



The State Bar *of California*

CALIFORNIA BAR EXAMINATION GRADING POLICY

The California Bar Exam (CBX) includes the General Bar Exam and the Attorneys' Exam. The General Bar Exam includes two sections: a written section, with five essay questions and one Performance Test (PT), and a 200-question Multistate Bar Examination (MBE). The Attorneys' Exam uses the same five essay questions and one PT as the General Bar Exam.

The exam components cannot be taken separately; general bar exam applicants must complete both the written and multiple-choice sections during the same exam administration. The current cut score, as determined by the Supreme Court of California effective July 2020, is 1390.

Answers shall be identified by code number only; nothing about an individual applicant shall be communicated to the graders.

EXAMINATION DEVELOPMENT AND GRADING (EDG) TEAM AND EXAM GRADERS

For each CBX, six groups, each consisting of up to 14 experienced graders and up to 4 apprentice graders, shall be selected to grade the essay and PT answers. The groups shall convene three times early in the grading cycle to ensure maximum calibration of grades. A member of the Examination Development and Grading (EDG) Team shall supervise each group of graders.

ASSIGNING GRADES

Each essay and PT answer is graded out of 100 points. The grade for the PT is doubled when the total written raw grade is calculated. Graders assign grades to essay and PT answers in five-point increments, on a scale of 40 to 100. To earn a grade of 40, the applicant must at least identify the subject of the question and attempt to apply the law to the facts of the question. If these criteria are not met, the answer is assigned a 0.

Graders evaluate answers and assign grades solely on the content of the response. The quality of handwriting, the accuracy of spelling, and grammar shall not be considered in assigning a grade.

CALIBRATION MEETINGS

At the first calibration session, the EDG team supervisor shall guide each team through the following process:

- Each team of graders reviews a set of applicant answers to provide insight into the issues applicants identified and the depth of their analysis.
- The graders review a set of 15 applicant answers, and each grader identifies the grade they would assign. The group discusses their rationale for the grades assigned to arrive at a consensus of how each question is to be graded.
- Having reached a consensus on the set of 15 responses, the graders independently read a new set of 25 answers without further group discussion and submit grades for analysis and review at the second calibration session.

The EDG team supervisor shall guide each team through the following process for the second calibration session:

- Graders discuss the results of the independent grading and discuss any of the answers where significant disagreement was seen. Differences are resolved through further discussion.
- An additional 10 answers are read, graded, and discussed and a consensus grade is assigned¹ to each.

Grading of applicants' exams does not commence until this process is completed.

A third calibration session is conducted midway through the exam cycle for a review of the grading standards. The graders read 10 additional answers as a group to ensure calibration remains strong.

SCALING

A different set of essay and PT questions is used for each administration of the CBX. Although in selection of questions for the exam every attempt is made to balance question difficulty, the questions asked on one administration may, as a group, be easier or more difficult than those asked on some other administration. Similarly, the graders who grade the answers to the questions for one administration may, as a group, be more lenient or stringent than the graders who grade the answers for another administration.

To address the potential variation in question difficulty and reader leniency between administrations the Committee of Bar Examiners (CBE) uses a scoring procedure known as scaling to ensure the level of difficulty of the exam remains consistent with previous administrations of the exam. Scaling converts scores on the written section to the same unit of measurement used for the MBE scale score. The scaling process involves assigning the highest total written score that was earned by any applicant the same value as the highest MBE score that was earned by any applicant. The second highest essay score is assigned the same value as

¹ Grades assigned during the calibration sessions are not final and are used solely for calibration purposes.

the second highest MBE score, and so on. This process is done separately for each administration of the examination.

Converting the total written raw scores to the same scale of measurement as the MBE adjusts for possible differences in average question difficulty and grading across different administrations of the exam. This adjustment ensures that an applicant's likelihood of passing is not affected by any variation across administrations.

To improve the accuracy of the scaling process, a formula is used to convert the grader-assigned written raw scores to scale scores. The scores obtained on the written section of the exam are then translated to the 2000-point MBE scale. An applicant's total score is the scale MBE score multiplied by .50 plus the written scale score multiplied by .50.

PHASED GRADING

All written answers submitted by applicants who completed the exam in its entirety are read at least once before pass/fail decisions are made. For applicants whose scores after the first read are near the required passing score (within 40 points), all answers are read a second time, and grades of first and second read are averaged. The total averaged score after two readings is then used to make a second set of pass/fail decisions.

To pass the exam after the first phase of grading, an applicant must have a total scale score of at least 1390 out of 2000 possible points, subject to the rounding policy described below. Those with total scale scores after first read below 1350 fail the exam.

If the applicant's total scale score is at least 1350 but less than 1390 after first read, their answers are read a second time by a different set of graders. The second grader for each answer shall not have access to the grade from the first grader and no information from the first grader shall be included in the evaluation. The first and second read grades for each answer are averaged to determine the raw score for the written section. The raw score is then converted to a written scale score. If the applicant's total scale score after two readings is 1390 or higher, subject to the rounding policy described below, the applicant passes the exam. Applicants with a total scale score below 1390 fail the exam.

ROUNDING

Following the calculation of the total scale score after the second read, any score between 1389.0001 and 1389.9999 is rounded to 1390 and deemed a passing score.

RELEASE OF RESULTS

Individual exam results will be posted directly to the Applicant Portal. The State Bar will announce an anticipated date of the release of results for each administration of the CBX which is anticipated to be:

- No later than 4:00 p.m. (PT) on the Friday that falls 9 weeks from the Friday of the week of the February bar exam;
- No later than 4:00 p.m. (PT) on the Friday that falls 14 weeks from the Friday of the week of the July bar exam.

The State Bar may advance the time and day scheduled for release. The time and day shall not be delayed absent good cause. The State Bar shall provide notice of a change in day or time of release on its website.

The public pass list will be published on the State Bar's website at approximately 9:00 a.m. the next business day following the release of results.

GRADING RECONSIDERATION

The grading process affords each applicant a fair and careful consideration of all their exam answers on the bar exam; no useful purpose would be served by further consideration by the Committee. The grading policy ensures that all answers with scores within the reread range after one reading have been regraded by a different set of graders. For these reasons, the Committee will not extend reconsideration based on challenges to its grading system or the judgments of its professional graders. The Committee will consider requests for reconsideration only when an applicant establishes with documented evidence that a clerical error resulted in failure or prevented the exam from being properly graded.

Requests for reconsideration submitted by or on behalf of an unsuccessful applicant must be in writing. Requests for reasons other than clerical errors may be summarily denied by the Office of Admissions on that basis, without further review by the Committee. All requests for reconsideration of grades must be received by the Office of Admissions no later than two weeks after the release of exam results.

These grading policies supersede all other previously adopted grading policies related to assigning grades, calibration, scaling, phased grading, rounding, and the release of results.

Recommended by the Committee of Bar Examiners: April 16, 2026

Approved by the Board of Trustees: July 16, 2026