

**FROM
DIPLOMA
TO
LICENSE**

**A Guide to Minnesota Bar Admission
for Law Graduates**

Published by the
Minnesota Board of Law Examiners
180 E. 5th Street, Suite 950
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101
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<https://www.ble.mn.gov/>

November 2018

INTRODUCTION

The Minnesota Supreme Court governs admissions to the bar and the practice of law in Minnesota pursuant to Article VI of the Minnesota Constitution and Minnesota Statutes Chapter 481. The Minnesota Supreme Court appoints the Board of Law Examiners (Board), which is comprised of nine (9) members, seven (7) of whom are lawyers and two (2) of whom are lay persons. The Board is responsible for ensuring that those admitted to the bar in Minnesota have the necessary competence and character to justify the trust and confidence placed in lawyers. The Board is governed by the Rules for Admission to the Bar (Rules). The Rules are available online at <https://www.ble.mn.gov/rules/> or in the Minnesota Statutes in the Minnesota Rules of Court volume.

The following are some frequently asked questions about the admissions process in Minnesota and about the Minnesota Bar Examination:

1. **What are the prerequisites for admission to the practice of law in Minnesota?**

Applicants to the Bar in Minnesota must meet the following requirements:

- be at least 18 years of age;
- demonstrate good character and fitness through the satisfactory completion of a background investigation;
- meet the legal education requirements described below;
- have a satisfactory score on the Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination (MPRE), unless applying for a legal services license under Rule 8 or a temporary house counsel license under Rules 9;
- achieve a satisfactory UBE score on the Minnesota Bar Examination, or be eligible for admission without examination by one of the following means: (i) years of practice, (ii) transfer of a Multistate Bar Examination (MBE) score achieved in another jurisdiction; (iii) transfer of a Uniform Bar Examination score (UBE) from another jurisdiction.

2. **What are the educational requirements for admission?**

If an applicant has either a J.D. or LL.B. from a law school that is provisionally or fully approved by the American Bar Association (ABA), the applicant meets the educational requirements for admission.

If an applicant is *not* a graduate of an ABA approved law school, the applicant must meet all of the following additional requirements:

- have a J.D. degree from a law school located in the U.S;
- have a bachelor's degree from an undergraduate institution that is accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Dept. of Education;

- provide documentary evidence that the applicant has been engaged, as a principal occupation, in the practice of law for 60 of the previous 84 months, in one or more of the activities listed in [Rule 7A\(1\)\(c\)](#); and achieve a passing score on the Minnesota Bar Examination.

3. How does one begin an Application to the Minnesota Bar?

Persons who want to be admitted to the Bar in Minnesota must do the following:

- Complete the Registration Form using the Board's online applicant portal at <https://www.ble.mn.gov/how-to-apply/step-1-register-through-portal/>
- Complete the Application for Admission to the Bar found at <https://www.ble.mn.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Bar-Application-Fill-In.pdf>
- Print out, sign, and have notarized the Registration Form and Application for Admission
- Print out, sign, and have notarized the Authorization and Release form consenting to the Board's investigation including seeking information from 3rd parties
- Obtain two affidavits from persons who have known the applicant for at least 1 year who can attest to the applicant's good character and fitness to practice law
- Submit a photo ID if applying to sit for the bar examination
- Submit all of the above in hard copy to the Board office along with a fee in the amount prescribed by [Rule 12](#) of the Rules for Admission to the Bar.

4. What questions are asked on the Bar Application?

The bar application asks for comprehensive information about the applicant's education, places of residence, employment history, admission in other jurisdictions, names and addresses of references, and other information necessary for the background investigation. Another brochure published by the Board, entitled [Character and Fitness for Admission to the Bar](#) addresses the scope of the investigation.

5. When must the Application for Admission by Examination be filed?

Applicants for admission by bar examination must submit a completed application along with the required attachments and fee on or before the published examination application deadline. Late fees are charged in accordance with the timelines set forth in [Rule 12](#) of the Rules for Admission to the Bar.

6. What is the educational requirement for admission in Minnesota?

Anyone who has a J.D. or LL.B degree from an ABA approved law school meets the educational requirements for admission in Minnesota. In addition, graduates of non-ABA approved law schools can be admitted under certain circumstances. See #9 and #10 below for additional information.

7. What proof do I need of graduation from law school?

Because a law student may submit a bar application before graduation, applicants must authorize their law school to send a Conferral of Degree 30 or more days prior to the examination. If authorized, Minnesota law schools will send the Conferral of Degree directly to the Board office. Out-of-state law school graduates must ask their law school to send in a Conferral of Degree to the Board. Whether from an in-state or out-of-state law school, the conferral must state either that the applicant has graduated or that the Applicant has fulfilled all requirements for graduation and will be graduated within 120 days following the date of the bar examination. Applicants who have not yet graduated at the time of application must submit a certified law school transcript showing the date of graduation before the Applicant can be admitted.

8. What does a Conferral of Degree need to say?

An applicant requesting admission to the Minnesota bar must request his/her law school to send a letter to the Board stating that the law school has conferred a J.D. or LL.B degree for the Applicant and the date on which the degree was awarded. The letter must be an original document, signed by the Dean or registrar or other authorized person, and received at the Board office at least 30 days prior to the exam. [See Rule 4C.](#)

9. Do graduates of non-ABA approved law schools have additional requirements?

As stated in [Rule 4A\(3\)\(b\)\(iv\)](#), graduates of non-ABA approved law schools have additional requirements to be admitted in Minnesota: a) they must prove that they have been licensed in another U.S. state or territory and have practiced law for 60 of the 84 months immediately preceding the submission of the application and the practice must have been in one or more of the activities listed in [Rule 7A\(1\)\(c\)](#), and b) they must take and pass the Minnesota bar examination. In addition, prior to authorizing a non-ABA graduate to sit for the Minnesota bar examination, the Board will review and make a determination as to whether the Applicant's practice meets the requirements of the rules.

10. When should a non-ABA law school graduate apply?

Graduates of non-ABA approved law schools are strongly urged to apply six or more months prior to the bar examination for which they intend to sit. This will afford the Board an opportunity to review and make a determination as to whether the Applicant's practice meets the requirements of the Board's rules. See question #9 above.

11. How do applicants who have practiced law in another state qualify for Admission Without Examination?

An Applicant who is a graduate of an ABA-approved law school who seeks admission in Minnesota must have engaged in the licensed practice of law in another U.S. state or territory for at least 1000 hours per year in the 36 of the 60 months immediately preceding the application in an activity qualifying under Rule 7A(1)(c). Lawyers who meet the 36 month requirement may be admitted without examination. More information can be found in [Rule 7A](#).

Graduates of non-ABA approved law schools are not eligible for admission by motion under any of the provisions of Rule 7, but may be eligible under [Rule 6](#) if the Applicant meets the requirements of [Rule 4A\(3\)\(b\)](#).

12. How does one qualify for Admission Without Examination on the basis of a transferred MBE score?

An Applicant who has achieved a scaled score of 145 or higher on the Multistate Bar Examination (MBE) taken in another state or jurisdiction may be admitted in Minnesota without examination. A completed application must be submitted within two (2) years of the date the Applicant sat for the qualifying examination. The bar examination must have included an essay portion, the Applicant must have been successful on the entire examination, and the Applicant must have been licensed in the state or jurisdiction in which the MBE was taken. More information can be found in [Rule 7B](#). Graduates of non-ABA approved law schools are not eligible for admission under Rule 7B.

13. Is Minnesota a Uniform Bar Examination (UBE) state? What is the UBE?

Minnesota is a Uniform Bar Examination state. The UBE is comprised of six (6) Multistate Essay Exam (MEE) questions, two (2) Multistate Performance Test (MPT) questions, and the 200-question Multistate Bar Exam (MBE). It is uniformly administered, graded, and scored by UBE jurisdictions and produces a portable bar exam score that can be used to seek admission in other UBE states. Minnesota requires a UBE score of 260 for admission.

Applicants seeking admission by UBE score must complete and submit an application to the Board office within three (3) years of the date the Applicant sat for the UBE examination in which Applicant achieved the qualifying UBE score. A UBE Applicant need not have been licensed in the state or jurisdiction in which the Applicant took the UBE. More information can be found in [Rule 7C](#). Graduates of non-ABA approved law schools are not eligible for admission under [Rule 7C](#).

14. Can a UBE score achieved in Minnesota be transferred into another UBE state?

An exam score achieved in Minnesota and certified by the National Conference of Bar Examiners (NCBE) as a UBE score may be transferred to another UBE state. Currently, the UBE states include: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oregon, South Carolina, Utah, Vermont, Washington, West Virginia, Wyoming, and Virgin Islands. The state to which the UBE is transferred makes a character and fitness determination and may have other admission requirements. Each UBE state sets its own passing score. Contact the state to which you wish to transfer a UBE score for further details.

15. Must motion applicants meet other prerequisites prior to admission in Minnesota?

Applicants for admission on motion must satisfy all the necessary prerequisites for admission in Minnesota outlined in Question #1 above. See [Rules for Admission to the Bar](#). Motion Applicants who have taken the Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination in another state may transfer that score to Minnesota.

16. Does Minnesota have only one Bar Application form regardless of the type of admission the applicant seeks?

The same bar application form is used whether the Applicant is applying for admission on motion or by examination. Applicants start the application process by registering on the [Board's Applicant Portal](#). Any Applicant who is unable to use the portal may register by phone by calling (651) 297-1857 and asking for telephone registration.

17. Does Minnesota require passage of an ethics test prior to admission?

With the exception of Applicants seeking a license under the house counsel Rule 9, and legal services programs, Rule 8, Applicants must take the Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination (MPRE) and receive a scaled score of 85 or higher.

18. What is the MPRE?

The MPRE is a two-hour 50-question multiple-choice test which may be taken again if an examinee does not achieve a passing score. The MPRE tests the American Bar Association's Model Rules of Professional Conduct, as well as the Model Code of Judicial Conduct. For more information, visit the NCBE's website at <http://www.ncbex.org/exams/mpre/>.

19. When and where is the MPRE given?

The MPRE is administered three times per year by the National Conference of Bar Examiners (NCBE) at test sites in Minnesota and in other states. Unlike the Minnesota bar examination, the ethics test may be taken during law school. The MPRE is not given as part of the Minnesota bar exam.

20. Is there a practice exam available to help in preparation for the MPRE?

The NCBE also makes available, for a modest fee, an online practice exam designed to assist examinees as they prepare for the MPRE. The practice test uses retired MPRE questions and provides an explanation as to why each possible answer is either right or wrong. Information regarding the online practice exams is available at <http://www.ncbex.org/study-aids/>.

Examinees are encouraged to use these resources in preparation for the examination.

21. How is the Minnesota Bar Examination structured and when is it given?

The Minnesota Bar Examination is a two-day test consisting of two 90-minute Multistate Performance Test (MPT) questions, six 30-minute Multistate Essay Exam (MEE) questions, and a 200-question six-hour long multiple-choice Multistate Bar Exam (MBE). The test is given each year in the Twin Cities area, on the last Tuesday and Wednesday of the month of February and the month of July.

22. Who drafts MEE questions?

Questions on the essay portion of the Minnesota Bar Examination are drafted by law professors, judges, and practitioners under the auspices of the National Conference of Bar Examiners. The examination covers at least six of the 13 test topics listed in [Rule 6E](#) of the Rules. The essays test general principles of law, not Minnesota-specific law. The questions are designed to elicit a thorough discussion of a variety of legal issues and a detailed analysis of the legal problem presented. For more information, visit the NCBE's website at <http://www.ncbex.org/exams/mee/>.

23. What Is the Multistate Performance Test?

The National Conference of Bar Examiners' Multistate Performance Test (MPT) is a 90-minute legal skill examination that requires completion of a designated legal task. The test is not intended to test substantive legal knowledge, but rather to examine the following six (6) fundamental lawyering skills:

- the ability to sort detailed factual materials and separate relevant from irrelevant facts;
- the ability to analyze statutory, case and administrative materials for principles of law;
- the ability to apply the law to the relevant facts in a manner likely to resolve a client's problem;
- the ability to identify and resolve ethical dilemmas, when presented;
- the ability to communicate effectively in writing; and
- the ability to complete a lawyering task within time constraints.

Two 90-minute performance questions are given during the Tuesday morning session. For more information, visit the NCBE's website at <http://www.ncbex.org/exams/mpt/>.

24. How are the MEE and MPT questions graded?

Essay answers and MPT answers are graded by a 3-grader team of trained Minnesota lawyers. Each grader on the team receives a copy of the question and is required to draft a legal analysis, covering the points which should be included in an answer to the question.

Graders participate in a national calibration teleconference facilitated by the NCBE and attended by graders from across the country. The three Minnesota graders then continue to meet for an extended calibration session among themselves.

25. Who are the graders for the MEE and MPT?

The graders are licensed Minnesota attorneys with strong academic credentials and varied practical legal experience who have been recommended by bar associations, judges, or other graders. Graders are trained in how best to reach consensus, while working with a 3-grader team so that they grade in a fair, consistent, and reliable manner.

26. How are the MPT and essay exams scored?

The graders grade the MPT and essay answers on a 1 to 6 scale by rank ordering the papers from the weakest (a score of 1) to the strongest (a score of 6). Blank books are scored as zero. Raw scores are converted to scaled scores using the standard deviation method of scaling. (See below for additional information on

how the scores are scaled and combined). Each examinee's scaled essay and MPT score is then added to the examinee's scaled MBE score to form a total score. Examinees with a total scaled score of 260 or above pass the examination. Examinees with a total score of 259 or below fail the exam.

27. How are the different sections of the examination weighted?

The MBE examination is weighted 50% of the total examination score; each essay question is 5% for a total weight of 30% for the essay portion of the examination; and each of the 2 performance test questions is weighted 10%; totaling 100% of the total examination score.

28. How is the total scaled score calculated?

Minnesota examinees' raw essay and MPT scores are combined then scaled to the distribution of the Minnesota MBE scores using the standard deviation method of scaling. The mean and standard deviation of the essay MPT scores are converted to the mean and standard deviation of the MBE scores. An individual's essay and MPT scores are placed on the same scale as that of the MBE scores. The scaled scores are added together to constitute a total scaled exam score upon which the pass/fail decision is made. A total scaled score equal to or greater than 260 is a passing score.

The MBE scores are scaled by the National Conference of Bar Examiners to previous administrations of the MBE so that the difficulty of the current exam is the same as that of previously administered examinations.

29. Are essay and MPT answers re-graded?

An examinee whose total scaled score is below the passing score of 260 will have their essay answers and MPT answers re-graded by two graders assigned to each question. No person fails the Minnesota Bar Examination unless each of his or her essay and MPT answers is graded and re-graded by graders on each of the 8 grading teams, a total of 24 graders.

Because there is no minimum passing score on either the essay/MPT portion or the MBE portion, examinees may compensate for a deficiency in one portion of the examination by doing well on the other portion. The total passing score must be at or above 260.

30. What is the Multistate Bar Examination (MBE)?

The Multistate Bar Examination (MBE) is given on the second day of the bar examination and consists of 200 multiple-choice questions; 100 questions in the morning and in the afternoon sessions.

The MBE covers the following basic areas of law:

- Torts
- Contracts
- Evidence
- Real Property (including Future Interests)
- Criminal Law and Procedure
- Constitutional Law
- Civil Procedure

For more information, visit the NCBE's website at <http://www.ncbex.org/exams/mbe/>.

31. Are there sample questions and answers available?

Many examinees find that reviewing past essay and MPT examination questions is helpful in preparing for the examination. Past essay examination questions, a brief summary of past MPT questions, and representative good answers from past examinations are available on the Board's website at <https://www.ble.mn.gov/bar-exam/representative-good-answers/>. [MPT](#) and [MBE](#) sample questions are also available through the National Conference of Bar Examiners (NCBE) website.

32. Is there a practice exam available to help in preparation for the MBE portion of the Minnesota Bar Examination?

The NCBE also makes available, for a modest fee, an online practice exam designed to assist examinees as they prepare for the MBE. The practice test uses retired MBE questions and provides an explanation as to why each possible answer is either right or wrong. Information regarding the online practice exams is available at <http://www.ncbex.org/exams/mbe/preparing/>.

Examinees are encouraged to use these resources in preparation for the examination.

33. How many times can someone take the Minnesota Bar Examination?

There is no limit on the number of times an examinee can repeat the exam. An unsuccessful examinee may apply to retake the Minnesota Bar Examination by filing an application and submitting the fee required by the Rules. This application must be received on or before the published late filing deadline, as referenced in Rule 11 of the Rules for Admission to the Bar.

34. Does passing the Bar Examination mean an applicant will be automatically admitted to the Bar?

Passing the bar examination is only one of the required prerequisites for admission to the Bar of Minnesota. The Board will recommend the admission of an Applicant

who passes the bar examination and satisfies the other necessary prerequisites for admission as outlined in Question #1 (above) and in the Board Rules.

35. Following admission to the Bar, are there other requirements with which a lawyer must comply?

Once licensed in Minnesota, a lawyer must comply with other regulations of the Supreme Court in order to retain his or her license, including the following:

- Attend 45 hours of approved continuing legal education (CLE) courses (including three hours of ethics and two hours elimination of bias) every three years and report attendance in a timely manner to the Board of Continuing Legal Education (see [Rules of the Minnesota State Board of Continuing Legal Education](#));
- If handling client funds, maintain those funds in an interest-bearing account, with interest paid to the Minnesota IOLTA Program (see [Rules on Lawyers Professional Responsibility](#)); and
- Pay an annual license fee to the Lawyer Registration Office of the Supreme Court (see [Rules of the Supreme Court On Lawyer Registration](#)) and report any address or name changes to that office.

The CLE Office and the Lawyer Registration Office are co-located with the Board of Law Examiners at 180 E. 5th Street, Suite 950, St. Paul, MN 55101.

New attorneys should consult the [Minnesota Rules of Professional Conduct](#) and other Rules of the Supreme Court for other obligations of practice.

36. Does admission to the Bar also mean membership in the Minnesota State Bar Association?

Admission to the bar of the State of Minnesota is not the same as membership in the Minnesota State Bar Association (MSBA).

The [MSBA](#) is a voluntary professional organization providing lawyers with valuable opportunities for continuing legal education, pro bono service, and professional development. All new attorneys are provided a free year of membership in the MSBA. Following the first year of practice, the lawyer must pay a fee in order to maintain membership in the MSBA.

37. Is there a different admission procedure for the federal courts?

While a Minnesota license and registration qualifies an attorney to practice in all the state courts of Minnesota, further steps must be taken to practice before the federal courts. Admission is administered by the clerk of the federal court. Inquiries and requests for application materials should be directed to the federal

court at (651) 848-1100 or you may find additional information at the United States District Court's website at www.mnd.uscourts.gov/.

38. What should I do if I have questions about the bar admission process in Minnesota?

Applicants or potential Applicants to the bar who have questions about the admissions process should feel free to refer to the Board's website <https://www.ble.mn.gov/> or call the Board office at (651) 297-1857.