

Board of Law Examiners

Full List of Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

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Questions About the Application Process

1. What are the steps in the processing of an application for admission by examination?

Answer: Applications for first-time Michigan bar exam takers, and re-examination applicants whose character and fitness clearance is more than three years old, must be completed online through the State Bar of Michigan (<https://www.michbar.org/professional/byexam>). The Affidavit of Personal History provides the information that is the basis for investigation of the applicant by the State Bar Committee on Character and Fitness. The electronic application will automatically generate the application to sit and the Affidavit of Personal History for the bar examination. Upon receipt of the electronic payment by the State Bar, the Board of Law Examiners receives the application to sit for the

examination, and the Character and Fitness Department receives the information for its investigation. Both processes proceed simultaneously. Detailed exam-day instructions along with an admission certificate to the examination are mailed to applicants the first week of the month of the examination. In usual course, passers of the examination may expect certification by the Board as soon as the results are released. Unofficial results are released to those applicants whose certification must await either character and fitness clearance or a passing score on the Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination. Applicants lacking certification of law school graduation do not receive even unofficial results until such law school certification is received by the Board.

Re-examination applicants must still send their re-examination form and fee directly to the Board of Law Examiners. If you have received your official examination results and lost your re-examination form, please send a written request to the Board at Board of Law Examiners, Michigan Hall of Justice, P.O. Box 30052, Lansing, MI 48909.

2. Where do I find information about the MPRE?

Answer: Information can be obtained from the website of the National Conference of Bar Examiners. (www.ncbex.org) The application for the MPRE may be available at a Michigan law school or by calling 319-337-1287. For records, call 319-337-1304.

3. How will I be admitted to the examination?

Answer: The first week of the month of the exam you will receive an admission certificate. Applicants receiving special accommodations usually receive their tickets the second week of the month of the exam. You must have this document in order to be admitted to the exam.

Questions About the Bar Examination

1. What are the qualifications to take the Michigan bar examination?

Answer: Board of Law Examiners Rules 1 and 2 set out the general requirements.

Subheading: Multistate portion of the exam

2. If an applicant has taken the Multistate portion of the exam in another state, is there provision for transfer of the score?

Answer: If the other state accepts transfer of MBE scores from exams administered in Michigan, a passing MBE score obtained within three years might transfer from that state. In the case of states that accept transfers from “concurrent examinations only,” a transfer only from a concurrent examination will be accepted. The applicant is still required to sit for the essay portion of the Michigan examination and must achieve a passing score as determined by a combination of the scores of the two portions of the examination. See MCL 600.934(3). The necessary form can be downloaded from the State Bar of Michigan's website: <https://www.michbar.org/professional/pdfs/F2.pdf>.

In addition to having the other jurisdiction certify the information to the Board, the applicant must also notify the Board of Law Examiners (not the State Bar of Michigan) by letter—fax and email are not

accepted—to the Board of Law Examiners, P.O. Box 30052, Lansing, MI 48909, of the applicant’s intent to transfer his or her MBE score, no later than May 15 for the July examination and December 15 for the February examination. This written notice of intent to transfer an MBE score is a necessary precondition to perfect the applicant’s right to transfer an MBE score to Michigan.

Subheading: Accommodations for those with disabilities or medical conditions

3. Are special exam accommodations available for those with disabilities or medical conditions?

Answer: Special accommodations are available on a showing that the applicant has a disability or medical condition warranting such accommodations. The Board employs the Americans with Disabilities Act standard, i.e., that a person is disabled if that individual has “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individual.” See 42 USC 12102. A “[Special Accommodations Questionnaire and Affidavit](#)” is available [here](#).

4. Are arrangements available for lactating mothers?

Answer: If you are a lactating mother who will need to pump during the bar exam, please notify the Board of Law Examiners (BLE) office at least 6 weeks prior to the exam. Send a letter notifying the BLE that you require a private room for pumping and storage of your pump and cooler. You are responsible for bringing your own cooler for storing the milk. Your pump bag and cooler will be subject to inspection to ensure no prohibited items are contained within and will be stored with BLE staff. The BLE requests notification as early as possible of your needs so that we can reserve a private room for you to use to pump at the exam facility. If you have concerns or require additional information, please contact BLE Executive Director Maribeth Graff at 517-373-4452 or BLE-Info@courts.mi.gov

Subheading: Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination

5. What is the passing score on the Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination and for how long is it valid?

Answer: The passing score is currently 85. That score is valid indefinitely.

Subheading: Exam dates and deadlines for filing an application

6. When is the Michigan bar examination and what are the deadlines for filing an application?

Answer: The bar examination is offered twice a year, on the final Tuesday and Wednesday of February and July. An application must be filed by November 1 for the February examination, or March 1 for the July examination. Late applications will be accepted until December 15 for the February examination, or May 15 for the July examination. Late applications must be accompanied by an additional \$100 fee. Bar application forms and instructions are available on the State Bar of Michigan's website.

7. If I apply to take an exam but need or want to delay taking it, what should I do?

Answer: As soon as you decide to delay taking the exam, send the Board of Law Examiners a letter by U.S. Mail stating you wish to transfer your application to a future exam. If you have already received your admission certificate, return that original with your letter. Fees already paid are not refunded. To transfer to a future exam there is a transfer fee. That fee is currently \$100. When you send your letter

you do not need to state which exam you wish to transfer or send the transfer fee. You also do not need to state a reason for the transfer. When you decide which future exam you are going to take, send the Board a letter saying you had applied, for example, for the February 2011 exam and wish to transfer your application to, for example, the February 2012 exam. Include the \$100 fee (money order) at that time. The filing deadline is 60 days before the exam you wish to sit for.

8. Are past exam questions available for review?

Answer: The Board of Law Examiners posts prior essay exams and examiners' analyses on its website. You can access these under the "Admission to the Bar" link.

9. Can I get a copy of my answers to the essay questions?

Answer: Yes, but only if you were unsuccessful on the bar examination. See Question 13 for further information. Answers are not returned to those who passed the examination.

10. When are the examination results released?

Answer: Examination results are generally released in mid-November for the July exam and mid-May for the February exam. Results are not given out over the telephone, so please do not call to inquire about your results. The Board of Law Examiners will post results by seat number on its website the same day the results are mailed to examinees. You are responsible for remembering your seat number. Do not call the Board of Law Examiners or the Character and Fitness Department to obtain your seat number.

11. What happens if I fail the bar examination?

Answer: If you fail the exam, you will receive information with your results describing the appeal process and the applicable deadlines. Read this information carefully. An application for re-examination will also be included with your official results. Official results are sent when the Board of Law Examiners is in receipt of your passing MPRE score, your law school certification, and your character and fitness clearance. A re-examination fee of \$300 is charged. Applications for re-examination must be filed at least sixty (60) days before the examination. If you failed the examination, you may send a written request for copies of your answers. The cost is \$20 (money order or certified funds). With those answers you will also receive a copy of the exam questions and examiners' analyses. Pursuant to Board of Law Examiners Rule 4, if the applicant's character and fitness clearance is more than three years old, the applicant must again be approved by the State Bar Committee on Character and Fitness.

12. Is there a limit on how many times I can take the bar examination?

Answer: No.

13. What is the format of the Michigan bar examination?

Answer: Pursuant to Board of Law Examiners Rule 3, the examination consists of the Multistate Bar Examination prepared by the National Conference of Bar Examiners and administered on dates and under regulations set by the Conference. The second portion of the exam consists of 15 essay questions prepared by or under the supervision of the Board or by law professors selected by the Board, on these subjects:

- (a) Real and Personal Property
- (b) Wills and Trusts
- (c) Contracts
- (d) Constitutional Law
- (e) Criminal Law and Procedure
- (f) Corporations, Partnerships, and Agency
- (g) Evidence
- (h) Creditor's Rights, including mortgages, garnishments, and attachments
- (i) Practice and Procedure, trial and appellate, state and federal
- (j) Equity
- (k) Torts (including no-fault)
- (l) The sales, negotiable instruments, and secured transactions articles of the Uniform Commercial Code
- (m) Michigan Rules of Professional Conduct
- (n) Domestic Relations
- (o) Conflicts of Laws
- (p) Worker's Compensation

14. How are scores calculated?

Answer: Each essay question has 10 possible points for a total of 150 possible points on the essay portion of the exam. There are 200 possible points on the Multistate (MBE) portion of the exam. A combined score of 135 or above is necessary to pass the exam using the following formula:

$$\text{Combined score} = [\text{scaled essay score} + \text{MBE score}] / 2$$

where the scaled essay score is the score resulting from the linking of the raw essay score to the MBE scale using linear equating methods (sometimes referred to as “scaling”) adjusted for the relative difficulty of the two portions of the bar exam as measured by the difference in the mean scores on the MBE scale for each portion of the exam averaged over six exam administrations.

15. Can I use my laptop computer to take the essay examination?

Answer: Yes. Information about using a laptop for the essay portion of the exam can be found in the Computer Based Testing Information document. There is a fee, ranging from approximately \$104 to \$110, payable to ExamSoft upon registering with them.

16. Can the Board of Law Examiners recommend a bar review course?

Answer: The Board makes no recommendation regarding bar review courses.

17. If I fail, can I review the MBE questions and answers?

Answer: No.

18. What can I bring into the examination room and/or testing area?

Answer: In September 2005, the Board of Law Examiners adopted a very strict security policy. To view the security policy, click the “Rules, Statutes, and Policy Statements” tab in the left-hand navigation on this page.

19. What is the Board of Law Examiners policy on bar examination conduct?

Answer: To view the policy the Board adopted, click the “Rules, Statutes, and Policy Statements” tab in the left-hand navigation on this page. The conduct policy is listed at the bottom of the page.

Questions About Character and Fitness

1. If the Board rejects my application on character and fitness grounds, when may I re-apply?

Answer: A recent amendment to State Bar Rule 15 sec 1 (17) and (18) now sets the waiting period at two years, reserving to the Standing Committee on Character and Fitness and the Board of Law Examiners the power to lengthen the period to as long as 5 years.

2. Where should I inquire about the character and fitness process?

Answer: Questions about the character and fitness process should be directed to the State Bar of Michigan at (517) 367-6510 or 346-6300.

3. How long is my character and fitness clearance valid?

Answer: Unless new information is received, your clearance is valid for three years.

4. Can I take the bar exam more than once if my fitness requirement has not been fulfilled?

Answer: No. The Board is not required by the rules to permit anyone to sit for an examination pending the fulfillment of those requirements. As a matter of grace the Board has permitted applicants to sit for one and only one examination pending character and fitness and MPRE clearances.

Questions About Admission to the Bar

1. Must an applicant be a U.S. citizen or resident?

Answer: No, however, there is a requirement that applicants have a J.D. degree from a reputable and qualified law school incorporated in the United States.

Subheading: Returning to Active Practice

2. I have been an inactive member of the State Bar for 3+ years. What role does the Board play in my return to active practice?

Answer: State Bar Rule 2 (B)(2) provides that one inactive for more than 3 years must obtain “a certificate from the Board of Law Examiners that the member possesses sufficient ability and learning in the law to enable the member to properly practice as an attorney and counselor in Michigan.” Applications for recertification are available on the Board’s website at the bottom of the main page.

Subheading: LLM from an ABA-approved law school

3. Is an LLM from an ABA-approved law school sufficient to allow me to sit for the Michigan bar examination?

Answer: No. Board of Law Examiners Rule 2, *inter alia*, requires applicants to have a J.D. from a reputable and qualified law school incorporated in the United States or its territories.

Subheading: After passing the exam and certification

4. Once I pass the exam & am certified for admission, what do I have to do to practice law in Michigan?

Answer: The applicant must appear and present the Board of Law Examiners certification to the Supreme Court or one of the circuit courts, and upon motion made in open court by a licensed lawyer, the court will enter an order admitting the applicant to the Michigan bar. After being admitted to the bar by the court, the applicant must then complete an application for membership in the State Bar of Michigan, enclosing payment of the required dues. By return mail, the applicant will receive a membership card bearing a license number. Registration with the State Bar of Michigan and payment of bar dues is the final step in becoming authorized to practice law before the state courts of Michigan.

5. When will I get my bar number and membership card?

Answer: After you have applied for membership in the State Bar of Michigan and paid the required dues, you will receive by return mail a membership card bearing your license number.

Questions About Being Admitted on Motion

1. Can an attorney from another state be admitted without taking the bar examination?

Answer: The State of Michigan permits admission on motion, without examination. To determine if you qualify for admission on motion, please read carefully the requirements of Rule 5, noting particularly the practice requirements. For further information and the application materials, go to the [Admission to the Bar](#) tab on this page.

Subheading: Attorneys who do not meet BLE’s Rule 5 requirements

2. Is there an abbreviated attorneys exam for those who are attorneys but do not meet the requirements of BLE’s Rule 5?

Answer: No.

Miscellaneous Questions

1. How much are Bar dues?

Answer: Contact the State Bar of Michigan at 517-346-6300.

2. How do I change my address with the Board?

Answer: Send the change of address in writing to the Board of Law Examiners at P.O. Box 30052, Lansing, MI 48909. Once you have been admitted to practice, send changes of address to the State Bar of Michigan, 306 Townsend Street, Lansing, Michigan 48933-2083.

3. What can I bring into the examination room and/or testing area?

Answer: In September 2005, the Board of Law Examiners adopted a very strict security policy. To view the security policy, visit the [Exam Security and Conduct Policy](#) tab in the left-hand navigation on this page.

4. What is the Board of Law Examiners policy on bar examination conduct?

Answer: To view the conduct policy, visit the [Exam Security and Conduct Policy](#) tab in the left-hand navigation on this page. Conduct policy is at the bottom of that page.