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Iowa bar exam

Summary of Bar Examination Law Student Registration Requirement (no longer required) Bar Examination Schedule Fees and Deadlines Bar Exam Application Bar Exam Laptop Option Application for Testing Accommodations (ADA) Application for Courtesy Accommodations (Non-ADA) Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination (MPRE) MBE Score Transfer Request Summary of Bar Examination Iowa administers the Uniform Bar Examination (UBE). The UBE is composed of the Multistate Essay Examination (MEE), two Multistate Performance Test (MPT) tasks, and the Multistate Bar Examination (MBE). It is uniformly administered, graded, and scored and results in a portable score that can be transferred to other UBE jurisdictions. The UBE is administered over two days, with the MBE given on the last Wednesday of February and July and the MEE and MPT given on the Tuesday prior to that. For more information on the UBE, please visit the NCBE the following website: www.ncbex.org/exams/ube/. Law Student Registration Requirement (No Longer Required) The Supreme Court of Iowa has approved a rule change eliminating the Law Student Registration Requirement. Applicants are still required to file the Bar Exam Application by the required deadlines in order to be permitted to sit for the bar exam. Bar Examination Schedule July 2025 Bar Exam The July 2025 exam will be held at the Holiday Inn Des Moines Airport Conference Center on on July 29-30, 2025. The application deadline for that exam was April 1, 2025. February 2026 Bar Exam. The application deadline for the February 2026 Iowa Bar Examination is November 1, 2025. The February 2026 exam will be held at the Courtyard by Marriott in Ankeny on February 24-25, 2026. Bar Application Fee and Deadlines Fee This fee is non-refundable. See Iowa Ct. R. 31.6. Check or money order should be payable to the "Iowa Board of Law Examiners." The appropriate fee is either \$800 or \$550, as determined below. \$800 Fee. Most applicants must pay an \$800 application fee. \$550 Fee. The following individuals must pay a \$550 application fee: Applicants who meet both of the following requirements: 1) filed a Law Student Registration under Iowa Court Rule 31.2 with the Office of Professional Regulation on or before January 15, 2021, AND 2) have never been licensed to practice law in any United States jurisdiction, Or Applicants who meet both of the following requirements: 1) have submitted a prior application and fee to take the Iowa bar examination AND 2) have never been licensed to practice law in any United States jurisdiction Deadline Applicants must file a completed application with the Office of Professional Regulation no later than April 1 preceding the July examination or November 1 preceding the February examination. An applicant who fails the Iowa bar examination and wants to take the next examination must file a new application within the above deadlines or within 30 days of the date the applicant's score is released from the prior Iowa examination, whichever is later. If a deadline falls on a day where the Office of Professional Regulation is closed, applications are accepted through the next business day. There is no waiver of these deadlines. Bar Exam Application Application Requirements In order to be eligible to sit for the Iowa Bar Examination, applicants must 1) have obtained a J.D. or LL.B. from an ABA-approved law school, 2) scored 80 or above on the Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination (MPRE), 3) demonstrate an intention to practice law in Iowa or another UBE jurisdiction, and 4) possess the requisite character and fitness to practice law. Required Application Items: All of the following must be submitted to the Office of Professional Regulation by the registration deadline. Items are considered filed when they are postmarked or when they are hand-delivered to the Office of Professional Regulation, 1111 East Court Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50319. If all three items are not received by the application deadline, the application will not be accepted and it will not be considered filed. 1. The NCBE Online Character Report Application PDF. From the above link, select Iowa as the jurisdiction to which you are applying. On the next page, click on the NCBE Account Login button and either log in with your credential or create an account. Click the Character & Fitness Icon to begin a new application. Select that you are applying to Iowa and select your Application Category as "Bar Examination." Proceed with completing the applicant and uploading any necessary attachments. Pay the separate report application fee to the National Conference of Bar Examiners at the time the NCBE online application is finalized and printed. For your convenience, a sample of the questions asked on the online character application can be found by clicking this link. Please note that this sample application is for informational purposes only. Applicants must follow the steps above to actually complete the application online, including finalizing and making payment with the NCBE. DO NOT fill out and submit the sample application. 2. The Iowa Bar Examination Cover Sheet and Checklist with the completed forms attached, including the NCBE Character Report Application PDF mentioned in item 1. 3. The appropriate fee with a check or money order made payable to "Board of Law Examiners." For the appropriate fee, see above. Optional Application Item: Applicants seeking either nonstandard ADA or courtesy accommodations should also submit all required forms related to those requests along with the three items mentioned above on or before the bar exam application deadline. These forms can be found below. Bar Exam Laptop Option The Iowa Board of Law Examiners is pleased to offer the option to use your laptop for the written portion of the bar exam (Multistate Essay Exam and Multistate Performance Test). Please note that tablets are not permitted for testing, and a wireless mouse or wireless keyboard is not permitted. Applicants who timely complete the registration process with our software provider will be permitted to use their laptops for the exam. You must provide your intent to use the laptop option with your bar exam application materials. Specific information about registration of your laptop and payment of the laptop use fee will be provided after all applications are received. Payment is made directly to our software vendor once the registration period opens. The fee is \$122. Application for Testing Accommodations (ADA) What is the process for seeking nonstandard testing accommodations? The Iowa Board of Law Examiners is committed to providing reasonable testing accommodations consistent with state and federal law. Reasonable accommodations are those adjustments or modifications of the standard testing conditions that ameliorate the impact of the applicant's disability on the examination process without fundamentally altering the nature of the exam, imposing an undue administrative or financial burden on the Board, compromising the security, validity or reliability of the exam, or providing an unfair advantage to the applicant with the disability. Applicants seeking testing accommodations for a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) must file the ELIGIBILITY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS (Form A) (see available online forms below) along with other form(s) and all supporting documentation appropriate for the disability. The burden of proof is on the applicant to show the need for any additional testing considerations. You must prove that your condition has substantially impaired a major life activity as compared to the general population and that the requested accommodation is reasonably designed to ameliorate the impact of the disability. The Board of Law Examiners reserves the right to request supplemental information from the applicant regarding the claimed disability or suggested accommodations including, but not limited to, additional expert examinations and/or reports. The Board also reserves the right to make a final judgment concerning testing accommodations and may, in its discretion, seek an independent evaluation from a medical specialist, psychologist, psychiatrist or other qualified specialist. Each case will be evaluated on its facts. What is the deadline for filing a request for accommodations? In order for the request for accommodation to be considered by the Board, all appropriate forms and supporting documentation pertaining to the disability must be completed by the appropriate parties, attached to Form A and returned by the applicant to the Board by the bar application deadline. What forms must be filed? Forms to be submitted to support a request for accommodations are: Form A – Eligibility Questionnaire to be completed by applicant (Doc) (REQUIRED) Form B – Physical Disability (Doc) Verification to be completed by Physician/Licensed professional, describing the type and extent of the disability and specifying the effect of such disability on the applicant's ability to take the bar examination. The licensed professional should be specific about any recommendations for extra testing time. Form C – Learning Disability (Doc) Verification to be completed by Physician/Licensed professional, describing the type and extent of the disability and specifying the effect of such disability on an applicant's ability to take the bar examination. This form must be accompanied by copies of the evaluation and sub-tests which were administered within the last three years from the date the application for testing accommodation is filed. Form D – ADD/ADHD (Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder) (Doc) Verification to be completed by a Physician/Licensed professional. This form must be accompanied by copies of the evaluation and tests which were administered within the last three years from the date the application for testing accommodation is filed. Form E – Mental Disability (Doc) Verification to be completed by Physician/Licensed professional. This form must be accompanied by copies of the evaluation and tests which were administered and a psychological report. Form F – Law School Accommodations Form to be completed by Law School Official (Doc). Application for Courtesy Accommodations (Non-ADA) Applicants seeking testing accommodations based upon a condition not covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act, including but not limited to breast-pumping, pregnancy, or the need to access medication at the exam site, should complete and file the form below as soon as the need for accommodations becomes apparent. The board of law examiners will address such requests on an individualized basis and may require medical documentation. The board will ensure breast-pumping applicants can bring necessary equipment to the exam site and are able to express milk in a sanitary and private setting with access to electrical outlets. Request for Courtesy Accommodation for Health-Related Conditions (PDF) Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination (MPRE) The Iowa Board of Law Examiners does not schedule or administer the MPRE. The National Conference of Bar Examiners website includes MPRE online registration. An MPRE score of 80 or above must be on file with the Office of Professional Regulation before the applicant is allowed to sit for the bar examination. If an applicant has not achieved a score of 80 or above prior to the applicable bar application deadline, the applicant must submit with the application, a petition or letter to the Iowa Supreme Court requesting leave from the Court to submit a late MPRE score. DO NOT submit this request directly to the Iowa Supreme Court, instead include with the completed application. There is no specific form for this petition. Applicants should detail plans to fulfill the MPRE requirement as outlined by the Iowa Court Rules. MBE Score Transfer Request If you have taken the MBE in Iowa and wish to transfer your score to another jurisdiction, please send a written request to the Office of Professional Regulation at the address listed above. The request should include: your name, the date of the examination from which you wish to transfer your MBE score, the address of the jurisdiction you wish to transfer the score to, and a check for \$25 made payable to the Board of Law Examiners. Since the adoption of the Uniform Bar Examination (UBE), Iowa no longer accepts transferred MBE scores. All applicants must take the entire UBE. Inquiries and Information Please direct inquiries to: Dan Saar, Director of Admissions Office of Professional Regulation Judicial Branch Building 1111 East Court Avenue Des Moines IA 50319 Phone: (515) 348-4670 Fax: (515) 348-4698 Email: Bar.Admissions@iowacourts.gov Passing the Iowa bar exam is an essential part of being admitted into the state's bar and beginning a successful career practicing law. In this guide, we'll break down everything you need to get started, including: The bar exam's eligibility criteria, content, and structure The steps you can take in order to give yourself the best chance of passing on your first attempt The additional requirements you'll need to satisfy in order to become admitted into the state's bar We'll also briefly look at the process of getting admitted through an Admission on Motion for out-of-state attorneys. \$2050+ Choose Kaplan Interested in getting started? We recommend Kaplan's bar exam preparation materials, which come with a free retake guarantee, interactive and flexible learning, and lawyer-led tutoring. The Iowa bar exam is administered by the Iowa Board of Law Examiners, which operates under the guidance of the Iowa Supreme Court. The Board collaborates with the Office of Professional Regulation to evaluate the qualifications of candidates, oversee the examination process, and ensure that all candidates meet the necessary standards for character and fitness. Applicants should be aware that the examination is held biannually, with sessions on the last Tuesday and Wednesday of February and July. The deadline for applications is April 1 for the July exam and November 1 for the February exam. Keep in mind that those who fail the exam may reapply within 30 days of receiving their scores in order to arrange a retake at the next available session. The standard exam fee is \$800, with a reduced fee of \$550 for those who have both previously applied for the Iowa bar exam and have never been licensed to practice law in any other U.S. jurisdiction. Note: Candidates close to completing their law degree may be eligible to sit for the exam before graduating by providing to the Committee an affidavit from their law school dean. This affidavit must verify their expected graduation within 45 days of the bar exam's start date. Since 2016, the state of Iowa has adopted the Uniform Bar Exam (UBE), which adheres to the following structure: Day 1: Multistate Performance Test (MPT): Two 90-minute Multistate Performance Test Questions (20%) Multistate Essay Examination (MEE): Six 30-minute Multistate Essay Exam questions (30%) Day 2: Multistate Bar Examination (MBE): 200 question multiple-choice exam (50%) The UBE exam is scored out of 400 points, 266 of which need to be answered correctly in order for a candidate to receive a passing mark. Below, we've broken down the content and structure of each exam-related requirement in more detail. The MPT is made up of two 90-minute parts, and the materials for each part contain a "File" and a "Library." The File consists of source documents that contain all of the facts of a specific case. As the examinee, the assignment that you will need to complete will be described in a memorandum from a supervising attorney. The File can also include things like transcripts of interviews, depositions, pleadings, trials, client documents, newspaper articles, police reports, and any other similar documents. Keep in mind that irrelevant information is generally included, and facts are sometimes incomplete, ambiguous, or even conflicting. This is meant to mirror legal practice, in which a client's or supervising attorney's version of events may be unreliable or entirely incomplete. In such a scenario, you will be expected to recognize when facts are inconsistent or missing in the exam and identify sources of additional facts. The Library part contains things like cases, statutes, and regulations, some of which may also not be relevant to the task that you will be assigned. You will need to be able to extract the legal principles required to analyze the legal problem you'll be presented with and perform the requested task. For more information, you can have a look at the National Conference of Bar Examiners' Instructions for Taking the MPT document. Free summaries of MPTs from recent examinations are also offered (e.g., MPT Summaries of 2023). The MEE consists of six 30-minute sections that can cover a variety of legal areas, including: Civil Procedure Business Associations (e.g., Agency and Partnership, LLCs, Corporations, etc.) Conflict of Laws Constitutional Law Contract Law Family Law Criminal Law Torts Trust and Estates Keep in mind that questions can often include issues in more than one area of law. This means that it'll be important to ensure that you have a "wide" range of understanding rather than a deep focus on one or two subjects. Note: For more information, have a look at the NCBE's official Instructions for Taking the MEE document or check out a few official MEE questions. The MBE is made up of 200 multiple-choice questions, which are broken down into 175 scored questions and 25 unscored questions. The exam is broken down into two three-hour sections, with one administered in the morning and one in the afternoon, both of which contain 100 questions each. Keep in mind that there are no scheduled breaks during either one of the sections. All 175 scored questions on the exam are distributed evenly, with 25 questions being attributed to each of the following seven topics: Constitutional Law Civil Procedure Contract Law Real Property Tort Law Evidence Criminal Law and Procedure Each question on the MBE exam will have four potential answers. You should choose what you believe is the best answer — keep in mind that scores are based on the number of questions answered correctly, and points are not subtracted for answering incorrectly. If you want to have a look at the exact format, you can have a look at the NCBE's official MBE Sample Test Questions document. Interested in getting started? We recommend Kaplan's bar exam preparation materials, which come with a free retake guarantee, interactive and flexible learning, and lawyer-led tutoring. The MPRE is made up of 60 multiple-choice questions (50 scored questions and 10 unscored questions) and is administered via Pearson VUE. Like the MBE exam, each question offers four possible answers, one of which is correct. The exam's content is based on law that relates to the conduct and discipline of attorneys and judges and includes the American Bar Association's (ABA) Model Rules of Professional Conduct and Model Code of Judicial Conduct, as well as important constitutional common law and generally accepted principles. In relation to questions of professional responsibility in the context of evidentiary issues (e.g., litigation sanctions, attorney-client evidentiary privilege, etc.), the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and the Federal Rules of Evidence will apply unless otherwise stated. You will have two hours to complete the MPRE exam in its entirety. For more information, we recommend having a look at the NCBE's Official Sample Test Questions document. A holistic Subject Matter Outline is also offered. In order to give yourself the best chance of passing the Iowa UBE exam on your first attempt, it's important to take enough time to make sure that you are adequately prepared. Despite the infamous difficulty of Iowa's bar exam, passing it on your first attempt is definitely possible with the right tools and preparation techniques. Below, we've broken down a few key tips that should aid you in your licensing journey. Start Strong in Your First Year: This is important due to the fundamental areas of law practice that the first year of law school generally covers, such as Contract Law, Tort, and Constitutional Law Leverage Academic Support: If your law school offers additional support services that are aimed at improving your preparation, we recommend utilizing these as much as possible. This can involve one-on-one tutoring, academic counseling, and mock exam programs Obtain Practical Legal Experience: If possible, we recommend gaining as much practical experience as you can during law school (i.e., through summer internships, mock trials, etc.). This is because this can go a long way in cementing your legal knowledge Adopt a Broad Study Approach: When studying for the bar, you should aim for a wide-ranging understanding of various subjects rather than an in-depth study of a few. This is important due to the huge amount of content that you will need to learn and/or will be tested on Most importantly, make sure you remain consistent so that you do not have to resort to last-minute cramming. Research has shown that we are able to retain a higher degree of information – and more easily – when revisiting old content in comparison to when learning it for the first time. This is known as Ebbinghaus's Forgetting Curve. Interested in getting started? We recommend Kaplan's bar exam preparation materials, which come with a free retake guarantee, interactive and flexible learning, and lawyer-led tutoring. Apart from qualifying for and passing the Iowa bar exam, there are several other requirements you will need to meet in order to become and remain a licensed attorney in the state, including: Pass the Character and Fitness Evaluation Satisfy the Continuing Legal Education (CLE) Requirements Following the exam, certain candidates may be required to fulfill additional stipulations to secure their full admission to practice law. These stipulations are designed to address any remaining concerns regarding the candidate's commitment to the legal profession's ethical standards. Such requirements might involve further background investigations, completing professional ethics courses, contribution to community service, or undertaking temporary supervised practice. Having said that, candidates facing denial or conditional admission due to character and fitness considerations are granted the opportunity of a hearing. This process permits candidates to provide additional information or clarification concerning their suitability for legal practice. Ultimately, final decisions on admission rest with the Iowa Supreme Court, which considers the Board's recommendations, hearing outcomes, and any contested findings by the applicants. In Iowa, attorneys who have passed the bar exam and gained admission to practice must engage in ongoing professional development through Continuing Legal Education (CLE). The state mandates that licensed attorneys complete a minimum of 15 CLE hours every year. This requirement, which is overseen by the Iowa Commission on Continuing Legal Education, ensures attorneys remain up-to-date with the latest legal developments and maintain high professional standards. The annual CLE curriculum must include: At least one hour focused on legal ethics, which covers the principles and responsibilities that govern the behavior of lawyers At least one hour on attorney wellness or diversity and inclusion, which emphasizes the importance of mental health and promoting equality and understanding within the legal community Attorneys are tasked with reporting their completed CLE hours to the Commission by March 10 of each year. While attorneys can carry over excess CLE credits to the following year, the specific hours dedicated to legal ethics, attorney wellness, and diversity and inclusion cannot be carried over. It's important to note that the CLE requirement for the first year following admission to the bar is waived, which gives new attorneys a grace period to adjust to their professional responsibilities. Admission on Motion provides a pathway for attorneys licensed in other states or the District of Columbia to be admitted to practice law in Iowa without the need to take the state's bar exam. This process is designed for attorneys with extensive legal experience and a proven record of professional integrity. In order to be considered for admission on motion applicants must meet the following requirements: Bar Membership: Must hold a current license and be an admitted member of the bar in any U.S. state or the District of Columbia Practice of Law: Must have actively practiced law for at least five years within the seven years immediately preceding their application Character and Fitness: Must comply with the character and fitness requirements specified in Iowa Court Rule 31.12 Keep in mind that, in accordance with Iowa Court Rule 31.12(8), applicants may be disqualified from Admission on Motion under several conditions: Failure of the Iowa bar exam within five years preceding the application Failure of five or more bar exams in any jurisdiction Possession of an Iowa license in exempt or inactive status, according to Iowa Court Rules 39.7 or 41.7 For more information, you can have a look at this publication provided by the Iowa Legislature.