Information about J.D. degree with honors at Michigan Law School

There are three levels of honors: cum laude, magna cum laude, and summa cum laude.

For students who matriculated prior to May 2012, honors are determined as follows:

The J.D. summa cum laude is awarded to every graduating student with a GPA of 4.000 or higher. The J.D. magna cum laude is awarded to every graduating student with a GPA of 3.700 to 3.999. The J.D. cum laude is awarded to every graduating student with a GPA of 3.400 to 3.699.

Note that a student’s GPA cannot be rounded up in order to qualify him or her for honors.

For students who matriculated in May 2012 or thereafter, and graduated in December 2014 or expect to graduate in May 2015:

The J.D. summa cum laude is awarded to every graduating student with a GPA of 4.0 or higher. If no August or December 2014 graduate has a GPA exceeding 4.0, the student(s) with the single highest GPA in those two groups will receive summa if and only if his or her GPA is at least as high as that of the May 2014 graduate(s) who received summa. If no May 2015 graduate has a GPA exceeding 4.0, the student(s) with the single highest GPA among the May 2015 graduates will receive summa if and only if his or her GPA is at least as high as that of the August or December 2014 graduate(s) who received summa.

The J.D. magna cum laude is awarded to the top 10% of the class that is not eligible for summa.

The J.D. cum laude is awarded to the top 37.5% of the class that is not eligible for summa or magna.

For students who matriculated in May 2012 or thereafter, and expect to graduate after May 2015:

The top 37.5% of students in each graduating class will receive Latin honors.

The J.D. summa cum laude is awarded to every graduating student with a GPA of 4.0 or higher. If no August or December graduate has a GPA exceeding 4.0, the student(s) with the single highest GPA in those two groups will receive summa if and only if his or her GPA is at least as high as that of the previous May graduate(s) who receive summa. If no May graduate has a GPA exceeding 4.0, the student(s) with the single highest GPA among the May graduates will receive summa if and only if his or her GPA is at least as high as that of the previous August or December graduate(s) who received summa.

The J.D. magna cum laude is awarded to students in the top 10% of the class who are not eligible for summa.

The J.D. cum laude is awarded to the remaining students in the top 37.5% who are not eligible for summa or magna.
May graduates will be treated as a separate class for purposes of determining magna cum laude and cum laude honors. For purposes of determining summa cum laude honors, any May graduates with GPAs of 4.0 or higher shall receive summa cum laude honors. If no May graduate has a GPA exceeding 4.0, the student(s) with the single highest GPA shall receive summa if and only if his or her GPA is at least as high as that of the previous August and December graduate receiving summa.

August and December graduates in the same calendar year will be grouped together as one class for purposes of determining magna cum laude and cum laude honors. For purposes of determining summa cum laude honors, any August and December graduates with GPAs of 4.0 or higher shall receive summa cum laude honors. If no August or December graduate has a GPA exceeding 4.0, the student(s) with the single highest GPA in those two groups of graduates combined shall receive summa if and only if his or her GPA is at least as high as that of the previous May graduate receiving summa.

Note that a student’s GPA cannot be rounded up in order to qualify him or her for honors.

**Graded credits needed for honors eligibility**

You need a total of 62 "graded for honors" credits in order to be eligible. Your Michigan Law School GPA is based on graded law classes taken at UM Law. Non-law classes, or law classes taken elsewhere, are not factored into your Michigan GPA, nor do they count towards the 62 graded for honors credits. However there are two exceptions: both credits earned by transfer students during their 1L year at another law school and credits earned when a student has been permitted to visit another law school for compelling and unusual personal reasons count towards the 62 graded for honors credits. None of those credits will be factored into your UM Law GPA, though.

Assuming that you graduate with exactly 82 credits, this means that you are permitted a maximum of 20 TOTAL pass/fail hours to be eligible for honors. Total pass/fail hours combines the number of credits you convert from a letter graded to a “Pass” (which appear as a “P” on your transcript and are described above). Mandatory pass/fail courses are those in which the Law School requires that you earn a grade of “S” for a grade of “C” (and in the case of clinical law courses, “C+”) or better. Examples of mandatory pass/fail courses are Legal Practice, Clinics, Externships (but not the externship paper), and non-UM law courses (be they non-law courses, or law courses taken elsewhere). For those who are not going to graduate with honors (GPA of 3.400 or higher, no rounding off), there is no limit on mandatory pass/fail credits, provided that all other graduation requirements (in particular, the “64 rule”) are met.

Mandatory and elective pass/fail (in terms of honors: again, neither mandatory nor elective (i.e., “grade conversion to pass”) pass/fail credits count toward the 62 graded credits required for honors eligibility. This is especially relevant to those who pursue an externship, a study abroad program, a dual degree program, and, to a lesser extent, clinical law courses. Any combination of these will result in a high number of mandatory pass/fail credits. Therefore, if you want to be eligible for honors and have an "eclectic" curriculum, then you should pay close attention.

**Order of the Coif.** This is awarded to the top 10% of the graduating class who earn 62 graded credits. For Coif purposes, the graduating class includes the August and December classes of one year and May class of the following year (e.g., August 2013, December 2013, and May 2014). If a student in the top 10% does not meet the graded credits requirement, substitutions by the next student down on the ranked class list are not permitted. In other words, if 390 are in the class of 2014, then the top 39 students are
reviewed for the Order of the Coif to determine if they qualify for honors (in terms of graded credits). Students who do not meet the requirements are eliminated.

For students who transferred to UM Law (beginning with the graduating class of 2014), credits earned in graded courses taken at their first-year law school will count towards the 62 graded credits required for Coif eligibility. (These graded credits will not be factored into their UM Law GPA.) However, credits taken at another law school earned while a visiting (i.e., non-degree) student will not count towards the 62 graded credits.

Finally, at Senior Day (which is what we call our commencement ceremony), honors are not announced, since final semester grades are not yet available. For May graduates, degrees will be "awarded" with honors designations included around the beginning of July (with the official date of degree being the last day of the May examination period). For December graduates, degrees will be awarded with honors designations included in mid-February (with the official date of degree being the last day of the December exam period).

Students with questions about honors eligibility should see Jack Atkinson in the Office of Student Records.

January 2015