Chapter 1. General Provisions

Rule 4.100 Authority

The Committee of Bar Examiners (“the Committee”) is authorized by law to accredit law schools in California (“accredited law schools”) and oversee and regulate those law schools. The Committee is the degree-granting authority for law schools subject to these rules.

Rule 4.100 adopted effective January 1, 2009.

Rule 4.101 What these rules are

(A) The Accredited Law School Rules (“these rules”) apply to law schools seeking provisional accreditation by the Committee, provisionally accredited law schools, and law schools accredited by the Committee, excluding those law schools fully and provisionally approved by the American Bar Association.

(B) The rules have been approved by the Committee and adopted by the Board of Trustees as part of the Rules of the State Bar of California and may be amended in accordance with those rules.

(C) These rules do not apply to unaccredited law schools registered by the Committee, paralegal programs, undergraduate legal degree programs, or other legal studies programs that do not lead to a professional degree in law. The appropriate entity must approve such programs, even if they are offered by an accredited, approved, or registered law school or an institution of which it is a part.


Rule 4.102 Law schools approved by the American Bar Association

A law school provisionally or fully approved by the American Bar Association is deemed accredited by the Committee and exempt from these rules, unless the American Bar Association withdraws its approval.

Rule 4.103 Interpreting and applying the rules

The Guidelines for Accredited Law School Rules, as adopted by the Committee of Bar Examiners, govern the interpretation and application of these rules. The Committee has the authority to amend the guidelines, subject to a reasonable comment period and after consideration of any comments received.

*Rule 4.103 adopted effective January 1, 2009.*

Rule 4.104 Citation

These rules may be cited as Accredited Law School Rules.

*Rule 4.104 adopted effective January 1, 2009.*

Rule 4.105 Definitions

(A) “Admissions Rules” are the rules contained in Title 4, Division 1 of the Rules of the State Bar of California (Admissions Rules).

(B) An “American Bar Association Approved Law School” is a law school fully or provisionally approved by the American Bar Association and deemed accredited by the Committee.

(C) A “California accredited law school” is a law school that has been provisionally or fully accredited by the Committee.

(D) “Provisional accreditation” is the status of a provisionally accredited law school. The Committee grants provisional accreditation for a specific period.

(E) A “provisionally accredited law school” is a registered unaccredited law school that is pursuing accreditation and has been recognized by the Committee as being in substantial compliance with applicable law and these rules.

(F) “The Committee” is the Committee of Bar Examiners of the State Bar of California.

(G) The “First-Year Law Students’ Examination” is the examination required by statute and by Division 1. Admission to Practice Law in California Admission to Practice Law in California rules.

(H) The “guidelines” are the Guidelines for Accredited Law School Rules adopted by the Committee of Bar Examiners.

(I) “Inspection” means an on-site visit to a law school by an individual or a team appointed by the Committee in accordance with these rules.
A “major change” is one of the changes specified in rule 4.165, Major changes.

A “professional law degree” is the LL.B. (Bachelor of Laws), M.L.S. (Master of Legal Studies), J.D. (Juris Doctor), LL.M. (Master of Laws), or other post-graduate degree authorized by the Committee. The J.D. degree may be granted only upon completion of a law program that qualifies a student to take the California Bar Examination.

A “California registered unaccredited law school” is an unaccredited law school that has been registered by the Committee.

“Senior Executive” means “Senior Executive, Admissions” or that person’s designee.

An “unaccredited law school” is a correspondence, distance-learning, or fixed-facility law school operating in California that the Committee registers but does not accredit.

(1) An “unaccredited correspondence law school” is an unaccredited law school that conducts instruction principally by correspondence. A correspondence law school must require at least 864 hours of preparation and study per year for four years.

(2) An “unaccredited distance-learning law school” is an unaccredited law school that conducts instruction and provides interactive classes principally by technological means. A distance-learning law school must require at least 864 hours of preparation and study per year for four years.

(3) An “unaccredited fixed-facility law school” is an unaccredited law school that conducts its instruction principally in physical classroom facilities. An unaccredited fixed-facility law school must require classroom attendance of its students for a minimum of 270 hours a year for four years.


Rule 4.106  Lists of law schools

The Committee maintains lists of law schools operating in California: those provisionally and fully accredited by the Committee, those registered as unaccredited by the Committee, and those approved by the American Bar Association. The lists are available on the State Bar Web site and upon request.

Rule 4.107  Student complaints

The Committee does not intervene in disputes between a student and a law school. It retains complaints about a law school submitted by students and considers those complaints in assessing the law school’s compliance with these rules.


Rule 4.108  Public information

Release of information contained in the files of applicants for provisional accreditation, provisionally accredited law schools, and accredited law schools is subject to the requirements and limitations imposed by state law.


Rule 4.109  Waiver of requirements

(A) A law school may request that the Committee waive any rule. The request must clearly show that the law school otherwise complies with these rules.

(B) The Committee will allow a law school a reasonable time to comply with the rule for which it has granted a waiver, but a waiver is temporary. A request to renew a waiver must be filed with the Annual Compliance Report.


Rule 4.110  Fees

(A) The regulatory and oversight services provided by the Committee are funded by reasonable fees that are set forth in the Schedule of Charges and Deadlines.

(B) Fees for the services of the Senior Executive or a consultant engaged by the Committee are based on an hourly rate that covers the cost of providing the service, including preparation and travel time.

(C) Travel expenses are reimbursed at actual cost, in accordance with State Bar travel reimbursement policies.


Rule 4.111  Extensions of time

For good cause, the Committee may extend a time limit prescribed by these rules.

Chapter 2. Application For Provisional Accreditation

Rule 4.120 Application based on substantial compliance

A registered unaccredited law school that meets the standards set forth in rule 4.160 may apply for provisional accreditation. If the Committee grants provisional accreditation, the provisionally accredited law school is subject to annual inspection and its students are subject to the First-Year Law Students’ Examination requirement. The Committee grants provisional accreditation for a specified period, typically for two years, although the period may be shorter or longer as may be determined by the Committee.

Rule 4.120 adopted effective January 1, 2009; amended effective May 17, 2019.

Rule 4.121 Application procedure

A registered unaccredited law school may apply for provisional accreditation by

(A) completing and submitting the Application for Provisional Accreditation with the fee set forth in the Schedule of Charges and Deadlines;

(B) submitting a self-study of its educational program and other information as required by the Committee;

(C) agreeing to allow the Committee to make any inspection it deems necessary; and

(D) agreeing to promptly pay all expenses of the inspection.


Rule 4.122 Status report on Application For Provisional Accreditation

Within sixty days of submitting an Application for Provisional Accreditation, a law school will be notified of the status of the application and the estimated date of Committee consideration.


Rule 4.123 Committee action on application for provisional accreditation

After considering an Application for Provisional Accreditation, the Committee may

(A) notify the law school within thirty days of considering the application that it does not appear to substantially comply with these rules and, for reasons stated in the notice, advise the law school to withdraw its application; or

(B) require an inspection within sixty days of the Committee's consideration of the application for provisional accreditation
(1) upon determining that the law school appears to substantially comply with the standards; or

(2) if the law school refuses to withdraw its application in spite of the Committee’s advice that it do so; or

(C) request further information, allowing a reasonable time for review; or

(D) deny the application.


Rule 4.124 Inspection for provisional accreditation

(A) An inspection visit is required of every applicant for provisional accreditation. The purpose of the inspection is to verify the information submitted by the law school and determine the extent of the law school's compliance with these rules.

(B) The Committee will notify the law school of the dates of the inspection. The inspection will be conducted by a team composed of the Senior Executive, at least one member of the Committee who has not previously visited the law school, a law school representative selected by the Senior Executive, and any other person selected by the Senior Executive.

(C) A law school may challenge the appointment of a team member for bias or for financial interest in or employment by a competing institution and request an alternative appointment. The challenge must be filed within ten days of the date the Senior Executive gives notice to the law school of the composition of the inspection team. An allegation of bias must be documented by written evidence. The Senior Executive will consider the challenge and may appoint an alternative team member for good cause within thirty days of receipt of the challenge.


Rule 4.125 Inspection report for provisional accreditation

The team inspecting a law school must provide the Senior Executive with a report on the visit within sixty days of the last day of the inspection. The Senior Executive must provide the law school with a copy of the report within thirty days of receiving it. If the law school takes exception to the report, it must notify the Committee in writing within thirty days of receipt of the report. The Committee must allow the law school sixty days from the date of receipt to submit material in support of its exceptions.

Rule 4.126  Committee action on provisional accreditation inspection report

After considering the inspection report on the law school, any exceptions filed by the law school, and any additional information it has requested, the Committee may deny provisional accreditation or grant it for two years or some other period of time it deems appropriate. A law school granted provisional accreditation is subject to an annual inspection and any other conditions the Committee deems appropriate.

*Rule 4.126 adopted effective January 1, 2009.*

**Chapter 3. Application For Accreditation**

Rule 4.140 Application for accreditation by provisionally accredited law school

No later than 180 days before the expiration of provisional accreditation, a provisionally accredited law school that is in compliance with these rules must apply for accreditation. A provisionally accredited law school that does not apply for accreditation by this time becomes an unaccredited law school.

*Rule 4.140 adopted effective January 1, 2009.*

Rule 4.141  Application procedure

A provisionally accredited law school may apply for accreditation by

(A) completing and submitting the Application for Accreditation with the fee set forth in the Schedule of Charges and Deadlines;

(B) submitting a self-study of its educational program and other information as required by the Committee;

(C) agreeing to allow the Committee to make any inspection it deems necessary; and

(D) agreeing to promptly pay all expenses of the inspection.

*Rule 4.141 adopted effective January 1, 2009.*

Rule 4.142 Status report on Application For Accreditation

Within sixty days of submitting an Application for Accreditation, a law school will be notified of the status of the application and the estimated date of Committee consideration.

*Rule 4.142 adopted effective January 1, 2009.*
Rule 4.143 Committee Action on Application For Accreditation

After considering an Application for Accreditation, the Committee may

(A) notify the law school within thirty days of considering the application that the law school does not appear to be in compliance with these rules and, for reasons stated in the notice, advise it to withdraw its application; or

(B) require an inspection within sixty days

(1) upon determining that the law school appears to be in compliance with these rules; or

(2) if the law school refuses to withdraw its application in spite of the Committee’s advice that it do so; or

(C) request further information, allowing a reasonable time for review; or

(D) deny the application.


Rule 4.144 Inspection for accreditation

(A) An inspection visit is required of every applicant for accreditation. The purpose of the inspection is to verify the information submitted by the law school and determine the extent of the school’s compliance with these rules.

(B) The Committee will notify the law school of the dates of the inspection. The inspection will be conducted by a team composed of the Senior Executive, at least one member of the Committee who has not previously visited the law school, a law school representative selected by the Senior Executive, and any other person selected by the Senior Executive.

(C) A law school may challenge the appointment of a team member for bias or for financial interest in or employment by a competing institution and request an alternative appointment. The challenge must be filed within ten days of the date of the Senior Executive’s notice to the law school of the composition of the inspection team. An allegation of bias must be documented by written evidence. The Senior Executive will consider the challenge and may appoint an alternative team member for good cause within thirty days of receipt of the challenge.

Rule 4.145  Accreditation inspection report

The team inspecting a law school applying for accreditation must provide the Senior Executive with a report on the visit within sixty days of the last day of the inspection. The Senior Executive must provide the law school with a copy of the report within thirty days of receiving it. If the law school takes exception to the report, it must notify the Committee in writing within thirty days of receipt of the report. The Committee must allow the law school sixty days from the date of receipt to submit material in support of its exceptions.


Rule 4.146  Committee action on accreditation inspection report

After considering the inspection report on the law school, any exceptions filed by the law school, and any additional information it has requested, the Committee may deny accreditation, grant it, or extend provisional accreditation.


Chapter 4.  Responsibilities Of Provisionally Accredited And Accredited Law Schools

Rule 4.160  Standards

A provisionally accredited law school must substantially comply with these standards. An accredited law school must comply with them.

(A) Lawful Operation. The law school must operate in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

(B) Integrity. The law school must demonstrate integrity in all of its programs, operations, and other affairs.

(C) Governance. The law school must be governed, organized, and administered so as to provide a sound educational program.

(D) Dean and Faculty. The law school must have at each campus, including any approved branch campus, a competent dean, a qualified administrator, an adequate administrative staff and a competent faculty that devote adequate time to administration, instruction and student counseling.

(E) Educational Program. The law school must maintain a sound program of legal education.

(F) Competency Training. The law school must require that each student enrolled in its Juris Doctor Degree program satisfactorily complete a minimum of six semester units (or their equivalent) of course work designed to teach practice-
based skills and competency training. Such competency training must teach and
develop those skills needed by a licensed attorney to practice law in an ethical
and competent manner.

(G) Scholastic Standards. The law school must maintain sound scholastic standards
and must as soon as possible identify and disqualify those students who lack the
capability to satisfactorily complete the law school’s J.D. degree program.

(H) Admissions. The law school must maintain a sound admissions policy. The law
school must not admit any student who is obviously unqualified or who does not
appear to have a reasonable prospect of completing the degree program.

(I) Multiple locations. Accreditation is granted to a law school as an institution. If a
law school receives approval to open a branch campus or a satellite campus, the
branch or satellite campus must be operated in compliance with the Standards
and Guidelines, subject to all site specific operational requirements and any
waivers approved by the Committee. The new campus must be in substantial
compliance with the Standards and all operational requirements no less than one
month prior to the start of classes, and in full compliance within two years. The
Dean of the law school will certify the substantial compliance of each new branch
or satellite campus, by a letter to the Committee, no later than 30 days prior to
the start of classes. If a law school conducts seminars or classes other than at its
principal facility, satellite or branch campuses, the seminars and classes must be
conducted in compliance with the Standards, except the Library Standard.

(J) Library. The law school must maintain a library consistent with the minimum
requirements set by the Committee.

(K) Physical Resources. The law school must have physical resources and an
infrastructure adequate for its programs and operations offered at each campus.

(L) Financial Resources. The law school must have adequate present and
anticipated financial resources to support its programs and operations.

(M) Records. The law school must maintain adequate records of its programs and
operations.

(N) Minimum, Cumulative Bar Pass Rate. The law school must maintain a minimum,
cumulative bar examination pass rate as determined and used by the Committee
in the evaluation of the qualitative soundness of a law school’s program of legal
education. The minimum, cumulative bar examination pass rate for a law school
with one or more branch campus is to be calculated and reported as the
combined rate of all such campuses.

(O) Consistent with sound educational policy and these rules, a law school must
operate in accordance with policies and procedures that comply with the
Constitutions and all applicable laws of both the United States and the State of California so as to provide both equality of opportunity and to prohibit unlawful discrimination.

(P) Compliance with Committee requirements. The law school must demonstrate its compliance with these rules by submitting required reports and otherwise complying with the rules.


Rule 4.161 Annual Compliance Report

(A) A law school subject to these rules must submit an Annual Compliance Report using the form prescribed by the Committee. The deadline and fee for submission of the report are set forth in the Schedule of Charges and Deadlines.

(B) A law school with an approved branch or satellite campus must submit an annual fee for each additional campus as set forth in the Schedule of Charges and Deadlines.


Rule 4.162 Periodic inspection

(A) An accredited law school, and each of its approved branch or satellite campus, is subject to a concurrent inspection, at the school's expense, every fifth year following the grant of accreditation or more frequently if the Committee believes inspection is necessary. The inspection must be conducted by a team composed of the Senior Executive, at least one member of the Committee who has not previously visited the law school, a law school representative selected by the Senior Executive, and any other person selected by the Senior Executive. A law school that believes a team member is biased or has a financial interest in or is employed by a competing institution may challenge the appointment of the team member and request an alternative appointment. An allegation of bias must be documented by written evidence. The challenge must be filed within ten days of the Senior Executive's notice to the law school of the composition of the inspection team. The Senior Executive will consider the challenge and may appoint an alternative team member for good cause within thirty days of receipt of the challenge.

(B) The inspection team must provide the Senior Executive with a report on the visit within ninety days of the last day of the inspection. The Senior Executive must provide the law school with a copy of the report within thirty days of receiving it. If the law school takes exception to the report, it must notify the Committee in writing within thirty days of receipt of the report. The Committee must allow the
law school sixty days from the date of receipt to submit material in support of its exceptions.

(C) After considering the inspection report, any exceptions filed by the law school, and any additional information it has requested, the Committee may continue accreditation or issue a Notice of Noncompliance.

*Rule 4.162 adopted effective January 1, 2009; amended effective November 18, 2016.*

Rule 4.163  Self-study

Prior to a periodic inspection, or more frequently if the Committee requests it, an accredited law school must reevaluate its educational program and submit a written self-study to the Committee. The purpose of the self-study is to determine whether the law school has complied with these rules and has achieved its mission and objectives. The law school must use the format prescribed by the Committee and submit the self-study and fee in compliance with the Schedule of Charges and Deadlines.

*Rule 4.163 adopted effective January 1, 2009.*

Rule 4.164 Prior approval of major changes

An accredited law school contemplating a major change must notify the Committee and obtain its approval at least ninety days before making the change. The notice must explain in detail any effect the change might have on the law school's compliance with the rules and be submitted with the fees specified in the Schedule of Charges and Deadlines. The Committee may then require submission of additional information or an inspection.

*Rule 4.164 adopted effective January 1, 2009.*

Rule 4.165  Major changes

The following are major changes:

(A) instituting a new division either part-time or full-time, or changing from a part-time to a full-time program, or from a full-time to a part-time program;

(B) changing the location of the school, or the location of a branch campus or satellite campus or seeking Committee approval to open a new branch campus or satellite campus;

(C) instituting any joint degree program, whether within the college or university affiliated with the law school or another institution;
(D) merging or affiliating with another law school, college, or university, or severance from a law school, college or university, or modifying the law school's relationship with an affiliated college or university;

(E) offering any new program in law study, whether a degree program, non-professional degree program, or non-degree program;

(F) sponsoring or offering for law study credit any individual seminar or class, other than from a branch campus, that will meet more than fifty-five miles from the law school’s principal facility or outside of California;

(G) changing the name of the school;

(H) changing from a nonprofit to a profit-making institution or vice versa; and

(I) changing the ownership of the school.


Chapter 5. Termination Of Provisional Accreditation Or Accreditation

Rule 4.170 Notice of Noncompliance

(A) If it appears to the Committee that a provisionally accredited law school is not in substantial compliance with these rules or that an accredited law school, or any approved branch or satellite campus is not in compliance with these rules, the Committee must provide the school with a written Notice of Noncompliance that states the reasons. This rule does not apply to a law school applying for provisional accreditation or to a provisionally accredited law school during the last 180 days of its provisional accreditation.

(B) Within fifteen days of receiving a Notice of Noncompliance, a law school must file a response demonstrating that it is in substantial compliance with these rules, if a provisionally accredited law school, or in compliance with these rules, if an accredited law school. The response must be submitted with the fee set forth in the Schedule of Charges and Deadlines.

(1) If the Committee deems the response satisfactory, it will notify the law school within thirty days of its consideration of the matter.

(2) If the Committee deems the response unsatisfactory, it must schedule an inspection by the Senior Executive within sixty days of its consideration of the matter.

Rule 4.170 adopted effective January 1, 2009; amended effective November 18, 2016.
Rule 4.171 Inspection pursuant to Notice of Noncompliance

The Senior Executive must submit to the Committee a report on an inspection made pursuant to a Notice of Noncompliance within sixty days of the last day of the inspection. After considering the report, the Committee will provide the provisionally accredited law school or accredited law school with a written notice that:

(A) the provisionally accredited law school is in substantial compliance with these rules; or

(B) the accredited law school is in compliance with these rules; or

(C) the provisionally accredited law school is not in substantial compliance with these rules for specific reasons that warrant probation or termination of provisional accreditation; or

(D) the accredited law school, or any approved branch or satellite campus is not in compliance with the rules for specific reasons that warrant probation or termination of accreditation.

Rule 4.171 adopted effective January 1, 2009; amended effective November 18, 2016.

Rule 4.172 Probation

(A) If the Committee decides that a provisionally accredited law school has not substantially complied with these rules, but has made progress toward substantial compliance, the Committee may place the law school on probation for a specified time.

(B) If the Committee decides that an accredited law school or any approved branch or satellite campus has not complied with these rules, but has made progress toward compliance, the Committee may place the law school on probation for a specified time.

(C) A provisionally accredited or accredited law school placed on probation

(1) is subject to any probation conditions imposed by the Committee, including interim inspections and progress reports; and

(2) continues to have degree-granting authority and its students are deemed enrolled at a provisionally accredited or accredited law school.
(D) At least thirty days before probation expires, the Committee will notify the law school of its determination that

(1) it will end the provisionally accredited law school’s probation or will proceed to terminate the law school’s provisional accreditation; or

(2) it will end the accredited law school’s probation or will proceed to terminate the law school’s accreditation.


Rule 4.173 Request for hearing

A law school may request a hearing before the Committee within fifteen days of being sent a notice that the Committee is considering termination of provisional accreditation or accreditation.


Rule 4.174 Hearing procedures

(A) Within sixty days of receiving a timely request for hearing, the Committee will schedule a hearing. The hearing will be held before a panel of three Committee members selected by the Senior Executive. The law school has the right to challenge the appointment of any member of the hearing panel by filing a written request for an alternative appointment within ten days following receipt of the notice of the composition of the panel. The Senior Executive must consider the request and, if good cause is shown, grant the request and appoint an alternative member. The law school will be notified within thirty days of the decision of the Senior Executive.

(B) The hearing will be reported and an original of the transcript will be prepared at the Committee’s expense. A copy of the transcript will be made available to the law school at its expense.

(C) The hearing need not be conducted according to common law or statutory rules of evidence. Any relevant evidence is admissible if it is the kind of evidence on which responsible persons rely in the conduct of serious affairs. The rules of privilege in the California Evidence Code or required by the United States or California Constitutions will be followed. The law school has the burden of establishing its compliance, if an accredited law school, and substantial compliance if a provisionally accredited law school, with these rules.

(D) All parties may be represented by counsel.

Rule 4.175 Committee action following hearing

(A) Following a hearing, the Committee will determine whether the accredited law school is in compliance or the provisionally accredited law school is in substantial compliance with these rules. Its decision will be based on the entire record, including materials presented at the hearing.

(B) The Committee may take any action affecting the law school’s provisional accreditation or accreditation that it considers appropriate, including termination of provisional accreditation or accreditation.

(C) The Committee, in its discretion, may do any or all of the following with respect to its decision:

   (1) publish it;
   (2) notify the students enrolled in the law school;
   (3) notify the California Supreme Court;
   (4) notify the California Attorney General.

*Rule 4.175 adopted effective January 1, 2009.*

Rule 4.176 Termination of accreditation or provisional accreditation

The Committee will terminate accreditation or provisional accreditation on a specific date, at which time it will also terminate a law school’s degree-granting authority. Until that date, students attending the law school are deemed enrolled at an accredited or provisionally accredited law school.

*Rule 4.176 adopted effective January 1, 2009.*

Rule 4.177 Review by Supreme Court

A law school may seek review of termination of its accreditation before the California Supreme Court pursuant to its rules.

*Rule 4.177 adopted effective January 1, 2009.*