Cornell Law School Grading Policy for JD Students

Faculty grading policy calls upon each faculty member to grade a course, including problem courses and seminars, so that the mean grade for JD students in the course approximates 3.35 (the acceptable variation can range between 3.2 and 3.5). This policy is subject only to very limited exceptions.

Before the fall 2010 semester, the policy, subject to the same very limited exceptions, called for faculty members to grade a course so that the mean grade for the JD students in the course did not exceed 3.35. There was, however, no lower limit for the course mean in any course.

Class Rank

As a matter of faculty policy we do not release the academic rankings of our students. Interested individuals, including employers, have access to the top 10% approximate cumulative grade point cut off for the most recent semester of completion. In addition, after four semesters, and subsequent semesters thereafter, the top 5% approximate cumulative grade point average is also available. Additionally, after four semesters, the top five students in the class are ranked.

Class of 2011 [five semesters]:
5% - 3.80; 10% - 3.70

Class of 2012 [three semesters]:
10% - 3.67

Class of 2013 [one semester]:
10% - 3.81

Dean’s List

Each semester all students whose semester grade point average places them in the top 30% of their class are awarded Dean’s List status. Students are notified of this honor by a letter from the Dean and a notation on their official and unofficial transcripts.

Academic Honors at Graduation

The faculty awards academic honors at graduation as follows: The faculty awards the J.D. degree summa cum laude by special vote in cases of exceptional performance. The school awards the J.D. degree magna cum laude to students who rank in the top 10% of the graduating class. Students who rank in the top 30% of the class receive the J.D. degree cum laude unless they are receiving another honors degree. For the graduating Class of 2010, the gpa cut off for magna cum laude was 3.67 and for cum laude was 3.48. Recipients are notified by a letter from the Dean and a notation on their official and unofficial transcripts.