Senior Research Project Rules

1. Eligibility

A student must have completed four semesters of full-time work toward a Northwestern JD before doing senior research for credit. In exceptional cases the Director of Research may authorize a student to do senior research who has completed only three semesters of full-time work toward a Northwestern JD students on academic probation may be authorized to do senior research at the discretion of the director but in no event will an application be accepted from a student on academic probation after the commencement of his or her fifth semester. In exceptional cases, and only with the prior approval of the director, senior research may consist of an expansion of work previously completed, even if academic credit was received for that work: Even without the director’s special approval, senior research may be pursued as part of work that will also lead to a thesis counting towards another degree; but a senior research project must be a discrete research project and not a part of a larger project for which other credit towards a Northwestern JD is being obtained simultaneously.

2. Credit Hours

   a. A student may pursue senior research for credit in the First Semester alone, the second semester alone or both semesters of the senior year. (See Rule 4 on Registration.)

   b. One semester or term projects must be taken for a minimum of 4 credit hours and are limited to 4 credit hours, subject to approval of additional hours up to a maximum of 8 by the director.

   c. Projects combining more than a single semester should normally be for 4 hours in each semester. The supervising professor may approve a lesser number of hours in either semester or term, but such projects may not be approved for less than 2 credit hours in either semester or
term or for less than 6 credit hours overall. The director may approve a greater number of hours, up to a maximum total of 12 hours in the student’s law school career.

d. A student working on a project where both professor and student are devoting a semester full time to the project may receive a total of 14 hours of credit.

3. Commitment Between Professor and Student

a. Every effort will be made to place each applicant with a supervising professor in a research area of mutual interest. Since the educational and research benefits of the program depend heavily upon this mutuality, the professor concerned necessarily has final discretion as to acceptance of a particular applicant, as to the research topic, and as to the procedures and methods to be followed, subject to these rules and to the rules of the Law School. Where possible, priority will be given to students who have not otherwise had an opportunity in Law School to do substantial supervised upperclass written work.

b. A professor may supervise more than two Projects in a semester or term ONLY WITH THE APPROVAL OF THE DIRECTOR OR THE DEAN.

c. The director shall compile annually and distribute to the faculty, no later than the first week of the academic year, a report on the participants (students and professors) and research topics for the preceding academic year.

4. Registration

a. All senior research projects must be approved by the Director of Senior Research. The form for senior research registration is available online on the Registration webpage. The student shall submit this completed form which will automatically route to the professor and to the director for approval. The form shall be submitted as soon as possible, and in no event later than 5:00pm on the first day of class.

b. Projects designed to include work for credit in more than one semester or term must be clearly registered as such and approved by the director in accordance with "a" above. Extension of a project originally intended for one semester or term into an additional semester or term is not favored and can be done only with the approval of the director upon a showing that substantial and unexpected work is necessary for completion of the project.

c. In order to withdraw from senior research, a student must submit a withdrawal form to the registrar no later than the Friday of the fourth week of the semester or term in which the credit was to be earned. The withdrawal form must be signed by the supervising instructor and the director. Any requests for withdrawal after this date must be approved by the dean or dean's designate and, if approved, will be recorded by a "W" grade on the student’s academic records and transcript.
5. Conduct of the Work

The work must be conducted in accordance with the following requirements:

a. Direct supervision of each participating student by one or more members of a faculty of this University.

b. Frequent individual meetings of a substantial nature with the professor to discuss the work, including a regular meeting each week individually with each student in accordance with a pre-arranged schedule. A minimum of twelve such weekly meetings should be held each semester a senior research project is in process. For projects that involve work when classes are not in session, there must be at least one meeting each week during that period.

c. Completion of one of the following by the student:

1. A paper of at least law review comment or article length which has gone through a minimum of three drafts (including the final submission), two of which were critically reviewed in detail by the supervising faculty member, and revised by the student after such review;

2. A program of supervised field study of substantial scope and difficulty, with a detailed written report of findings and conclusions, reviewed critically by the supervising professor and revised at least once by the student after such a review;

3. A program of approved inter-disciplinary study in one or more other departments of the University, and a written report of this study as under "2" above.

d. Review and approval of the final draft of the required paper or report by the supervising professor and a second faculty reader chosen by the supervising professor. An oral examination may also be required. If the supervising professor is a member of the adjunct faculty, the second faculty reader must be a member of the faculty.

e. Senior research project papers or reports are due on the date established by the supervising professor, but not later than three day before the grade due date of the semester in which the credit is earned. For good cause, a student may request that he/she be permitted to submit the paper at a later date. Such a request must be in writing, addressed to the supervising professor, and must set forth the student's reasons for the request. The supervising professor may:

1. Deny the request.

2. Authorize a delay in the submission of the paper or report until any date prior to three days before the grade due date of the semester in which the credit is earned.

3. Recommend, with the concurrence of the director of research, that the dean authorize a delay in the submission of the paper or report, to three days before the grade due date of the semester in which the credit is earned. As of the published date of
these rules and regulations, the dean has announced that extension of time for a senior research paper or report will be granted only "under the most compelling circumstances.

6. Deadlines for Submission of Final Paper
The final draft of the paper required under rule 5C above must be submitted to the supervising professor no later than three (3) days before the grade due date for the semester in which the credit is to be earned (the supervising professor may establish earlier deadlines, but may not extend the final deadline, which is fixed by the faculty)

Sanctions for failure to meet these deadlines are within the discretion of the supervising professor, and may include reduction in the grade or refusal to grant credit

7. Enrollment for Two Separate Senior Research Projects
No student may enroll for more than one senior research project to be conducted in the same term or semester. A student who has pursued a senior research project for credit in a given semester may not pursue a second separate senior research project in a subsequent term or semester unless he/she obtains the following prior to fourteen days after the first day of classes of the term or semester in which he/she seeks permission to enroll for a second project:

a. certification by the supervising professor of the first project that the latter has been fully completed and a grade given and that the professor recommends the student as especially deserving for additional senior research experience; and

b. approval by the director, who shall first satisfy himself that the permission sought will not deprive another student, who has not theretofore done senior research, of an opportunity to pursue such work.

8. Limitations on Outside Work
Experience has shown that successful participation in the senior research program requires continuous and substantial expenditure of time. For the protection of program and student alike, therefore, the faculty recommends that participants devote their full time and effort to Law School work while enrolled in the program, undertaking no outside employment or other substantial outside time commitment. In meritorious cases, however, the supervising professor may authorize up to 5 hours per week, of outside work, provided that more than 10 hours of outside work may be permitted only in extraordinary circumstances, taking into account the nature of the job, the students total work load, and all other circumstances relevant to whether the student's ability to do the senior research project will be impaired.
9. Seminars
Because of the difficulty of accommodating the writing of substantial papers for seminars while engaged in the senior research program, participants are advised to avoid taking such seminars in the same semester. If it appears that a seminar must be taken in the same semester as a senior research project, the student should consult in advance of the beginning of the semester both with his supervising professor and with the seminar instructor concerned.

10. Grading
Senior research projects of more than six credit hours may be separated into two blocks of hours for grading purposes, the smaller block to be no less than three hours. Provided, however, that the division of a grade not be used to reflect different levels of performance in various aspects of the senior research project. The division of a grade is to be used only in the event that the end product is of such quality as to fall between two adjacent grade levels. All senior research projects receiving a final grade of A+ will be awarded "senior research honors," which will be reflected on the student's transcript.