

# SOUTHWESTERN

## LAW SCHOOL

### Los Angeles, CA

## Bar Examination Certification Procedures

**Administrative policy.**

**Revision history:** Formerly a part of the Academic Policies and Procedures; established as a standalone policy in December 2025.

**Related policies:** Bar Admission Information; [Professional Licensure by Program](#); Graduation Requirements Policy; Student Records Policy—FERPA; Student Honor Code; Code of Student Professionalism and Conduct

**Scheduled Review Date:** August 2027 (Registrar's Office)

### A. Explanation

A "bar examination certification," which may be called a "law school certification," "Dean's Certification," or "Certificate of Graduation," is an official statement that Southwestern Law School completes and sends directly to a board of bar examiners on behalf of a student or graduate.

The certification asks the law school to verify that you have earned the J.D. degree, or completed all academic requirements for the J.D. (some jurisdictions permit "anticipated graduation" certifications or allow individuals to sit for the examination during their final year in law school).

Most jurisdictions require Southwestern to transmit specific supporting documents, such as your official transcript and your original admissions application, along with any amendments. In addition, most jurisdictions require Southwestern to disclose any known academic misconduct, disciplinary matters, and criminal records.

Southwestern's Registrar's Office ([registrar@swlaw.edu](mailto:registrar@swlaw.edu)) completes these forms on the law school's behalf with input from the Student Services Office.

Southwestern does not charge a fee to issue these certifications.

Please read these procedures carefully. We recommend that students begin researching requirements during their first year and update their research at least one year before graduation. Please note that requirements and deadlines vary by jurisdiction. Certifications generally require seven business days to prepare and may take longer during peak periods or school closures.

Please direct questions about the certifications to [registrar@swlaw.edu](mailto:registrar@swlaw.edu) or [studentservices@swlaw.edu](mailto:studentservices@swlaw.edu). Write "Bar Examination Certification" in the email heading.

## B. Where to Find the Correct Form

Individuals are responsible for researching and understanding the requirements and deadlines for any jurisdiction in which they are planning to sit for the bar examination. Students and graduates who plan to sit for the California bar examination should review Section E below.

- **Your jurisdiction's bar admissions website or portal:** Most states provide a downloadable "law school certification/Dean's Certification" form within the bar application packet or require the law school to submit the certification through the state's online portal once you identify Southwestern as your school.
- **National Conference of Bar Examiners resources:** In addition to visiting the official website for your jurisdiction's board of bar examiners, the [National Conference of Bar Examiners](#) website provides links to each jurisdiction; these links should allow you to determine whether a paper form or a portal authorization is required.

## C. What Southwestern Discloses to Bar Examiners

Law schools play a crucial role in certifying candidates for bar admission by verifying that each graduate not only earned their degree but also upheld the standards of honesty, integrity, and responsible conduct expected of a future attorney. Each jurisdiction's form serves the same ultimate purpose: to ensure that any potential character issues from an applicant's legal education are brought to light for the bar's evaluation. Southwestern will respond accurately and completely to each jurisdiction's request, consistent with applicable law and school policy.

### 1. Frequently requested information

Depending on the jurisdiction's form or portal prompts, Southwestern may be asked to certify or disclose one or more of the following:

- **Degree status and academic record:** Dates of attendance; confirmation of J.D. conferral or completion of all J.D. requirements; academic standing at graduation; and, where required, an official transcript.
- **Academic integrity and discipline:** Any findings of academic misconduct (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) and any academic or conduct-code sanctions, including probation, suspension, expulsion, or required withdrawals; and whether any disciplinary matter is pending at the time of certification.
- **Professionalism and conduct:** Violations of the Student Honor Code or the Code of Student Professionalism and Conduct, or other institutional policies, that reflect on honesty, integrity, civility, respect for rules and the law, judgment, or reliability (e.g., repeated failures to meet obligations or deadlines).
- **Known legal or administrative matters:** If known to the law school through official records or required student self-reports, material civil or criminal matters that bear on character and fitness.
- **Financial responsibility:** Known defaults on financial obligations to the law school or as otherwise known to the school in its official capacity.
- **Other material information:** Any other information in the law school's records

that the jurisdiction specifically asks Southwestern to report because it may bear on character, fitness, or moral qualifications.

## **2. Mental health and bar applications**

Some jurisdictions ask questions about an applicant's mental health. Typically, these questions focus on whether an applicant's mental health condition currently impairs their ability to practice law competently, ethically, and professionally. In most jurisdictions, a history of seeking mental health treatment alone does not disqualify a person from bar admission. For a summary of mental health-related questions by jurisdiction, consult resources compiled by the [NCBE](#).

Southwestern's Bison Cares mental health counseling is provided through Uwill, an independent third-party service. Southwestern does not receive any information identifying who uses Bison Cares services. Because Southwestern does not know who uses the service—and does not collect or retain this information—we cannot, and therefore do not, report a student's use of Bison Cares to any state bar or licensing authority.

## **3. Recommendation requests**

A few jurisdictions specifically ask whether Southwestern recommends the applicant for admission or whether it has any reason to doubt the applicant's character or fitness. Southwestern's responses will be objective, records-based, and limited to information within the law school's knowledge and records.

## **4. Pending matters and post-certification updates**

If an investigation or disciplinary matter is pending at the time of certification, Southwestern will disclose that status. If new material information arises after certification but before the jurisdiction completes the moral character review, Southwestern may issue a supplemental certification or update, consistent with applicable law.

## **5. Student responsibilities and continuing duty to disclose**

Students and graduates are responsible for promptly disclosing to Southwestern any post-admission conduct or record changes that may require an amendment to institutional records or a bar application. The applicant—not the law school—is responsible for ensuring the bar receives all application components by the jurisdiction's deadlines.

## **6. Privacy**

Southwestern discloses only what is required or permitted by law, including under FERPA. Separate student consent is required on the bar certification form before the Southwestern will complete the form. Southwestern does not opine on medical diagnoses or disabilities; if a jurisdiction's questions touch on health or substance-related issues, Southwestern's disclosures (if any) are limited to factual conduct and institutional actions reflected in official records.

## **D. When Certification Typically Occurs**

### **1. May and June graduates**

Students who have completed the requisite units for graduation at the conclusion of the spring semester or second SCALE year are typically eligible to be certified by Southwestern to take the July bar examination of that year.

### **2. July and December graduates**

Students who complete the requisite units for graduation at the conclusion of a summer term in July or the fall semester in December are typically eligible to be certified by Southwestern to take the bar examination as early as the following February.

### **3. January graduates**

Students who have completed the requisite units for graduation at the conclusion of the January intersession may graduate in January and could be certified to take the bar examination the following February or July. However, January graduates who wish to take that year's February bar examination should take note that (1) due to the timing for faculty to submit January intersession grades, the school may not be able to issue the certification by the jurisdiction's deadline and (2) the student's ability to study for the bar examination will likely be negatively impacted given their enrollment in January intersession courses. January graduates should coordinate with the Registrar's Office as early as possible to determine whether the certification can be completed before the deadline.

## **E. Students and Graduates Planning to Sit for the California Bar Examination**

After you submit a California bar examination application in the State Bar of California's [applicant portal](#), the state bar will contact Southwestern directly to obtain your certification. You do not need to submit a separate form to Southwestern or take other steps.

Southwestern will automatically issue the bar certification once the Registrar's Office confirms you have satisfied all degree requirements and that a diploma may be awarded. For individuals taking the bar examination immediately after graduation, this process occurs within approximately three weeks of the "grades due" date on the relevant [academic calendar](#).

To confirm that the state bar has received your certification, log into the state bar's applicant portal, click "status," and scroll to the "Admission Requirements" list. When the bar has Southwestern's certification on file, the "Law School Certification/Certificate of Graduation" item will appear as satisfied/received. If you believe Southwestern has submitted the certification but your Status Screen does not reflect it, email [admissions@calbar.ca.gov](mailto:admissions@calbar.ca.gov) or call 800.843.9053 for assistance. You may email [registrar@swlaw.edu](mailto:registrar@swlaw.edu) if you would like a courtesy confirmation of the date Southwestern transmitted your certification.

## **F. Students and Graduates Planning to Sit for Another Jurisdiction's Bar Examination**

Students and graduates who need a certification for a jurisdiction other than California should take the following steps:

- Obtain the jurisdiction's form;
- Email it to the Registrar's Office ([registrar@swlaw.edu](mailto:registrar@swlaw.edu)) well before the deadline;
- Within the email, state your full name and student ID number (if known);
- State clearly when the certification is due;
- Include a current phone number where the Registrar's Office can reach you if necessary; and
- Indicate whether you wish to receive a courtesy copy of the certification.

Certificates generally require several business days to prepare. To avoid potential issues, the individual should request the certificate as far in advance as possible and *no fewer than seven business days* before the certificate is needed. Please note that Southwestern is closed for Winter Break from mid-December through early January.

#### **G. Policy Revisions**

Southwestern expressly reserves the right to change or modify any aspect of this policy at any time, with or without notice.