

4.2 Update and Action on Approval of the Plan for the July 2025 California Bar Examination Administration



The State Bar of California

OPEN SESSION

AGENDA ITEM

4.2 MARCH 2025

COMMITTEE OF BAR EXAMINERS

DATE: March 14, 2025

TO: Members, Committee of Bar Examiners

FROM: Donna Hershkowitz, Chief of Admissions
Audrey Ching, Program Director, Admissions

SUBJECT: Update and Action on Approval of the Plan for the July 2025 California Bar Examination Administration

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The July 2025 California Bar Exam is scheduled to be administered primarily on Tuesday, July 29 and Wednesday, July 30. The staff recommendation and [direction from the California Supreme Court](#) is to return the administration of this examination to the traditional in-person format used prior to February 2025. This staff report highlights the most critical elements that need to be procured for an in-person administration, as well as the status of staff efforts. This report also seeks approval from the Committee of Bar Examiners (CBE) to proceed with an in-person exam for July 2025.

DISCUSSION

Given the issues identified with the administration of the February 2025 California Bar Examination by Meazure Learning, staff recommends returning to the in-person testing method that was used before February 2025. The CBE should understand that securing locations for the July exam has been difficult in past years, and starting this process so late will create extra complications. This may result in fewer available testing sites, forcing some applicants to travel farther from their homes and incur higher travel costs.

To date, the staff has been able to hold space at larger testing sites in the greater Los Angeles area, the San Francisco Bay Area, and the Sacramento area, with seats for just over 7,500 test takers. Efforts continue to find additional sites. Smaller venues like law schools, hotels, and the

State Bar Los Angeles office will be considered for accommodated applicants. Staff believe the best way to ensure a smooth administration for July, with planning having started so late, is to use sites that we have successfully used before and that we have confidence have the ability and equipment to meet the needs for a bar exam.

In addition, the software vendor for the in-person administration will need to be resecured. In prior years that vendor was ExamSoft; staff has also reached out to other vendors to understand the different options available. Based on the information provided, staff will ask the Contracts Committee of the Board of Trustees to approve contracting with one of these vendors. For traditional in-person exams, the software is used solely to record applicant answers to questions provided in hardcopy. In the Measure Learning platform, both the questions and applicant responses were delivered digitally within the software. Returning to the traditional delivery method also means that the ability to cut and paste from the file or library of the performance test, or from the body of the essay will not be available. When ExamSoft was used prior to the February 2025 administration, however, test takers were able to cut, copy and paste within their answers and to use spell check.

The one change staff believes should be made for the July 2025 exam is to administer the 200 multiple-choice questions (MCQs) via computer using the selected software platform rather than requiring applicants to record answers on a Scantron sheet. Using Scantrons increases the risk of errors, such as applicants misaligning their answers, making holes in the Scantron by erasing too hard, or misplacing answer sheets if they become separated from the test booklets. Because the State Bar is no longer utilizing the National Conference of Bar Examiners' Multistate Bar Examination, we now have the flexibility to load the MCQs into the software instead of using hardcopies and Scantron sheets. During the pandemic, when the MBE was conducted in this manner, survey data suggests this method was preferred by applicants.

Across multiple post-bar exam surveys—including those conducted in 2021 during the remote, pandemic-era exams and in 2024 leading up to the February 2025 hybrid exam—staff found that up to 64% of respondents preferred receiving and answering multiple-choice questions on their computer rather than using hardcopy paper materials.

PREVIOUS ACTION

None

FISCAL/PERSONNEL IMPACT

The estimated cost of administering the July 2025 Bar Exam in person had been projected to be between \$4.8 million and \$5 million. However, actual costs may exceed this range due to an expected increase in test-taker volume, driven by the decision to waive exam application fees for many applicants as well as the late pivot to an in-person exam.

While staff anticipates that the 2025 Admissions Fund budget can accommodate these costs, proactive planning for financial sustainability in 2026 and beyond will be necessary in the near term.

AMENDMENTS TO RULES

None

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS & IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

None – core business operations

RESOLUTIONS

Should the Committee of Bar Examiners concur, it is:

RESOLVED, that consistent with the Supreme Court’s direction as articulated in the [Court’s March 4, 2025, statement](#), the Committee of Bar Examiners supports and confirms the return to in-person exam administration for the July 2025 California bar examination.

ATTACHMENT(S) LIST

None