

July 2024 Bar Exam Takers Invited to Participate in NextGen Prototype Exam

Nine-Hour Pretest of New Bar Exam to be Held in October

Media contact: communications@ncbex.org

Media resources: <https://www.ncbex.org/media-resources>

MADISON, WISCONSIN, July 29, 2024—Not many aspiring attorneys would willingly offer to take the bar exam a second time. But that’s exactly what the approximately 46,000 examinees sitting for the attorney licensure exam this week are being asked to consider – in exchange for \$1,500 and a sneak peek at the NextGen bar exam currently under development by the National Conference of Bar Examiners (NCBE).

The July 2024 bar exam will be administered on Tuesday, July 30, and Wednesday, July 31, at locations across the US.

The NextGen prototype exam is a full-length pretest of a new bar exam that will officially launch in July 2026. Held in October 2024, the prototype exam will generate essential data to inform each US jurisdiction’s decision about the passing score it will require for admission. The prototype exam will take nine hours, with six hours of exam time on day one (a Friday) and three hours on day two (a Saturday).

Participation is open to July 2024 examinees who take the Multistate Bar Examination (MBE) as part of their bar exam (in most US jurisdictions, the bar exam is made up of three parts, including the MBE). NCBE’s research team encourages both first-time and repeat test takers from both ABA-accredited and non-ABA-accredited law schools to sign up. Approximately 2,200 participants will be selected from across the US, with researchers seeking broad representation, including in the range of scores earned in July. Eligible examinees will be contacted directly by NCBE and their jurisdictions in early August.

“The prototype exam is carefully designed to support comparisons between the current bar exam and the NextGen exam, taking into account the relative motivation of examinees when taking the July bar exam versus the October prototype exam. The results of the prototype exam will be used to develop the national score scale for the new exam and to evaluate the effectiveness of individual exam questions,” said Rosemary Reshetar, EdD, NCBE’s Director of Psychometrics and Operations.

“Data from the prototype exam will also inform a national standard-setting study to be held in mid-2025. NCBE will use the prototype and standard-setting results to issue guidance to Courts and attorney admission boards across the country as they set the individual passing scores required in each jurisdiction,” said Reshetar.

The prototype exam will be administered in 32 jurisdictions across the US, and examinees may sign up to sit in any available jurisdiction, not just the jurisdiction where they took the bar exam. The dates and locations are:

- **October 18–19:** Denver, Colorado; Washington, DC; Boise, Idaho; Annapolis, Maryland; Minneapolis, Minnesota; New York City, New York; Raleigh, North Carolina; Bismarck, North Dakota; Columbus, Ohio; Tigard, Oregon; Knoxville, Tennessee; and Richmond, Virginia.
- **October 25–26:** Phoenix, Arizona; Hartford, Connecticut; Miami, Florida; Atlanta, Georgia; Honolulu, Hawaii; Chicago, Champaign, and Carbondale, Illinois; Indianapolis, Indiana; Des Moines, Iowa; Topeka, Kansas; Boston, Massachusetts; Jefferson City, Missouri; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; Columbia, South Carolina; Sioux Falls, South Dakota; Fort Worth and Houston, Texas; Salt Lake City, Utah; Seattle, Washington; and Charleston, West Virginia.

The largest testing site is in Boston, and examinees located nearby are especially encouraged to sign up for that location to help ensure they secure a seat at the exam. The sign-up period is from August 19 to 29; potential participants will receive details about how to sign up on August 19. Additional information is available online at <https://nextgenbarexam.ncbex.org/nextgen-prototype-exam-october-2024/>.

The rigorous process NCBE is using to develop the NextGen bar exam includes multiple phases of testing and statistical analysis in advance of the July 2026 launch of the new exam. This research provides the data needed to ensure that the new NextGen exam tests what it's intended to test accurately, fairly, and reliably. The same process is followed for many other important exams, including those for medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, engineering, accounting, and other licensed professions.

The new bar exam will initially test eight foundational areas of legal knowledge, as well as seven foundational lawyering skills. A ninth foundational area, family law, will be added in July 2028. To choose which subjects and skills to test, NCBE surveyed more than 14,000 attorneys across the country to determine what newly licensed lawyers need to know and be able to do.

Twenty states and one territory have already announced plans to use the new exam, with Florida the most recent. Connecticut, Guam, Maryland, Missouri, Oregon, and Washington have announced their intention to begin using the NextGen exam in 2026; Arizona, Iowa, Kentucky, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Vermont, and Wyoming intend to begin in 2027; and Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Kansas, and Utah plan to make the switch in 2028. More states and territories are expected to sign on in the next year.

The NextGen bar exam, like the current Uniform Bar Exam (UBE), will support score portability between participating jurisdictions. Forty-one jurisdictions currently administer the UBE, which results in a portable score that candidates can transfer to seek admission in other UBE jurisdictions.

Questions for the NextGen bar exam are being written by law professors and deans, practicing attorneys, and judges from jurisdictions throughout the US. Like the current bar exam, the NextGen bar exam will be administered, and the written portions graded, by the individual US jurisdictions. The exam will be given over one and a half days, with six hours of testing time on

day one and three hours on day two. The current bar exam is typically administered in 12 hours over two full days.

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About the National Conference of Bar Examiners

The National Conference of Bar Examiners (NCBE), headquartered in Madison, Wisconsin, is a not-for-profit corporation founded in 1931. NCBE promotes fairness, integrity, and best practices in bar admissions for the benefit and protection of the public, in pursuit of its vision of a competent, ethical, and diverse legal profession. Best known for developing bar exam content used by 54 US jurisdictions, NCBE serves admission authorities, courts, the legal education community, and candidates by providing high-quality assessment products, services, and research; character investigations; and informational and educational resources and programs. In 2026, NCBE will launch the next generation of the bar examination, ensuring that the exam continues to test the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for competent entry-level legal practice in a changing profession. For more information, visit the NCBE website at <https://www.ncbex.org>.

About the Next Generation of the Bar Exam

Set to debut in July 2026, the NextGen bar exam will test a broad range of foundational lawyering skills, utilizing a focused set of clearly identified fundamental legal concepts and principles needed in today's practice of law. The skills and concepts to be tested were developed through a multi-year, nationwide legal practice analysis, focused on the most important knowledge and skills for newly licensed lawyers. Designed to balance the skills and knowledge needed in litigation and transactional legal practice, the exam will reflect many of the key changes that law schools are making today. NCBE is committed to ensuring a systematic, transparent, and collaborative implementation process, informed by input from and participation by stakeholders, and guided by best practices and the professional standards for high-stakes testing. For more information, visit <https://nextgenbarexam.ncbex.org/> or <https://www.ncbex.org/exams/nextgen>.