



California Bar Exam

February 2025 – Exam Disruption
April 18, 2025



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Responding to Exam Disruption

Discussion of Options



- Impute for missing data (Recommended)
- Establish raw passing score (Recommended)
- *Regrade process (Standard Operating Procedure)*
- Adjust scores for performance on November experiment (Recommended)
- Adjust scores for applicants based on type or severity of potential disruption (Not Recommended)

Impute for Missing Data (Recommended)

- Item Response Theory (IRT) methods were used to impute missing MCQ and Written responses.
- The Rasch model was used for the MCQ scores.
 - Estimate the likelihood that an applicant would answer a question correctly based on (a) the difficulty of the question and (b) the performance of the applicant on answered questions.
 - These estimates were used in place of missing scores for applicants who responded to at least 66% of the questions.
- The one parameter Rasch partial credit model was used for the multi-point written scores.
 - Estimate the likely essay score an applicant would earn for a constructed response question based on (a) the difficulty of the question and (b) the performance of the applicant on answered questions.
 - These estimates were used in place of missing scores for applicants who responded to at least 4 essay questions.

Imputation Results



- Multiple Choice Questions
 - 3,733 applicants answered all 171 scored questions
 - 367 applicants had imputed values
 - 86% of these applicants had 1-4 missing values imputed
 - 14% had 5 or more imputed values with a maximum of 47
- Written Questions
 - Approximately 80% of Essay/PT graded
 - 3,262 applicants had at least 4 written responses
 - 201 applicants were missing 1 written response
 - 43 applicants were missing 2 written responses
- Limitation: all missing responses were imputed

Establish Raw Passing Score (Recommended)



- Raw scores for MCQ and Written Components will be scaled to 1390 as passing
- Standard validation committees to evaluate current passing standard applied to new questions
- Pass rates from February 2023 and 2024 informed recommended range for the committee
- MCQ range of 110-124 was provided to the committee as guidance

Results – MCQ component



- First-time applicants
 - Baseline – 122 of 171 scored items (~45% pass rate)
 - -1 SEM – 119 of 171 scored items (~51% pass rate)
- Repeat applicants
 - Baseline – 120 of 171 scored items (~29% pass rate)
 - -1 SEM – 117 of 171 scored items (~38% pass rate)
- Total applicants
 - Baseline – 120 of 171 scored items (~34% pass rate)
 - MCQ – 117 of 171 scored items (~43% pass rate)

Results for Written Component



- Linking to MCQ for comparable expectation of performance
- First-time applicants
 - Baseline – 445 of 700 points (average of 64/question; ~45% pass rate)
 - -1 SEM – 435 of 700 points (average of 62/question; ~51% pass rate)
- Repeat applicants
 - Baseline – 440 of 700 points (average of 63/question; ~29% pass rate)
 - -1 SEM – 430 of 700 points (average of 61/question; (~39% pass rate)
- Total applicants
 - Baseline – 440 of 700 points (average of 63/question; ~34% pass rate)
 - MCQ – 430 of 700 points (average of 61/question; ~44% pass rate)
- Overall estimates of passing are contingent on all graded essays and PT questions

Adjust for November Experiment (Recommended)



- Passing expectations align with historical performance from the February 2023 and 2024 exams
- Apply to multiple choice section following regrade process
- Up to 40 scale score points
 - Effectively a 20-scale score point (0.5 SEM) adjustment because the MCQ section is 50% of the overall scale score
- November Experiment Participants
 - Baseline – 29 of 49 questions (~39% eligible for adjustment)
 - -1 SEM – 28 of 49 questions (~49% eligible for adjustment)

Differential Adjustment (Not Recommended)



- Data were insufficiently reliable to recommend differential adjustments for potential severity of disruption for applicant groupings
- Multiple sources of data were identified
 - Applicant generated – calls/emails to State Bar, post-exam survey responses
 - Limitations: self-report data, lack of convergence with other sources
 - Measure Learning generated – testing time, log files, reports of technology disruption
 - Limitations: tech escalation data were not comprehensive for applicants
 - State Bar generated – onsite observations, word counts on prior essays and performance tests
- Several analyses were conducted to attempt to classify applicants based on the type and severity of disruption

Summary of Recommendations



- Impute for missing applicant response data
- Establish raw passing score considering collective effects of disruption
- *Regrade process*
- Adjust scores based on performance on November experiment

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Written Portion



- The written portion of the exam is composed of five essays and one performance task
- Unless accommodated, applicants have 60 minutes to complete each essay and 90 minutes to complete the performance task
- Some applicants have their written exam regraded
- Essays are administered on the first day
- Total raw score = $EE1 + EE2 + EE3 + EE4 + EE5 + 2 \times PT$

Written Performance



	Average EE1	Average EE2	Average EE3	Average EE4	Average EE5	Average PT	Average Total Raw Written Score
2023	58	57	58	60	59	61	413
2024	60	55	60	57	58	61	411
2025*	60	62	61	63	62	57	423

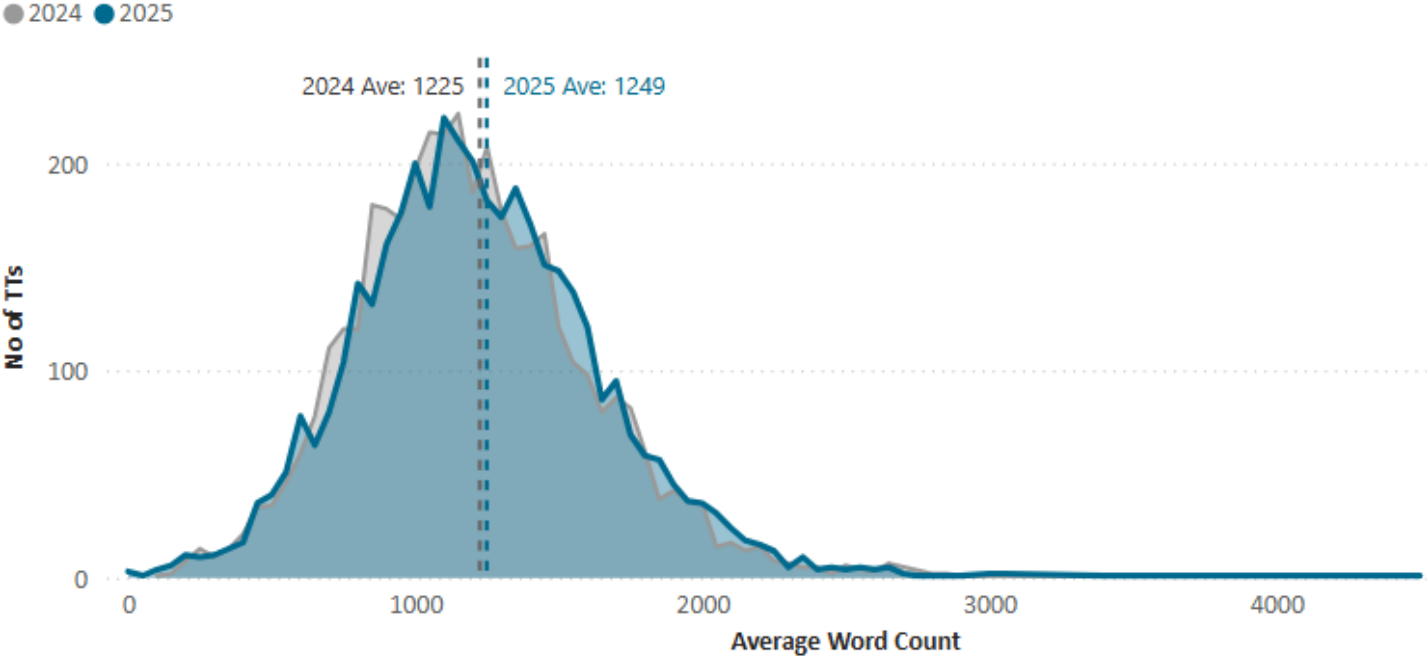
- All scores displayed represent first read February scores
- Due to the availability of scores, not all 2025 written score are included

* Includes about 80% of applicant records

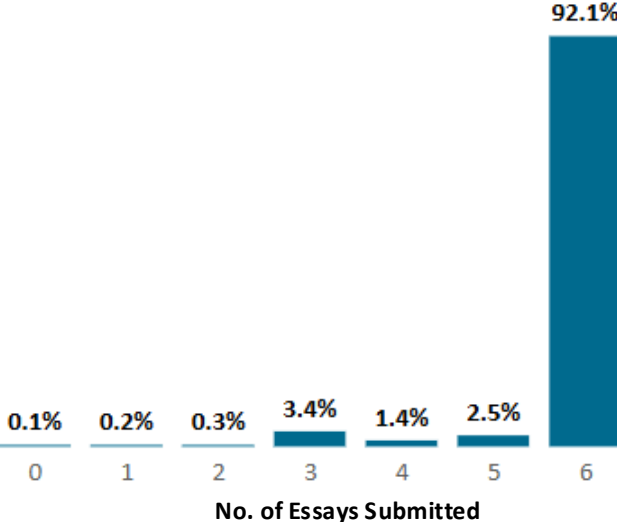
Word Count Analysis – Feb 2024 vs. Feb 2025

Overall, Feb. 2025 is similar to Feb. 2024 in terms of essay length; 2 distributions overlap substantially. The differences appear at the extremes, where 2025 saw more zero-word submissions and higher word-count outliers. In Feb. 2025 121 test takers submitted zero-word essays (vs. 29 in Feb. 2024), and only 92% submitted all 6 essays (vs. 99% in Feb. 2024).

AVERAGE WORD COUNT: FEB 2024 VS FEB 2025



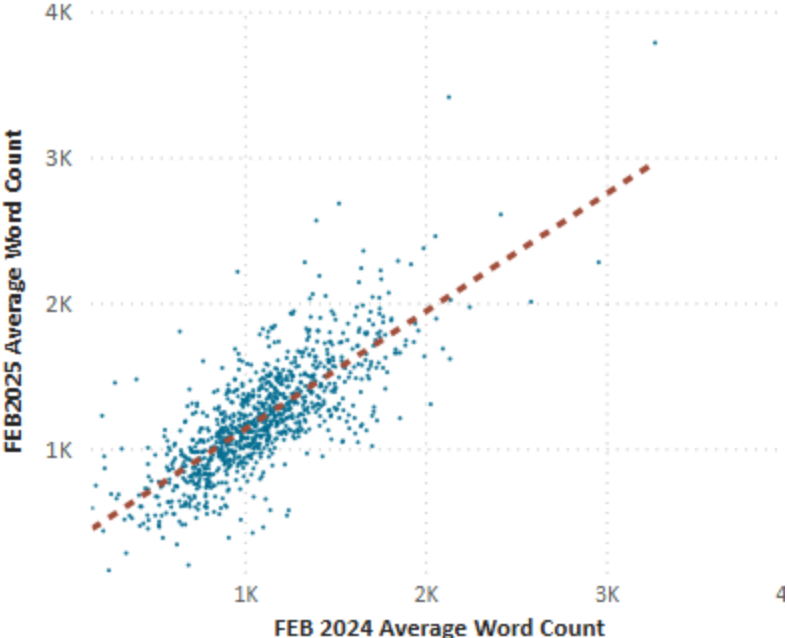
NUMBER OF ESSAYS SUBMITTED: FEB 2025



Word Count Analysis – Repeaters

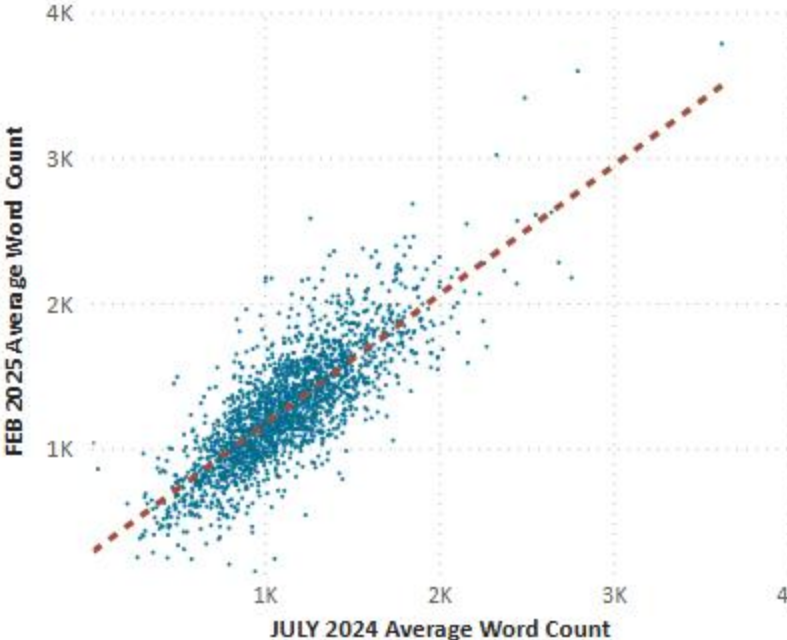
Repeater analysis shows a strong correlation—those who wrote more in 2024 also tended to write more in 2025. Comparing February 2025 repeaters with both February 2024 and July 2024 cohorts suggests that essay lengths remained consistent across attempts.

REPEATERS: FEB 2024 VS FEB 2025



Feb. 2025- Ave. Word Count: **1210**
Feb. 2024- Ave. Word Count: **1095**

REPEATERS: JULY 2024 VS FEB 2025



Feb. 2025- Ave. Word Count: **1276**
July 2024- Ave. Word Count: **1122**

Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ)



- MCQs were administered on the second day
- 200 multiple choice questions were administered
- Questions with favorable statistical properties were selected to count in applicants' scores
- Statistical properties include:
 - Item difficulty – the proportion of applicants who answered the question correctly
 - Item discrimination – the relationship between getting the question correct and the total score
 - Response option selection – the frequencies associated with each response option

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INFORMATION



MCQ Performance – 200 Questions



	Target Goal	Civil Procedure	Constitutional Law	Contracts	Criminal Law and Procedure	Evidence	Real Property	Torts	Total
Average Difficulty	0.30 – 0.80	0.60	0.64	0.64	0.59	0.68	0.60	0.63	0.63
Average Discrimination	0.10+	0.19	0.22	0.19	0.13	0.20	0.18	0.13	0.18
Performance Flags	< 6	3	5	4	9	2	6	11	40

MCQ Development



- Exam questions were drafted by three sources:
 - ACS Ventures
 - Kaplan
 - State Bar
- Draft questions were reviewed by subject matter experts and editors; and were revised as needed

MCQ Development – Scored Items



- 171 questions were selected for scoring

	Civil Procedure	Constitutional Law	Contracts	Criminal Law and Procedure	Evidence	Real Property	Torts	Total
ACS	2		1	10	2	2	6	23
Kaplan	22	25	2	3	23	23	2	100
State Bar/FY			22	10			16	48
Total	24	25	25	23	25	25	24	171

MCQ Performance – Scored Items



Difficulty	Target Goal	Civil Procedure	Constitutional Law	Contracts	Criminal Law and Procedure	Evidence	Real Property	Torts	Total
ACS	0.30 – 0.80	0.49		0.55	0.67	0.83	0.76	0.79	0.70
Kaplan		0.62	0.69	0.74	0.60	0.71	0.61	0.71	0.66
State Bar/FY				0.66	0.60			0.62	0.63
Total		0.61	0.69	0.66	0.63	0.72	0.62	0.67	0.66

Discrimination	Target Goal	Civil Procedure	Constitutional Law	Contracts	Criminal Law and Procedure	Evidence	Real Property	Torts	Total
ACS	0.10+	0.12		0.04	0.10	0.24	0.30	0.13	0.13
Kaplan		0.20	0.22	0.13	0.16	0.19	0.17	0.04	0.19
State Bar/FY				0.21	0.16			0.15	0.18
Total		0.19	0.22	0.19	0.13	0.20	0.18	0.13	0.18