



ANTONIN SCALIA  
LAW SCHOOL  
George Mason University®

# NAVIGATING 1L

A REFERENCE GUIDE TO  
SCALIA LAW SCHOOL

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# Introduction

Welcome to the George Mason University Antonin Scalia Law School. This first-year guide is prepared by Scalia Law's Administration to provide useful information for your first year and beyond.

## Law School Administration

Scalia Law's Administration is headed by Dean Ken Randall, Dean of the Law School, whose office is in Suite 200 (Administration) on the second floor of Hazel Hall. In the same Suite, and throughout Hazel Hall, are other administrative offices such as Admissions, Career Services, Student Affairs, Academic Support, Records, Finance, Alumni Relations, and Library and Technology Services. A full directory of people and offices within the Law School, organized by department, is available via the Law School's [Directory of People and Offices](#).

## Academic Regulations

The Law School's Academic Regulations contain most of the policies and procedures applying to JD students and are cited throughout this Guide. The Academic Regulations cover topics like matriculation, registration, and graduation requirements; academic performance; student records; and coursework and evaluation of student performance. Students can access the full Academic Regulations on the [Scalia Law's website](#).

## Academics

### The 1L Curriculum

During the first year of the JD program, you will be provided with a course schedule. You will take numerous doctrinal courses which focus on foundational areas of law. You will also take courses focused on legal research, writing, and analysis, and one called Economics for Lawyers.

- *Doctrinal Courses:* These courses are designed to introduce you to the most fundamental areas of the law – the “building blocks” from which other, more specialized, legal doctrines evolve. In the fall semester, these courses include Torts, Contracts I, and Property. In the spring, the doctrinal courses include Criminal Law, Legislation and Statutory Interpretation, Civil Procedure, and Contracts II.

- *Legal Research, Writing, and Analysis:* At Scalia Law, students take four semesters of Legal Research, Writing, and Analysis (LRWA) in their first two years. In the first year, students take LRWA I in the fall, followed by LRWA II in the spring. Students learn both objective and persuasive legal writing styles in their first two semesters. In the fall, students are introduced to the basics of researching, analyzing, and writing objectively by creating a series of memoranda in LRWA I. They learn various research methodologies with the assistance and collaboration of Scalia Law's Reference Librarians. In the spring LRWA II course, students continue building these skills and explore persuasive writing through a trial level problem. LRWA II also involves an oral argument competition where all 1L students participate in an argument before local practitioners and judges.
- *Economics for Lawyers:* Economics for Lawyers introduces students to the economic and quantitative tools that play a role in legal disputes. The intent is not for students to become experts in economic study, but to familiarize them with concepts that aid in analyzing disputes and crafting arguments using non-legal methods in legal contexts. Those economic strategies are reinforced in other courses.

## Method of Instruction

The method of instruction used in first-year courses may vary from professor to professor. Most may choose to incorporate the Socratic Method (or "cold call") style of teaching. This method utilizes a question-and-answer strategy to promote critical thinking. Significant emphasis is placed on developing your analytical skills in each course. These skills are honed through the "case method" teaching approach in class. After reading and studying cases, students may be called upon in class and expected to identify case features such as the relevant facts, the issue(s) presented by the case, the court's disposition (also known as the "holding"), and the rationale for that disposition based upon applicable rules of law.

## Focus Areas and Concentrations

After their first year, students choose the elective courses they want to take in the day or evening. Students may sample a variety of courses from the curriculum offered or elect to specialize in one or more Focus Areas. Focus Areas relate to a specific practice area that a student may want to focus on based on their interests or desired career.

Students may also choose to complete a Concentration in certain Focus Areas. For each Concentration, a student must complete a minimum of 5 courses in the Focus Area and earn a final grade of "B-" or higher.

Information on the JD Focus Areas and Concentrations offered at Scalia Law can be found on Scalia Law's [JD Focus Area website](#).

# Preparing for Class

## General Policy on Class Attendance, Punctuality, and Preparation

Regular and punctual attendance and class preparation are required to earn academic credit. [See Academic Regulations 4-1](#). Students should also review their course's syllabus for each professor's attendance policy.

## Minimum Attendance Requirement

The Law School's attendance policy provides students with the flexibility to miss up to 20% of the sessions of a course for any reason. All absences are counted (i.e., there are no "excused absences"). Any student who fails to attend at least 80% of a course's required sessions or their equivalent is not eligible for credit in that course. Any student who is not present for at least 75% of an individual session of a course is considered absent from that session. See [Academic Regulations 4-1.1](#).

## Class Preparation

The purpose of the case method in the first year is to attain a comprehensive and well-rounded familiarity with legal doctrines and principles and to think critically about information presented. Class participation is essential to the first-year academic experience. This requires a thorough and critical reading of the assigned materials before each class to be adequately prepared. For the first few weeks, students spend a lot of time reading and analyzing each case while they get accustomed to the language and format of legal writing. Reading and preparing for class gets easier with time and practice.

# Grading & Examination

## Exam Procedures

In all first-year courses, students take a final exam. In doctrinal courses, the final exam may be the exclusive basis for the final course grade, but some instructors may include a mid-term exam or incorporate class participation into the final course grade. In LRWA, the final course grade includes writing assignments, final exam, and other components. In elective courses taken in later years, instructors may substitute a writing requirement for an examination. Whether a course has a final exam or not will be published on the semester course schedule. Students should be sure to review the course syllabus for further information regarding a course's exam and grading policy.

## Anonymous Grading

Examinations are graded anonymously. Each semester, students are issued a new 6-digit exam number to use on all exam materials. This number is confidential, and is issued directly to the student via ExamSoft, the software used for laptop exams. Instructors grade exams knowing only the exam numbers, and not the identity, of the students.

Certain courses, however, cannot be graded entirely anonymously. Courses with significant writing, performance, or participation requirements may have no or partial anonymity. For example, a course may have an anonymous examination component of the grade, and a non-anonymous participation component of the grade. Students should refer to the syllabus for the components that make up an individual course's grades.

## Receiving Grades

Individual assignment grades are reported to students by the instructor(s) during the semester. Final course grades are reported through the Patriot Web system approximately three weeks after the exam period ends. Students can view their grades and print an unofficial transcript by accessing their Patriot Web account. Grade distribution summaries are posted on the [Career and Academic Services Intranet](#).

## Grading Policy

The grading policy for first year classes (exclusive of LRWA) is as follows:

- The mean (average) grade may range from 3.20 to 3.30.
- The following grade distribution shall apply:
  - A+, A: 10-35%
  - A-, B+, B: 40-70%
  - B- and lower: 10-35%

## Review of Performance

After final course grades are reported, students may review their exam and exam answer(s) during an administrative exam review period (when instructors may opt to make exams and exam answers available for student review) or by requesting an individual meeting with the course instructor(s) to review exam performance. For exam security reasons, all student review of exam materials must be supervised (by an administrator or the instructor) and exam materials are not returned to students.

## Grade Appeals

A student may challenge a final course grade by submitting written objections to the instructor, with a copy sent to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs. A final course grade may be changed only if the original grade was clearly erroneous because of (a) clerical error,

or (b) defective construction or evaluation. More information regarding grade appeals, including the full process for appeals, can be found in [Academic Regulation 4-9](#).

## **Additional Graduation Requirements: Preparing for Your Profession**

In addition to completing the required and optional classes necessary for graduation, Scalia Law students will participate in several training programs and meetings throughout their academic careers designed to help them succeed in law school and prepare them for the workplace. Through this graduation requirement, law students will receive training in four main areas: Legal Skills Development, Professional Identity Development, Civil Discourse, and Bar Preparation. Mandatory programming begins in orientation; additional dates for the first year are included on the academic calendar and [Career and Academic Services Intranet](#).

## **Career and Academic Support and Advising**

The Law School's Career Services and Academic Advising offices are in the Leadership Center (Suite 150 directly off the Law School atrium, to the right of the Law Library entrance).

### **Academic Support and Advising**

The Academic Support and Advising team provides academic services, such as advising students on course selection, obtaining academic assistance, and special needs or disability support. During the fall, the Academic Support and Advising office also hosts several workshops covering topics including case synthesis, outlining, and exam preparation. The office can be reached at [lawacad@gmu.edu](mailto:lawacad@gmu.edu).

### **Career Services**

The Career Services team provides career support services to students and alumni, including career counseling; resume, cover letter, and writing sample review; seminars on career-related topics; employer interview and networking programs; job fair coordination; and a network of alumni and professionals throughout the country who can provide advice and conduct mock interviews. All first-year students must participate in the fall group career orientation and a one-on-one counseling session with a career counselor. Career services appointments, programs, job postings, and externship programs are managed through the [Simplicity system](#). Students will receive an e-mail during orientation that contains instructions to access. The office can be reached at [lawcareer@gmu.edu](mailto:lawcareer@gmu.edu).



## Alumni Connections

Students are connected to alumni and other professionals in many ways. First, Career Services, student organizations, alumni relations, and bar associations host many events throughout the year for students that are attended by alumni and other professionals.

Career Services can introduce you to alumni one-on-one or in group settings and subsidize costs for off-site events. Second, all students can participate in the formal second-year Career Services **Alumni Connection** program. Third, all students can find and connect with alumni on LinkedIn (over 7000 on LinkedIn, as well as an alumni LinkedIn group).

## Law Student Well-Being

INBALANCE is the Law School's health and well-being hub of information. The University, Law School, and the Virginia Judges & Lawyers Assistance Program provide information and host programs to support law student well-being, including one-on-one appointments and group events. Additional information is available at:

- [Scalia Law's InBalance](#)
- [UL Arlington](#)

## University Health and Disability Services Offices

There are a number of University offices focused on student health and disability services, many of which have office hours on the Mason Square Campus.

### Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

The Counseling and Psychological Service's (CAPS) provides in-person and virtual, free, and confidential, mental health services for enrolled students. The staff are professional counselors available to help students reach their academic, social, and personal goals. When a student's needs require a different level of care, CAPS works with students to transition care to community providers.

The law school has a dedicated counselor on the CAPS team to provide the most timely and effective assistance. To make an appointment, call 703-993-2380 and identify yourself as a law student so you are directed to the right counselor.

Students can read more about the office, and the services and resources provided, on the [CAPS website](#).

## Student Health Services (SHS)

Student Health Services provides accessible and affordable health care services for currently enrolled students in a caring and confidential environment, regardless of whether they have health insurance. Services range from diagnosis and treatment of illness and injury to immunizations and prescriptions. There is no charge to be seen by a healthcare provider. There are fees for some services and procedures, such as lab tests. Law school students can be seen at clinics on the Mason Square or Fairfax Campus, and virtual telehealth appointments are available. Further information on appointments and services offered by [Student Health Services](#) can be found on their [website](#).

## Disability Services (DS)

The Disability Services Office implements and coordinates accommodations and disability-related services for all university programs and activities, including for students taking courses at the Law School. Disability Services is available to serve all students with disabilities, including those with cognitive, sensory, mobility, and other physical impairments. Students should visit the [Disability Services website](#) for more information on services and accommodations and the initial process for requesting accommodations. All requests for accommodation must be directed to Disability Services. This ensures that all requests are handled consistently by the office equipped to review medication documentation, assess what accommodations are necessary and reasonable, and provide any auxiliary aids and supportive services.

## Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC)

The Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) provides various programs and services for student support. These services cover topics such as financial well-being, food insecurity, substance abuse, survivor support, and more. They also provide services to student victims of all forms of sexual and interpersonal violence. Students may request support from SSAC for themselves or make a referral if they are concerned about a fellow student. SSAC is located on the Mason Square Campus in Van Metre Hall. Further information on all their programs and services offered can be found on the [SSAC website](#).

## Office of Military Services

The Office of Military Services assists veterans, active-duty service members, guardsmen, reservists, and dependents in successfully transitioning to Mason University. The office

offers one-on-one support for financial aid, counseling, and more. Veterans and active-duty service members receive priority registration. Students can contact the office at [military@gmu.edu](mailto:military@gmu.edu).

## Financial Aid

The Office of Student Financial Aid is on the Fairfax Campus and helps students finance their education. Services include financial counseling, referrals, and financial assistance through loans. Counselors periodically visit the Mason Square Campus to make presentations and all financial aid services are available through the [Mason Student Service Center](#).

## Extracurricular and Co-Curricular Activities

### Student Organizations

There are over 40 student organizations at the law school covering many interests, topics, and perspectives. A list of all organizations can be found [online](#). Getting involved in a student organization is a helpful way for 1Ls to find a community on campus.

The Student Bar Association (SBA) is the Law School's student government organization and serves as the managing body for all student organizations. The SBA will hold a student organization fair in the fall. All students are welcome and encouraged to attend and gather more information about the opportunities offered.

### Journals, Moot Court, Trial Advocacy

Scalia Law has four student-edited journals (each functioning as an independent student organization): George Mason Law Review; Civil Rights Law Journal; The Journal of Law, Economics & Policy; and National Security Law Journal. Each journal publishes articles written by scholars and students. Student journal members assist in researching, editing, and revising the scholarship selected for publication. Scalia Law also has a Moot Court Board and Trial Advocacy Association that sponsors students to compete in extramural competitions. Students can apply to join journals or these courtroom-based groups at the end of their first year.

## Communications and Event Information

GMU email is used for all Scalia Law communications, including emergency notices and academic, student organization, campus, and career information. Students are expected

to check their GMU email regularly and are responsible for deadlines and other important information sent to their GMU account.

Student organizations and law school departments send out event invitations on the student listservs (the sender will be [lawcareer@gmu.edu](mailto:lawcareer@gmu.edu); [lawevent@gmu.edu](mailto:lawevent@gmu.edu); [laworg@gmu.edu](mailto:laworg@gmu.edu); or [lawnews@gmu.edu](mailto:lawnews@gmu.edu) depending on the type of event). Events are also publicized on the law school bulletin boards and [calendaring system](#). the TV screens around Hazel Hall, and on Symplicity. For Scalia Law career, academic, and bar events that require registration or RSVPs, students use the Symplicity system (the information system utilized by Career and Academic Services).

## Academic Standards

All students enrolled at Scalia Law are subject to high academic standards which form the basis of the Law School's honor system and tie directly to the University's commitment to academic honesty, proper acknowledgment, and uniqueness of work. An essential aspect of this system is the obligation of each student to report violations and participate in proceedings, if needed. A copy of the Law School's expectations and processes can be found on our [Academic Standards website](#).

## Commitment to Open Dialogue and Debate

At Scalia Law, we believe faculty and students have the same right to express opinions and challenge opposing views. They also have the same obligation to promote a civil and tolerant environment. Scalia Law believes effective legal training requires students to be challenged by their instructors and classmates to make well-reasoned arguments. The faculty's Statement of Principles can be found [online](#). The Law School and student organizations also host events throughout the school year that encourage open dialogue and debate.

## Sharing Feedback and Reporting Complaints & Concerns

Scalia Law welcomes student feedback and questions and encourages students to report any complaints or concerns as soon as they arise (and to not wait until the end of a course or semester). Within the law school, students can reach out to any faculty or staff member. If the faculty or staff member is not best situated to help, they will direct

students to the appropriate resource. If students are unsure where to begin, please start with Annamaria Nields, Associate Dean for Student Affairs. Dean Nields' office is in the Leadership Center (Suite 150). She can also be reached at [anields@gmu.edu](mailto:anields@gmu.edu), 703-993-8174. Students are welcome to drop in or make an appointment by contacting Dean Nields directly.

Additionally, the University has many offices that students can contact if they have questions, need assistance, or want to report concerns. The Law School will also refer students to University resources for issues involving potential bias, discrimination, harassment, or sexual misconduct.

More information about the University offices and how to contact them directly can be found online:

- [Office of Access, Compliance, and Community](#)
- [Bias Incident Report](#)
- [Title IX](#)
- [Student Support and Advocacy Center](#)

## ABA Compliance Complaints

Scalia Law is an ABA accredited law school. This means the school is subject to the ABA Standards for Approval of Law School. The Standards may be found at: [American Bar Association Standards](#). Any law school student who wishes to bring a complaint about a problem impacting the school's legal education program and compliance with the ABA Standards may do so by submitting a written complaint to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (Professor Terry Chorvat, [tchorvat@gmu.edu](mailto:tchorvat@gmu.edu)). Additional information and instructions can be found in [Academic Regulations 3-10](#).

## Student Complaints

Students may also utilize the university's Student Complaint System to register concerns not expressly related to the law school's compliance with ABA Standards. See [Academic Regulations 3-10.2](#) for more information. The appropriate steps and channels to follow may be found online at the [Student Complaint System](#) site.

# Scalia Law Campus Information

## Student Lockers

Students can rent lockers on campus to store books and personal items. The Student Bar Association is responsible for locker rentals and will provide information to students at the beginning of the academic year regarding fees and procedures.

## Mailboxes

Each student will have an individual mailbox on the 3rd Floor outside the Records Office. The mailboxes are set up in the fall after classes begin. Students should check them regularly for hard copy assignments that are returned and other student information.

## Bookstore

The GMU bookstore is in Van Metre Hall on the Mason Square Campus. It is managed by Barnes & Noble. The bookstore provides all textbooks and supplies for the Mason Square campus, as well as snacks, apparel, and more.

## Food

Mason Square Café is located on the Main Level of Van Metre Hall, and vending machines are located on the second, third, and fourth floors of Hazel Hall. Additional food options will be available in the new Fuse at Mason Square when it opens fully this fall. There are also a variety of restaurants and food options off-campus within walking distance.

## Records Office

The Law School Records Office maintains student files for current and previously enrolled law students and is the office to administer final exams and coordinate grade reporting and class rankings. The Records Office also processes all requests for law school transcripts, enrollment verifications, bar exam certifications, letters of good standing or permission, and other student documentation as needed. The office is located in Hazel Hall, Room 341, and can be reached at [lwrecord@gmu.edu](mailto:lwrecord@gmu.edu) or (703) 993-8015.

The Records and Registrar's Offices compiled a helpful resource page in response to some of the most frequent questions they received related to academic requirements and regulations, exams, grades, graduation, registration and class schedules, student records, and more. The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and answers can be found [here](#).

## Personal Emergencies

If a personal emergency or other situation arises that could impact your academics (e.g., you're hospitalized for appendicitis, you must spend time away from school to care for a family member, you're selected for jury duty during exams), please reach out to Annamaria Nields, Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Academic Support ([anields@gmu.edu](mailto:anields@gmu.edu)), to make her aware of the situation. Dean Nields can discuss options with you and connect you with Law School and University resources to help.



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