

2023-2024

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# Navigating Year One: A Reference Guide

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## Introduction

Welcome to the University of Richmond School of Law. This first-year guide is prepared by the Dean’s Office with input from several other campus offices to provide useful information for your first year and beyond. We welcome your comments and suggestions for future revisions.

## Academics

### The 1L Curriculum

During the first year of the JD program, your schedule of courses will be set for you. You’ll take numerous doctrinal courses, which focus on topical areas of law. You’ll also take courses focused on legal analysis and writing, research, and professional identity formation.

- ***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, and Civil Procedure. In the spring, the doctrinal courses include Criminal Law, Property, Constitutional Law, and Legislation & Regulation.

- ***Legal Analysis & Writing***

Students will take Legal Analysis & Writing I in the fall, followed by Legal Analysis & Writing II in the spring. These courses teach students to engage in a principled, systematic process of legal writing and analysis to prepare them for the rigors of client-centric, service-oriented legal practice in a rapidly changing world. Students will develop a toolbox of skills that are adaptable to many types of legal issues and communication needs.

- ***Legal Research***

During the fall semester, students will take a one-credit Legal Research Course. This class provides students with the key skills necessary to find legal materials online and in print.

- ***Professional Identity Formation***

In addition to these courses, students also take a Professional Identity Formation (PIF) course in both fall and spring. Richmond’s PIF program helps students discern their own values, strengths, and interests in relation to their individual practice, the legal profession, and society. Through a process of self-directed learning, students attain critical interpersonal lawyering skills.

## **Method of Instruction**

The method of instruction used in the first-year doctrinal courses varies somewhat from professor to professor. However, significant emphasis in each course is placed upon developing your analytical skills. These skills are honed through use of the “case method” 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 (or “holding”), and the rationale for that disposition based upon applicable rules of law.

## **Preparing for Class**

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

The classroom experience is an indispensable part of a student’s legal education, and every student is accordingly required to attend class fully prepared and on time. The professor shall be responsible for monitoring compliance with this policy and for determining the consequences of an unexcused failure to comply. The professor shall advise the class of their approach to these matters at the beginning of the semester. Students who will be absent due to a religious observance should notify the professor in the first two weeks of the semester, consistent with the University’s Religious Observance Policy (policy found online at <https://registrar.richmond.edu/planning/calendar/religious-observance.html>).

### **Minimum Attendance Requirement**

Any student who fails to attend at least 75 percent of a course’s required sessions or their equivalent (as determined by the professor, in consultation with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, and in conformance with the University’s Religious Observance Policy) will not pass the course. Attendance policy found online at <https://richmond.coursedog.com/policies/lawacademicregulations#class-attendance1>.

### **Class Preparation**

The purpose of the case method in first-year instruction is to achieve a comprehensive and well-rounded familiarity with legal doctrine and principles. For this reason, the classroom experience and effective class participation are essential to the first-year academic experience. First and foremost, this requires a full and careful reading of the assigned materials for each class. Starting at the beginning of the semester, students are often surprised at the amount of time they have to spend to feel fully prepared for class. This time required to fully digest and understand a case will diminish with practice, but for the first few weeks, be prepared to spend a lot of time mastering each case.

## **Grading & Examination**

### **Exam Procedures**

Every fall, the Associate Dean of Students will explain the exam procedures that will be used during the fall and spring semesters. Stay tuned for guidance on these procedures and if you have any special circumstances that require a change in procedures, please contact the Associate Dean of Students.

## **Anonymous Grading**

When possible, courses are graded on an anonymous basis. Each year, you will receive a four-digit anonymous Exam ID number. You should use this number instead of your name on all exams, unless instructed otherwise. It is very important that you use your correct number. Certain courses, however, cannot be graded anonymously. For example, courses with significant writing, performance, or participation requirements fall outside of the anonymous system. Also, certain courses are graded on a partially anonymous system. For example, a first-year course might be graded primarily by use of an exam but might also have a portion of the grade based on classroom participation.

## **Grade Reports**

Grade reports are available online at [bannerweb.richmond.edu](http://bannerweb.richmond.edu) at the end of each semester. We cannot release grades over the phone.

## **Grading Policy**

The grading policy for classes you take as a first year is as follows:

The mean (average) grade point for each course will be 3.30 +/- .10;

The following grade distribution shall apply:

- 20-40% = A or A-
- 25-45% = B+
- 10-30% = B
- 5-25% = B- and below

The Associate Dean of Academic Affairs will have limited discretion to allow faculty to deviate from the above policy. The full grading policy is available online at <https://richmond.coursedog.com/policies/lawacademicregulations#grading-policy>.

## **Grade Appeals**

A faculty member may change a grade in cases of a clerical (mathematical) or transcription error. If a student believes such an error has occurred, the student should communicate directly with the professor. If a student has received a failing grade in a course based on an examination or paper, the student may request review of that examination or paper. More information regarding grade appeals can be found online at <https://richmond.coursedog.com/policies/lawacademicregulations#grade-appeals1>.

## **Support & Advising**

### **Academic Success Program (ASP)**

The ASP helps students adjust to the first year of law school, reach their academic potential during law school, and ensure that all graduates are fully prepared to meet the challenge of the bar examination. First-year students work with Professor Krishnee Coley.

First-year ASP is an open-attendance program providing ongoing support and education through academic skills classes, workshops, and individual conferences throughout the academic year. Everyone is encouraged to attend, but attendance is voluntary.

### **Faculty Mentors**

Every student is assigned a faculty mentor upon entry to law school. Faculty mentors support you in your journey from law student to legal professional. Many students maintain contact with their assigned faculty mentor throughout their law school career. Others form a mentoring relationship with a faculty member with whom they have established a close professional bond. However created, a strong mentor relationship with a faculty member can be a very positive experience in law school. Mentors can encourage self-reflection and self-direction, offer guidance and feedback, provide context for your academic and professional experiences, and model professional behavior and values.

As part of the Professional Identity Formation (PIF) course, 1L students are required to meet at least once with their faculty mentor in the fall and spring semesters. These meetings provide opportunities for students to assess both their successes and challenges as they adjust to law school, identify areas for growth, and find resources to maximize their experience in law school.

### **Student Section Mentors (SSMs) & Peer Mentors (PMs)**

Every first-year small section is assigned a Student Section Mentor (SSM). SSMs are second- and third-year law students who serve as knowledgeable guides for new students and provide access to people, resources, and information. SSMs encourage a sense of community between students in their section and focus on a smooth transition, acclimation, and a sense of belonging at Richmond Law. You can expect to hear from your SSM throughout the year with reminders about resources that may help you.

Peer Mentors are second- and third-year law students who offer guidance and connect incoming students to helpful resources during their first year of law school. Each incoming student is matched with a Peer Mentor at orientation. You can ask your Peer Mentor about their own law school experience and share questions or concerns about your own. Both Peer Mentors and Student Section Mentors can provide student-focused insights about how to achieve success and happiness as a first-year law student.

### **Career Development Office (CDO)**

The Career Development Office (CDO) will help you explore your professional interests and define and achieve your career goals. The CDO supports students by conducting advising sessions, developing and implementing programs to increase your knowledge of career paths and refine your employment search skills, and facilitating alumni and employer connections.

As an entering student, you will be paired with a career advisor early during your first semester. Your career advisor, who is your primary CDO contact, is available to help you develop an employment search strategy, prepare application documents, practice interviews, build a networking plan, and direct

you to various employment search resources. As you will work with your advisor throughout your time at the law school, your advisor will be able to provide feedback tailored to your unique situation. You should participate in an initial meeting with your career advisor no later than mid-October. Thereafter, you may schedule a meeting with your career advisor at any time. Regular meetings and email check-ins are encouraged.

The CDO sponsors two recruitment programs during spring semester to supplement your employment search efforts. You may apply for interviews through the Spring On-Campus Interview Program and the Government & Public Interest Interview Program. You should set up a student profile in LawQuest, the CDO's career services management system, and thereafter you also may apply to job postings through the LawQuest system.

The Student Advisory Board, made up of upper-level students, meets regularly with the CDO team to discuss topics impacting students in the employment process and helps identify and plan the programs and services students need. Above all, the CDO is here not only to help you find a job, but to guide you as you launch your career.

## **Mental Health Services**

### **University of Richmond Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)**

CAPS offers a wide range of free, short-term mental health-related services for students at the University of Richmond. Students may access CAPS services during normal business hours in the Well-Being Center, for limited hours within the Law School, and in some circumstances remotely. About one-third of UR students use CAPS services at least once before they graduate.

CAPS is staffed by licensed mental health professionals and their services are free and confidential. Students are strongly encouraged to utilize CAPS services if they feel they could be helpful - no problem is too big or too small. Find more information about CAPS, including instructions on how to make an appointment, online at <https://caps.richmond.edu/>.

### **Virginia Judges and Lawyers Assistance Program (VJLAP)**

VJLAP offers tailored counseling services and support groups to law students who are suffering from mental health disorders and addiction. Their services are 100% free, confidential and non-disciplinary. Seeking help from VJLAP, whether for a current substance abuse or mental health issue or for dealing with a past legal infraction, can allow you to create a positive record of mature and responsible behavior in the face of situations that might otherwise seem to create obstacles to bar admissions. Learn more about VJLAP online at <https://vjlap.org/students/>.

## **Disability Services**

The mission of the University of Richmond Disability Services Office (Disability Services) is to ensure that those within our campus community who have disabilities are provided opportunity for full participation and equal access to campus resources. As part of this mission, Disability Services reviews applications for accommodations and determines if and what type of accommodations are appropriate

for each student on a case-by-case basis by balancing input from the student, documentation, and all application materials.

Approved accommodations are implemented by the Law School Dean's Office Student Affairs team in partnership with the student and the student's instructors. Learn more about Disability Services online at <https://disability.richmond.edu/>.

## **Financial Planning**

### **Financial Aid**

The Financial Aid Office supports students in many ways. They process loans and scholarship awards, provide helpful information about loan repayment, forgiveness, and consolidation, guidance on student budgeting, and answers to questions frequently asked by law students about financial aid. Learn more about the Financial Aid Office online at <https://financialaid.richmond.edu/>.

Students may also reach out to the Financial Aid Office to request an appointment with a personal financial aid advisor to discuss their individual financial needs.

### **MAX by AccessLex**

MAX by AccessLex is a free, multi-faceted personal finance program designed exclusively for law students. MAX provides quick and easy to understand lessons, in-person and online learning options, one-on-one financial coaching from Accredited Financial Counselors, and over \$300,000 in scholarship incentives each year to law students nationally. MAX content covers topics from paying for law school to investing for your retirement – and every step in between. Learn more about MAX by AccessLex online at <https://www.accesslex.org/max-by-accesslex>.

## **Extracurricular and Co-Curricular Activities**

### **Student Organizations**

There are over 35 groups in the law school covering a multitude of interests and perspectives. A list of all organizations can be found online at <https://law.richmond.edu/students/organizations/index.html>. Organizations typically elect new officers in the spring semester.

A student organization fair will be held at the start of each academic year and all students are welcome to attend and gather more information.

### **Journals**

Richmond Law has three student-run journals: The University of Richmond Law Review, the Richmond Journal of Law and Technology, and the Richmond Public Interest Law Review. Each Journal publishes articles and essays written by scholars as well as students. All sponsor academic symposia and have offices in the Law School.

Student journal members research all manner of legal sources (articles, statutes, constitutions, cases)

to collectively improve the quality of the scholarship selected for publication.

Students qualify for membership on a journal by completing the Unified Journal Competition, which consists of a Bluebook exam and a case note writing assignment, at the conclusion of their first year.

## **Internal Communications**

The best way to find out what is happening around the school is to refer to The Docket, an email newsletter distributed every Thursday morning and Sunday evening. You're also invited to connect with the Law School on Facebook ([facebook.com/URLawSchool/](https://www.facebook.com/URLawSchool/)), Instagram ([instagram.com/urlawschool/](https://www.instagram.com/urlawschool/)), and Twitter ([twitter.com/URLawSchool](https://twitter.com/URLawSchool)).

The online events calendar is a list of publicized events taking place in and around the law school (calendar found online at <https://law.richmond.edu/students/events/index.html>). You'll also find a list of each day's events on the TV screen in the front atrium.

## **Honor System**

The Law School honor system is exclusively student-run. The Honor Council adjudicates claims of academic misconduct under the Law School Honor Code. The Grievance Committee is responsible for investigating and prosecuting Honor Court cases. Members of the Student Advocate Corps are available to provide a defense for the accused student. If a claim of misconduct goes to trial, the Honor Court determines guilt or innocence and, in the event of a guilty verdict, imposes sanctions pursuant to the Code. Justices of the Honor Court, along with members of the Grievance Committee and the Student Advocate Corps are elected by the student body. In the event an accused goes to trial, the Justices serve as impartial jurors in the process.

A copy of the Honor Code can be found in the Law School Catalog online at <https://law.richmond.edu/students/honor-code.pdf>. Students are bound by the Law School's Honor Code by virtue of their matriculation at the Law School.

## **Standards of Conduct**

All students at the University of Richmond are subject to the University's Standards of Conduct. The purpose of the Standards of Conduct is to help ensure an environment that is most conducive to academic learning. The Standards define the rights, freedoms, and responsibilities regarding conduct of individuals and groups that make up the student academic community, and to identify those standards of conduct the University of Richmond deems essential for fulfilling its educational mission and its community life. The Standards govern the conduct of students and their guests on the campus of the University of Richmond or at University-sponsored activities and functions. The full text of the Standards of Conduct along with the consequent disciplinary procedures can be found in the Law Catalog online at <https://richmond.coursedog.com/policies/lawacademicregulations>.

## Reporting Complaints & Concerns

### Student Complaints

- Informal Complaints – Students may submit informal feedback and via the Informal Complaint Form, which is submitted to Law School administrators. This form may be used to submit feedback on issues big and small, from complaints about facilities to concerns about Law School strategic initiatives. The Informal Complaint Form can be found online at [bit.ly/inf-feedback](https://bit.ly/inf-feedback).
- Formal Complaints – Students may submit formal feedback (as detailed online in the Student Complaint Policy at <https://studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/contact-us/complaints.html>), via the Student Complaint Form. The Student Complaint Form can be found online at <https://studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/contact-us/complaints.html>.

This process is managed by the University's Student Development office, in partnership with Law School leadership and the Student Center for Equity and Inclusion (more information about the Student Center for Equity and Inclusion can be found online at <https://inclusion.richmond.edu/>).

If information obtained through the Informal or Formal Complaint forms leads administrators to believe that bias activity and/or sexual misconduct has occurred, that information will be passed along to the offices overseeing bias activity and/or sexual misconduct as described below.

### Reporting Bias Incidents, Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct

The University of Richmond values the dignity, worth, and contributions of all individuals in our community. The University encourages members of the campus community to report and is committed to responding to reports of bias incidents, discrimination, harassment, and other conduct that may violate applicable laws, regulations, or University policies. A summary of the many ways to report concerns at the University can be found online at <https://www.richmond.edu/reporting-resources/>.