeting

For calculation purposes, NYLS's fall and spring semesters are 15 weeks long, where the final week is dedicated to examinations. The summer term is 8.5 weeks, where the last week is dedicated to examinations. To support coordination among sections, midterm examinations in the first year are administered by the Office of the Registrar on designated Fridays, freeing up a class meeting for additional instruction. Pursuant to Interpretation 310-1, 50 minutes of in-class instruction count as one hour, and 60 minutes of out-of-class work count as one hour toward the total 42.5 total hours required per credit per semester.

Compliance Considerations

New Courses: Beginning in spring 2019, the course proposal form was updated to include a question that requires the proposer of the course to be familiar with this policy and ABA Standard 310. The proposer must certify that the proposed number of credits corresponds with the minimum standards set forth in this policy before the Curriculum Committee will consider the proposal.

Existing Courses: The Associate Dean, with support from Academic Affairs senior staff and the Curriculum Committee, collect the syllabi for all scheduled courses at the start of each semester and review them for compliance with all relevant standards. Where a course does not appear to meet the standards, member(s) of the Curriculum Committee will work with the professor to implement appropriate changes. In general, the Curriculum Committee will support the Associate Dean's efforts and work with faculty on a regular basis to ensure compliance.

Publication of Policy: To ensure that the entire academic community is aware of this policy, it will be publicly maintained on the portal on the Faculty tab (under Teaching) and on the Student tab (under Academic Planning).

A Closer Look by Type of Course

Lecture and Seminar Courses

In lecture and seminar discussion courses, for every 50 minutes of in-class instruction or examination, students are expected to perform an additional 120 minutes of substantive preparation for each in-class hour for the 15-week term. These allocations between class time and self-directed academic engagement are suggestions only. At NYLS, it is typical for one week of the 15-week term to be used for the examination. In total, at a minimum, students should be academically engaged with class meetings, preparation, examinations, and individual meetings with faculty for 42.5 hours per credit hour per semester.

² The School and the faculty recognize that the amount of time dedicated to academically engaging activities will vary by student due to a range of factors.

Clinics (Adapted from the Office of Clinical and Experiential Learning Handbook)

All faculty and students enrolled in clinics hosted at the School are informed of the need to comply with the ABA standards through formalized documentation of student work, including the hours for which they are receiving clinic credit. At a minimum, students are required to devote three to four hours per credit per week to the clinic, including seminar participation and fieldwork. For 4-credit clinics, this works out to 12 to 16 hours per week for 14 weeks, or 168 to 224 hours per semester ($4 \times 3 \times 14 = 168$; $4 \times 4 \times 14 = 224$).

It is NYLS policy that the faculty leader of each clinic remain diligent in tracking hours worked by each student and reflecting the same on the corresponding tracking tool.

Below is a chart reflecting the minimum number of hours students should be reporting for **a full year, 4-credit-per-semester clinic**.

Clinical Credits Per Semester	Halfway Through Fall Semester (October)	End of Semester	Halfway Through Spring Semester (February)	End of School Year
4	84 hours	168 hours	252 hours	336 hours

- For On-Campus Clinics:** During clinic orientation, all students will be trained on the cloud-based case management system Clio, which has a built-in feature for tracking hours. To ensure that students are completing the requisite hours of work to earn the corresponding number of credits, all students in clinics hosted on campus will log their time on Clio.
- For Off-Campus Clinics:** At the beginning of the semester, clinical faculty and students enrolled in each off-campus clinic are sent a link to an online time-tracking form with instructions on how to use the form. Periodically, faculty, and the senior administrator for the Office of Clinical and Experiential Learning are expected to review the time reported by the clinic's students. At a minimum, faculty are asked to review student time reporting *at least* twice a semester.

Externships and Field Placements

To ensure students are completing the requisite hours of work to earn the corresponding number of credits, all students at field placements and externships will log and report their hours on timesheets that are submitted to the faculty director of the externship program and faculty supervisor of the individual student. Samples of timesheets are posted on the portal under the Career tab. As stated in Annex G to the Faculty Rules, students are required to work 140 hours over the course of the term to earn 2 credits for the placement/externship.

The co-requisite seminar that accompanies all externships and field placements will provide 1 additional academic credit for the seminar based on regular class meetings and tutorials with faculty tutors that amount to 42.5 hours minimum of academic engagement over the course of the term.

Simulation Courses

Simulation courses, including Legal Practice, meet regularly during the semester, and many include larger blocks of time dedicated to simulations followed by individual meetings between the student and faculty to discuss feedback and performance of the simulation as well as large-group instruction on how to improve individual performance. In total, each simulation course in the curriculum will demand a minimum of 42.5 minutes of academic engagement per credit hour per student.

Independent Research Papers

Students enrolled in an Independent Research Paper will earn 2 credits for their academic engagement that must include a minimum of three meetings of 30 minutes each with their faculty advisor to discuss progress, challenges, and content of their research and writing. In addition, students are expected to dedicate a minimum of 83.5 hours toward research, analysis, drafting, proper citation and formatting, and re-writing their work product over the semester.

Co-Curricular Courses (*Law Review* and Competition Teams)

NYLS has four approved co-curricular courses: *Law Review*, Dispute Resolution Team, Moot Court Association, and Trial Competition Team. Each co-curricular has faculty advisor(s) who are responsible for ensuring that the students complete requisite work associated with the academic credit granted for participation. Generally, students earn 1 credit for every 42.5 hours of academic engagement committed to the co-curricular each semester.

Per the Faculty Rules, each co-curricular course is governed by its corresponding annex. Each annex (which includes the corresponding co-curricular's bylaws) outlines how students earn academic credit for the course based on expectations for time commitment and substantive faculty interaction that relates to their given role in the co-curricular course. Generally, the executive boards of each are permitted to earn an additional academic credit each semester based on the expected commitment of additional time related to their leadership position.

Joint-Degree Program Courses

Where a student will receive credit toward their J.D. for courses completed at an outside institution as part of an authorized joint-degree program during their enrollment at the School, the Associate Dean will obtain and review the syllabi for each course to determine whether the course(s) meet NYLS and ABA standards. These credits from the outside institution can only be earned post-matriculation to a J.D. degree program.³

Transfer Credits

Similar to credits recognized as part of a joint-degree program, for transfer credits generally, the Associate Dean will obtain and review the syllabus for each course to determine whether the course(s) meet NYLS and ABA standards. These credits from the outside institution can only be earned post-matriculation to a J.D. degree program.⁴

Distance Education

Students are permitted to earn credits for distance education courses in accord with Faculty Rule 2.09 and pursuant to ABA Standard 306. Similar to traditional classroom courses, 1 academic credit represents 42.5 hours of academic engagement by the student; the actual breakdown between faculty-lead instruction and student self-study will vary.

³ See NYLS Faculty Rule 2.02.10 - Prohibition on Credit for Course Work Prior to Matriculation in a J.D. Degree Program.

⁴ *Id.*