

BAR EXAM REGISTRATION AND APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS*

All law school graduates must apply for admission to a state bar in order to obtain a license to practice law in that jurisdiction. The criteria for eligibility to take the bar examination or to otherwise qualify for bar admission are set by each state's board of bar examiners. Some states require that law students register for the bar exam as early as the first semester of the first year of law school. A list of those states requiring early law student registration is included on page 3. Students who miss the early registration deadlines in these states may end up paying expensive late registration fees.

A License to Practice Law

Obtaining a license to practice law involves a demonstration of **competence** and **character and fitness**.

Competence is ordinarily established by a showing that the applicant holds an acceptable educational credential (i.e., a J.D. degree) from a law school that meets educational standards, and by achieving a passing score on the bar examination.

Character and fitness of the applicant is evaluated by the bar examiners. In this regard, bar examiners seek background information concerning each applicant that is relevant to the appropriateness of granting a professional credential. Law is a public profession, and because the degree of harm a lawyer can inflict once licensed is substantial, decisions about who should be admitted to practice law are made carefully by the bar examining boards.

The Exam(s)

The most common bar exam testing configuration consists of a two-day or three-day examination. The first day of testing is devoted to the Multistate Bar Examination (MBE). The second day of testing is typically comprised of locally state crafted essays. In some states there is a third day of testing, which may include the Multistate Essay Examination (MEE) and/or the Multistate Performance Test (MPT).

In addition, almost all jurisdictions require that the applicant present a passing score on the Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination (MPRE). Passing scores are established by each jurisdiction. Massachusetts requires a passing score of 85. The MPRE is administered separately from the bar exam in March, August and November. Law students may take the MPRE while enrolled in law school. For more information about the MPRE and to download an application visit: <http://www.ncbex.org/multistate-tests/mpre/>.

* Excerpt from the National Conference of Bar Examiners, <http://www.ncbex.org>.

Exam	Details	Registration Information
Multistate Bar Examination (MBE) * Exam administered in all states	a six-hour, two-hundred question multiple-choice examination covering contracts, torts, constitutional law, criminal law, evidence, and real property	Apply to applicable State Board of Bar Admissions: http://www.ncbex.org/bar-admissions/offices/
Multistate Essay Examination (MEE) *Exam may be administered in states requiring a third day of testing	a three-hour, six-question essay examination covering agency and partnership, commercial paper, conflict of laws, corporations, decedents' estates, family law, federal civil procedure, sales, secured transactions, and trusts and future interests.	Apply to applicable State Board of Bar Admissions: http://www.ncbex.org/bar-admissions/offices/
Multistate Performance Test (MPT) * Exam may be administered in states requiring a third day of testing	three 90-minute skills questions covering legal analysis, fact analysis, problem solving, resolution of ethical dilemmas, organization and management of a lawyering task, and communication	Apply to applicable State Board of Bar Admissions: http://www.ncbex.org/bar-admissions/offices/
Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination (MPRE)	a fifty question, two-hour, multiple-choice examination administered three times each year	Apply on-line at: http://www.ncbex.org/multistate-tests/mpre/

Boards of bar examiners in most jurisdictions expect candidates to register for the exam during the final year of law school. Bar examinations are administered at the end of February and July, with considerably more applicants taking the July test because it falls after graduation from law school.

As state-specific information is so important (and so variable) in the lawyer-licensing process, law students should contact the [board of bar examiners](#) in the jurisdiction(s) in which they are most likely to practice law. A directory of state board of bar examiners is available at <http://www.abanet.org/legaled/baradmissions/barcont.html>.

The Patent Bar Exam

A patent attorney is someone who is admitted to practice patent cases before the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO). The patent bar is administered by the United State Patent Office. Each practitioner must show proof of good moral character and reputation, have the requisite scientific or technical background, and pass the registration examination commonly known as the patent bar exam. Students are encouraged to take the patent bar exam before graduating from law school. For additional information about the patent bar exam, visit www.uspto.gov/web/offices/dcom/olia/oed/examregist.htm.

States Requiring Early Law Student Registration

State or Jurisdiction	Law Student Registration Fee	Website
Alabama	\$10 - \$100	www.alabar.org
California	\$92	www.calbar.org
Florida	\$75 - \$500	www.floridabarexam.org
Illinois	\$100 - \$450	www.ibaby.org
Iowa	\$25 - \$75	www.judicial.state.ia.us
Louisiana	\$25 (Plus NCBE report fee)	www.lascba.org
Mississippi	\$100 - \$300	www.mssc.state.ms.us
Missouri	\$200 - \$445 (Application fee for Character and Fitness Report due as soon as law school begins. Fees increase the longer the applicant waits to file.)	www.mble.org
North Dakota	\$150 (Includes NCBE report fee)	www.ndcourts.com
Ohio	\$75 (Plus NCBE report fee)	www.sconet.state.oh.us
Oklahoma	\$125 - \$500 (Plus NCBE report fee)	www.okbar.org
South Dakota	\$50 (Plus other fees)	www.sdjudicial.com
Texas	\$150 (Plus other fees)	www.ble.state.tx.us
Virginia	\$175 - \$290 (Application fee for Character and Fitness Report.)	www.vbbe.state.va.us