

SOUTHWESTERN

LAW SCHOOL Los Angeles, CA

Bar Admission Information

Administrative policy. Effective immediately.

Revision history: Formerly a part of the annually revised Student Handbook; established as a standalone policy in August 2022; name changed from “California State Bar Information” to “Bar Admission Information” in July 2024; other substantive and technical edits made in July 2024; edits made April 2025 to add a reference to the Code of Student Professionalism and Conduct; revised in September 2026 to substantially expand and update the prior policy, adding guidance on changing bar examinations, testing accommodations, character-and-fitness and certification procedures, and a new step-by-step bar admissions planning guide.

Related policies, procedures, and materials: Graduation Requirements Policy; Student Honor Code; Code of Student Professionalism and Conduct; [Bar Examination Certification Procedures](#); [Professional Licensure by Program](#); Student Records Policy — FERPA

Scheduled Review Date: July 2027 (Academic Success and Bar Preparation Office)

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A. Applying for Bar Admission

1. Professional licensure by program

Each student who intends to seek admission to the bar in any jurisdiction is responsible for researching, understanding, and complying with that jurisdiction’s requirements. Each student is urged to review Southwestern

Law School's [Professional Licensure by Program](#) disclosure to understand whether the J.D. program in which the student is enrolled meets the requirements to sit for the bar in each jurisdiction under consideration. Southwestern updates the disclosure each summer.

Students considering admission in more than one jurisdiction, uncertain where they will practice, or who may relocate, should review the requirements of each jurisdiction under consideration.

2. Criteria, requirements, and deadlines

Each jurisdiction establishes its own educational, examination, moral fitness, registration, deadlines, and other requirements for bar admission. Most jurisdictions require candidates to pass a written bar examination and a moral fitness evaluation. Some jurisdictions have additional restrictions or requirements, and a few provide alternative (non-exam) pathways to licensure for some candidates.

Students should begin researching these requirements during their first semester. The National Conference of Bar Examiners (NCBE), in collaboration with the American Bar Association, publishes the [Comprehensive Guide to Bar Admission Requirements](#), which includes jurisdiction-specific admissions information and links to bar admission agencies. Because requirements and deadlines change, students should confirm current requirements directly with the official bar admissions authority for each jurisdiction they are considering.

Some requirements arise very early in law school. For example, a law student who intends to seek admission in California must [register with the State Bar of California](#) within 90 days after beginning the study of law. Other jurisdictions may have similar early requirements or deadlines.

Students should consult **Appendix A**, "Recommended Bar Admissions Planning Guide."

3. Examination format and topics tested

Students should determine the examination format, subjects, skills, and any jurisdiction-specific components that will apply when they expect to take the bar examination and should consider that information when selecting elective courses and planning for bar preparation. Many jurisdictions, including California, are transitioning to the [NextGen Uniform Bar Examination \(NextGen UBE\)](#). Students should determine which examination will be administered in their intended jurisdiction when they

expect to test and monitor official jurisdiction and NCBE sources for changes.

4. Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination (MPRE)

Most U.S. jurisdictions require candidates to pass the Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination (MPRE), which is administered separately from other components of the bar exam and is offered multiple times each year. The NCBE provides information about the MPRE, including registration, test dates, and jurisdiction requirements.

Southwestern encourages students to take the MPRE soon after completing the Legal Profession course, while also confirming the score and timing requirements of each jurisdiction in which they may seek admission.

5. Testing accommodations

Students who may require testing accommodations for the MPRE or a bar examination should review the applicable procedures, documentation requirements, and deadlines well in advance. Testing authorities may use standards that differ from Southwestern's, and receiving accommodations at Southwestern does not automatically establish eligibility for the same accommodations on a licensing examination. Students may contact Southwestern's Accessibility Services at accessibility@swlaw.edu with questions about Southwestern records or verification of accommodations. The testing authority makes the final decision on any request for examination accommodations.

6. Costs and commercial bar preparation courses

Each student should research the expected costs of bar admission and develop a financial plan. Depending on the jurisdiction and the student's circumstances, costs may include registration and application fees, moral character fees, the MPRE, the bar examination, fingerprints or background checks, required documentation, travel or lodging, a commercial bar preparation course, and living expenses during the post-graduation study period.

Southwestern does not endorse any specific commercial bar preparation course but strongly recommends that each graduate complete one. Students are encouraged to consult with the Academic Success and Bar Preparation Office at academicsuccess@swlaw.edu regarding examination planning, course selection, Southwestern's bar preparation curriculum and

resources, commercial bar preparation options, and other bar preparation matters.

7. Questions and assistance

Southwestern can provide information and support, but the applicable bar admissions authority determines eligibility for admission, character and fitness, examination accommodations, and satisfaction of all other jurisdiction-specific requirements. Southwestern, therefore, cannot guarantee an individual student's eligibility for admission or predict how a jurisdiction will evaluate particular circumstances. Students should raise questions early with the appropriate Southwestern office and the jurisdiction's bar admissions authority.

B. Bar Examination Certifications and Character-and-Fitness Information

Many jurisdictions require a law school to complete a bar examination certification, which may be called a "law school certification," "Dean's Certification," "Dean's Certificate," or "Certificate of Graduation." The information requested varies by jurisdiction and may include a student's enrollment or degree status, academic record, original admissions application and amendments, academic-integrity or disciplinary history, and other information the jurisdiction requires. Southwestern's [Bar Examination Certification Procedures](#) explain the certification process, the information Southwestern may disclose, privacy considerations, timing, and student responsibilities.

Students are expected to comply with the Student Honor Code and Code of Student Professionalism and Conduct and to conduct themselves consistently with the professional and ethical standards expected of applicants for admission to the legal profession. Bar applications commonly require applicants to disclose disciplinary sanctions and other matters involving educational institutions, sometimes regardless of whether the underlying conduct appears to bear directly on fitness to practice law. Southwestern will respond accurately and completely to certification requests, consistent with applicable law and school policy. Each applicant remains responsible for determining and making every disclosure required by the jurisdiction.

A student's duty to amend the student's Southwestern admissions application is ongoing. Students should periodically review their original admissions application and any amendments to ensure the information remains complete and accurate, and should promptly make any required amendments. Before submitting a bar application, students should compare the answers on their Southwestern

admissions application and amendments with the answers on the bar application and address any discrepancy that requires correction or explanation.

For students and graduates applying to sit for the California bar examination, the State Bar of California contacts Southwestern directly after the applicant submits the bar examination application. A separate Dean's Certificate request to Southwestern is not required. The Registrar's Office will transmit the required certification after confirming that the student has satisfied the applicable degree requirements.

Students and graduates applying in another jurisdiction should follow that jurisdiction's instructions and Southwestern's Bar Examination Certification Procedures. Any certification form that must be completed by Southwestern should be submitted to the Registrar's Office at registrar@swlaw.edu well before the applicable deadline. Certifications generally require at least seven business days to prepare and may take longer during peak periods or school closures.

Questions about bar examination certifications may be directed to registrar@swlaw.edu or studentservices@swlaw.edu. Students should write "Bar Examination Certification" in the email subject line.

Appendix A: Recommended Bar Admissions Planning Guide

This appendix is intended as a planning guide. Bar admission requirements, procedures, and deadlines vary by jurisdiction and may change while a student is enrolled in law school. Students are responsible for reviewing and complying with the current requirements of each jurisdiction in which they may seek admission. Students should begin planning for bar admission early in law school and should not wait until their final year to investigate applicable requirements.

During the first semester of law school

- **Identify possible jurisdictions.** Identify each jurisdiction in which you may seek admission, including jurisdictions in which you currently live, expect to work after graduation, or may consider practicing in the future. Students who are uncertain where they will practice should investigate multiple jurisdictions.
- **Confirm educational eligibility.** Review Southwestern's [Professional Licensure by Program](#) disclosure and the official bar admissions website for each jurisdiction under consideration. Confirm that your J.D. program and anticipated course of study satisfy the jurisdiction's educational requirements for bar admission.
- **Identify early requirements and deadlines.** Determine whether the jurisdiction requires law students to register, file an initial application, begin a character-and-fitness process, or complete any other requirement during the first year of law school. Some deadlines arise shortly after beginning legal studies.
- **Research alternative pathways.** If considering an alternative pathway, understand eligibility and other requirements.
- **Create a bar admission file and calendar.** Maintain a personal record of applicable deadlines, fees, requirements, usernames and account information, and documents submitted. Calendar deadlines well in advance rather than relying on the final filing date.
- **Begin gathering preserving information that may later be required.** Bar applications frequently request detailed historical information. Students should maintain accurate records of matters such as prior addresses, employment, educational institutions, legal names, and other information that may be difficult to reconstruct several years later. Consider creating a spreadsheet and maintaining it throughout your professional career (in case you want or need to seek admission in additional jurisdictions).

Throughout law school

- **Monitor jurisdictional changes.** Periodically review the official bar admissions website for each jurisdiction under consideration. Examination formats, subjects

tested, filing procedures, character-and-fitness requirements, fees, and other admission requirements may change between matriculation and graduation.

- **Keep your Southwestern admissions application current.** Review your admissions application and any amendments periodically. If you learn that information provided in the application was incomplete or inaccurate, or if circumstances arise that may require an amendment, promptly follow Southwestern's procedures for updating the application. Do not wait until completing a bar application to address a possible discrepancy. Contact the Student Services Office if you have questions.
- **Maintain consistency in disclosures.** When completing bar-related applications, carefully compare the information requested with information previously provided to Southwestern and other educational institutions. Differences do not necessarily present a problem, but unexplained inconsistencies can create unnecessary questions or delay.
- **Preserve relevant documentation.** If a matter may have to be disclosed during the character-and-fitness process, retain available records concerning the matter and its resolution. Depending on the jurisdiction and the issue involved, obtaining older court, employment, educational, financial, or other records can take substantial time.
- **Consider bar-tested subjects when selecting courses.** Learn which subjects and skills will be tested on the examination you expect to take and consider that information when planning your upper-level curriculum. Course selection should also reflect your academic and professional goals.
- **Budget for bar admission.** Begin planning for expenses that may arise during the admission process. Depending on the jurisdiction and individual circumstances, these may include registration and application fees, character-and-fitness fees, the MPRE, fingerprinting or background-check expenses, testing-accommodation documentation, bar preparation, examination-related travel and lodging, and living expenses during the period of intensive bar preparation.

When Taking the Legal Profession Course

- **Plan for the MPRE.** Determine whether your intended jurisdiction requires the Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination and, if so, the required passing score, applicable deadlines, and any rules concerning the age or transfer of an MPRE score. Register well in advance at nbex.org.
- **Investigate MPRE accommodations early, if needed.** Students who may seek testing accommodations should separately review the MPRE accommodation process and deadlines. Receiving accommodations at Southwestern does not automatically establish eligibility for accommodations on a licensing examination.

- **Take the MPRE at an appropriate time.** Southwestern generally encourages students to take the MPRE soon after completing Legal Profession, while recognizing that the best timing may depend on the student's jurisdiction, academic schedule, and other circumstances. Block out sufficient study time for the examination (not simply time to study for the Legal Profession final exam).

Approximately 12 to 18 months before anticipated graduation

- **Conduct a comprehensive eligibility review.** Recheck the current admission requirements of each jurisdiction in which you are seriously considering admission. Confirm educational eligibility, required examinations, character-and-fitness procedures, application deadlines, and any jurisdiction-specific requirements.
- **Confirm which bar examination you will take.** Determine the examination format expected to be administered when you graduate, including whether the jurisdiction will administer the NextGen UBE, another form of the Uniform Bar Examination, or a jurisdiction-specific examination. Review any separately tested state-law or jurisdiction-specific components.
- **Begin the character-and-fitness process when permitted or required.** Determine when the applicable jurisdiction permits or requires the character-and-fitness application to be filed. Because some investigations can take substantial time, students should not assume that this portion of the process can wait until after graduation.
- **Review your disclosure history.** Compare your Southwestern admissions application and amendments with the types of questions asked on the jurisdiction's character-and-fitness and bar applications. If you are uncertain whether your Southwestern application should be amended, address the issue before submitting the bar application.
- **Begin preparing accommodation requests, if applicable.** Review the jurisdiction's testing-accommodation procedures, documentation standards, forms, and deadlines. Start gathering required documentation sufficiently early to allow time to obtain additional information if requested. Do not assume that documentation used to obtain accommodations in law school will automatically satisfy the jurisdiction's requirements.
- **Identify law school certification requirements.** Determine whether the jurisdiction requires a Dean's Certificate, law school certificate, transcript, handwriting sample, disciplinary certification, or other documentation from Southwestern, and note both the jurisdiction's deadline and Southwestern's processing requirements.

During the final year of law school

- **Open or update required bar admission accounts and applications.** Review application instructions carefully before beginning. Determine what historical information, references, documentation, fingerprints, explanations, or supplemental forms will be required.
- **Begin collecting application information well before the deadline.** Character-and-fitness applications may request extensive information concerning residences, employment, education, litigation, criminal or traffic matters, financial matters, disciplinary proceedings, professional licenses, or other subjects. The precise questions vary by jurisdiction.
- **Request third-party information early.** If the application requires records, references, employment verification, court documents, or information from another institution or government agency, allow sufficient time for others to respond.
- **Confirm all examination requirements.** Verify the subjects and skills tested, examination format, permitted materials and technology, laptop-registration requirements, examination location, and any jurisdiction-specific examination or online component.
- **Develop a post-graduation bar-preparation plan.** Select an appropriate commercial or other bar-preparation program, understand Southwestern's available bar-preparation resources, and develop a realistic schedule for full-time preparation after graduation.
- **Update your financial plan.** Account not only for fees and bar preparation but also for the period between graduation and the examination when employment may be limited by intensive bar study.

During the final semester

- **Confirm application status.** Verify that required bar and character-and-fitness applications have been submitted and that the admissions authority has received any supplemental documents for which you are responsible.
- **Request Southwestern documents on time.** Submit any Dean's Certificate, law school certification, or similar request to the Registrar's Office with sufficient advance notice. Do not assume that the jurisdiction will automatically request all necessary documents from Southwestern.
- **Confirm personal information.** Make sure that your name and other identifying information are consistent across Southwestern records, NCBE records, bar applications, and examination registrations. Promptly report any required changes of name, address, email address, or other contact information.
- **Confirm graduation-related requirements.** Make sure that you understand whether your jurisdiction requires proof of graduation, a final transcript,

certification of your J.D. degree, or other documentation that cannot be provided until after the degree is awarded.

- **Review all remaining deadlines.** Recheck the jurisdiction's website even if you previously calendared the requirements. Do not rely solely on information obtained earlier in law school.

Immediately before and after graduation

- **Confirm that Southwestern has everything needed from you.** Follow up on any outstanding certification or transcript requests and respond promptly if Southwestern needs additional information to complete a jurisdiction's form.
- **Confirm that the bar admissions authority considers your application complete.** Monitor your applicant portal, email, and other official communications and promptly respond to requests for supplemental information.
- **Begin full-time bar preparation as planned.** Follow your bar-preparation schedule and make appropriate use of Southwestern's Academic Success and Bar Preparation resources.
- **Address outstanding character-and-fitness matters promptly.** Continue to respond to requests from the admissions authority and update your application if the jurisdiction requires disclosure of events occurring after the original filing.

Before taking the bar examination

- **Confirm examination logistics.** Verify the examination date, reporting time, location, identification requirements, permitted and prohibited items, laptop or software requirements, and any other examination-day rules.
- **Confirm accommodation arrangements, if applicable.** Review the final accommodation determination and any instructions concerning location, scheduling, equipment, breaks, or other approved arrangements.
- **Confirm that all prerequisites have been satisfied.** Make sure that any required MPRE score, jurisdiction-specific component, certification, or other pre-examination requirement has been completed or is on track for timely completion.

After the bar examination and before admission

- **Continue monitoring your application.** Passing the bar examination may not complete the admission process. A jurisdiction may still require completion of the character-and-fitness review, an MPRE score, a state-law component, additional documentation, fees, or other requirements.
- **Complete admission formalities.** Follow the jurisdiction's instructions concerning the oath of admission, registration, attorney fees, required orientation

or education, and any other prerequisites to becoming an active member of the bar.

- **Keep Southwestern informed when appropriate.** Respond to requests from the Registrar's Office, Academic Success and Bar Preparation Office, or other Southwestern offices concerning bar admission and examination results.
- **Participate in Southwestern's swearing-in ceremony:** We hold an on-campus ceremony for you and your loved ones. Ceremonies are usually on or close to December 1 and June 1.

When in doubt, investigate early. Many bar admission issues are easier to address when identified during law school than when discovered shortly before graduation or an application deadline.