

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

RHODE ISLAND BAR EXAMINATION

Question: Who do I contact for questions about the Rhode Island bar examination?

Answer: Bar Admissions Staff, Rhode Island Supreme Court, 250 Benefit Street, 7th Floor, Providence, Rhode Island 02903 ribarexam@courts.ri.gov.

Question: Which Rhode Island Supreme Court Rules apply to the Rhode Island bar examination?

Answer: Article II, Rules 1 through 8 of the Rhode Island Supreme Court Rules and the Board of Bar Examiners Rules of Practice Governing Admission on Examination.

Question: How do I apply to take the Rhode Island bar examination?

Answer: Rhode Island has a new mandatory electronic bar application process which consists primarily of two (2) steps:

1. Applicants must first complete the National Conference of Bar Examiners (NCBE) electronic Application to the Bar of Rhode Island; and
2. Applicants must then submit the Petition for Admission to the Rhode Island Bar (Petition) available electronically on the Rhode Island Supreme Court Attorney Portal (RISCAP).

Please note that the completed NCBE Application must be submitted as part of the electronic Petition. See the Instructions on How to Apply for Admission to the Rhode Island Bar for detailed information how to file these documents electronically.

Question: Does Rhode Island administer the UBE?

Answer: Yes, as of February 2019.

Question: What is the Uniform Bar Examination?

Answer: Per the National Conference of Bar Examiners' (NCBE) website, "The Uniform Bar Examination (UBE) is coordinated by NCBE and is composed of the Multistate Essay Examination (MEE), two Multistate Performance Test (MPT) tasks, and the Multistate Bar Examination (MBE). It is uniformly administered, graded, and scored by user jurisdictions and results in a portable score that can be transferred to other UBE jurisdictions. The UBE is administered over two days, with the MBE given on the last Wednesday of February and July and the

MEE and MPT given on the Tuesday prior to that.” For more information on the UBE, please refer to the NCBE website: <http://www.ncbex.org/exams/ube/>

Question: Does Rhode Island have reciprocity agreement with other jurisdictions?

Answer: No. Rhode Island does, however, allow out-of-state attorneys who have been engaged in the full-time active practice of law or full-time teaching of law at a law school accredited by the American Bar Association, for at least five (5) out of the last ten (10) years immediately preceding the deadline for filing the Petition for Admission to the Rhode Island Bar, to take only the essay portion of the examination. Please see Article II, Rule 2(a) and Board Rule 4(b)(i)(2).

Question: What is the difference between the bar examination administered to Rule 1 and Rule 2(a) applicants?

Answer: Rule 1 applicants are required to take both days of the two-day Rhode Island Bar Examination. Generally, Rule 1 applicants are recent law school graduates or attorneys licensed in another jurisdiction who do not meet the requirements of Rule 2(a).

Rule 2(a) applicants only attend day one (1) of the two-day Rhode Island Bar Examination. Rule 2(a) applicants are attorney admission applicants who have been engaged in the full-time active practice of law or teaching of law for at least five (5) years of the last ten (10) years preceding the application deadline for filing the application.

Question: Does Rhode Island accept applications for admission on transferred UBE scores?

Answer: Yes, Rhode Island will start accepting UBE transfer applications as of February 28, 2019. Please see Article II, Rule 1B and Board Rule 3.

Question: What is the maximum age of a qualifying, UBE score that can be transferred to Rhode Island?

Answer: Rhode Island will accept qualifying UBE scores earned in an administration of the UBE which occurred within two (2) years of filing a Petition for Admission on Transferred Uniform Bar Examination Score. UBE scores earned in an administration beyond the two (2) year time frame will not be accepted.

Question: Does Rhode Island accept concurrent UBE bar applications or courtesy UBE bar applications?

Answer: No.

Question: Can I transfer a qualifying score to Rhode Island from a non-UBE jurisdiction that administered all elements of the UBE?

Answer: The NCBE UBE Score Portability webpage indicates, “You must take the examination in a UBE jurisdiction to earn a portable UBE score. If the jurisdiction in which you tested had not adopted the UBE at the time you took the exam, you did not earn a UBE score, even if that jurisdiction administered the MEE, MPT, and MBE.” (<http://www.ncbex.org/exams/ube/score-portability/>).

Question: Who is qualified to transfer a UBE score to Rhode Island?

Answer: Rhode Island will accept UBE score transfers from applicants who have earned a UBE score of 276 or greater in an administration of the UBE within two years of filing a Petition for Admission and provided they met all eligibility requirements in Article II of the Rhode Island Supreme Court Rules and the Board of Bar Examiners Rules of Practice

Question: Are foreign educated applicants eligible to take the bar examination?

Answer: Yes, but only as a Rule 2(a) applicant. Applicants who have not graduated from a law school accredited by the American Bar Association (including foreign law school graduates) may seek admission under Article II, Rule 2(a).

Question: When is the filing deadline?

Answer: Rule 1 applicants must submit the Petition for Admission to the Rhode Island Bar available electronically on RISCAP by December 1 for the February examination and May 1 for the July examination.

Rule 2(a) applicants must submit the Petition for Admission to the Rhode Island Bar available electronically on RISCAP by September 1 for the February examination and February 1 for the July examination.

Petitions for Admission may not be submitted earlier than sixty (60) days prior to the filing deadlines. Please see the Instructions on How to Apply for Admission to the Rhode Island Bar for a detailed listing of required forms and documents that must accompany the Petition for Admission to the Rhode Island.

Rule 1(b) transfer applications are accepted on a rolling basis. Applicants who file a petition by January 15 each year will be eligible for admission in March, and applicants who file by June 15 each year will be eligible for admission in August. Applicants who file petitions after these dates are held for the next admission cycle. Eligible applicants must have a complete file, been approved by the Board of Bar Examiners, and have been recommended for admission by the Committee on Character and Fitness.

Question: What if I do not have all my documents in time for the filing deadline?

Answer: All documents required to be submitted by the applicant must be filed by the filing deadline.

Question: Do I submit the supplemental forms with my Petition for Admission?

Answer: Forms that must be completed by an individual other than the applicant must be submitted by that individual directly to Bar Admissions staff in hardcopy by mail. The law school documentation, Certificates of Good Moral Character, and the Employment Verification Forms must be forwarded directly to the Committee on Character and Fitness from the individuals who complete the forms.

Question: The employment section of the NCBE electronic Application to the Bar of Rhode Island asks for a listing of all employment where I have been employed beginning after my 21st birthday. Do I include internships and clerkships?

Answer: Yes – paid and unpaid.

Question: What do I do if a question on the NCBE electronic Application to the Bar of Rhode Island is not applicable to me?

Answer: If a question is not applicable to you, please indicate as such. Do not leave answers to any questions blank.

Question: What if I cannot answer a question fully?

Answer: All questions in the NCBE electronic Application to the Bar of Rhode Island and the Petition for Admission to the Rhode Island Bar must be answered fully. If you cannot answer a question fully, please provide an addendum to the question explaining why.

Question: If I am a male, do I have to provide my Selective Service Number?

Answer: Yes. If you do not have the number, you must obtain a number and submit that information in your NCBE electronic Application to the Bar of Rhode Island. If you are a male and did not register under any Selective Service Act, please explain why. If you are a female and were not required to register under any Selective Service Act, please so indicate.

Question: If I attended two (2) or more law schools, do I need to law school documentation from all law schools I attended?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Do you require Certificates of Good Standing from every jurisdiction where I am admitted to the bar even if I am inactive in that jurisdiction?

Answer: Yes, we require Certificates of Good Standing from every jurisdiction and every court in a jurisdiction, if applicable. For example, Massachusetts state, Massachusetts federal, and First Circuit Court of Appeals in Massachusetts. Applicants need not be active in all jurisdictions, but they must be in good standing. Accordingly, applicants must rectify administrative suspensions in order to pursue their application for admission to the Rhode Island Bar, which could include resigning in good standing from a state bar, if necessary.

Question: Do I need to provide a criminal background check for any time spent abroad?

Answer: No.

Question: Is a national criminal background check acceptable?

Answer: No. Applicants must obtain a background check from each jurisdiction where the applicant resided for six (6) months or more since turning the age of eighteen (18) in accordance with the policies in that jurisdiction. Please see the Criminal Background Report information on the Rhode Island Judiciary's website for instructions and a listing of criminal history record repositories listing on our website at Instructions on How to Apply for Admission to the Rhode Island Bar.

The six (6) month time period for residing in a given jurisdiction which requires submittal of a background check need not be consecutive but in total.

Question: Who can submit a Certificate of Good Moral Character on my behalf?

Answer: Certificates of Moral Character can be from any individual, not used as references in any other part of the Petition. Submissions can be from lawyers, non-lawyers, non-employers, or any combination as long as they are not related to you by blood and have not been listed as a reference in the Petition. Employers who serve as a reference to your employment are excluded.

Question: Do I need my handwriting sample witnessed?

Answer: Yes. It is generally done through the Office of the Dean for Rule 1 applicants. Rule 2(a) applicants need to have handwriting sample notarized.

Question: Do I need to have a one on one interview with a member of the Character and Fitness Committee and when do applicants get interviewed?

Answer: All applicants, including Rule 1B Admission to the Rhode Island Bar on Transferred UBE Score applicants, must submit to a one-on-one interview with a member of the Character and Fitness Committee. Interviews take place approximately one (1) month prior to each bar examination. Rule 1B applicants will be included in the interview schedule with those applicants sitting for the bar examination in Rhode Island. Interviews are held at the Bourcier Conference Room, Rhode Island Supreme Court, 250 Benefit Street, 7th floor, Providence, Rhode Island. The interview may result in an applicant being referred to the full Committee for hearing.

The Character and Fitness interview schedule for each examination is posted on the Judiciary's website. Applicants are notified via email of the posting. At the interview, applicants who are passed to take the bar examination will receive a ticket for admission into the examination.

Reapplication applicants who were previously interviewed by a member of the Character and Fitness Committee may not need further interview to take a bar examination. These applicants will be notified about how to obtain a ticket for admission to the examination via email from the Bar Admissions Staff.

Question: Do I need to bring anything with me to the Committee on Character and Fitness interview?

Answer: Yes, please report to the registration table with valid photo identification. Please be aware that applicants who have not submitted all required information and documentation will not receive a ticket for admission to the examination. Rule 1B Admission to the Rhode Island Bar on Transferred UBE Score applicants will not be assigned for a Committee on Character and Fitness interview until their Petition for Admission is complete.

Question: How will the Bar Admissions Staff contact me about my application and the bar examination?

Answer: The Bar Admissions Staff communicate with applicants via email. All contact with the Bar Admissions Staff should be by email to ribarexam@courts.ri.gov.

Question: Where will the Rhode Island Bar Examination be held?

Answer: Typically, the bar examination is held at the Rhode Island Convention Center, One Sabin Street, Providence, Rhode Island, unless notified otherwise. The Bar Admissions Staff will provide applicants with specific information about the administration of the bar examination.

Question: What is tested on Tuesday?

Answer: Tuesday is essay day. It consists of two (2) Multistate Performance Test (MPT) questions (three (3) hours timed) and then a lunch break. The six (6) Multistate Essay Examination (MEE) questions (three (3) hours timed) will be administered in the afternoon.

Question: What is tested on Wednesday?

Answer: The morning and afternoon portions of the Multistate Bar Examination (MBE). The morning session of the MBE is three (3) hours timed followed by a lunch break. The afternoon MBE session is also three (3) hours timed.

Question: Is there a laptop program option available?

Answer: All applicants are permitted to use their laptop for the essay portion of the examination (Tuesday) at no additional cost. Laptop service is strictly optional. Applicants wishing to use their laptop must register directly with *ExamSoft Worldwide, Inc.* by the registration deadline set by the Bar Administrator and communicated to the applicant via email. Registration typically opens one (1) month after the filing deadline and closes approximately one (1) month before the bar examination. A representative from *ExamSoft Worldwide, Inc.* will be onsite during the essay portion to assist laptop users. For more information, please visit the *ExamSoft Worldwide, Inc.* website at www.examssoft.com/ribar. The use of a laptop is highly recommended for applicants whose handwriting is illegible.

Question: How do I transfer my MBE score earned in Rhode Island to another jurisdiction?

Answer: To transfer your MBE score to another jurisdiction, you must submit a Request Transfer of MBE Score through the Rhode Island Supreme Court Attorney Portal (RISCAP) and pay the \$25.00 transfer fee.

Question: When are the results of the bar examinations released?

Answer: We typically release the February bar examination results in May and the July bar examination results in November. Applicants are notified of the results release date via email once the date is confirmed.

Question: When are the swearing-in ceremonies for successful applicants?

Answer: Swearing-in ceremonies, for all applicants including Rule 1B Admission to the Rhode Island Bar on Transferred UBE Score applicants, are usually held one (1) to three (3) weeks after the bar examination results are released. Group ceremonies are held at the Rhode Island Supreme Court Courtroom located on the 7th Floor of 250 Benefit Street, Providence, RI 02903. Dates and times for the ceremonies are firm and seating for guest is limited.

Question: **After I pass the examination and am sworn in, when can I begin practicing as a Rhode Island attorney? What is my admission date?**

Answer: Applicants have three (3) months from their swearing-in date to register with the Rhode Island Supreme Court. Art. IV, Rule 1(a). After you register with the Court and obtain a bar number is when you are officially admitted as an attorney and are authorized practice law in Rhode Island. The date you first register with the Court is your date of admission to the Rhode Island Bar.

Question: **What if I decide not to take the bar examination after submitting my application?**

Answer: If after submitting an application you decide not to sit for the bar examination, you must either defer to the next examination or withdraw your application. Applicants choosing to defer must submit a Request to Defer to the Next Bar Examination via RISCAP and pay the \$300.00 fee.

Deferral only holds an application open to the next scheduled examination. Applicants who defer from a previous bar examination must file a Petition to Reapply by the filing deadline of the next scheduled bar examination. Please see the Instructions on How to File a Petition to Reapply for Admission to the Rhode Island Bar for a detailed listing of required forms and documents that must accompany the Petition to Reapply.

The bar application file of applicants who fail to file a timely Petition to Reapply for Admission are closed.

Applicants that want to withdraw from the bar examination, must submit a Request to Withdraw Petition for Admission to the Rhode Island Bar. Upon withdrawal of a petition an applicant's bar application is closed.

Applicants should be aware of the no-show-fail policy set forth in Board Rules of Practice, Rule 2(d)(vi).

Question: **How can I retake the Rhode Island Bar Examination after failing?**

Answer: Applicants who fail the bar examination may sit for the next bar examination but must file a Petition to Reapply by the applicable filing deadline. Information about how to reapply to take the bar examination is included in the bar results letter. Typically, applicants who fail the bar examination are afforded fourteen (14) days to reapply. Applicants should see the Instructions on How to File a

Petition to Reapply for Admission to the Rhode Island Bar for a detailed listing of what must be filed when filing a Petition to Reapply.

The bar application file of applicants who fail to file a timely Petition to Reapply for Admission are closed.

Question: **What is the Rhode Island Bar Association?**

Answer: The Rhode Island Bar Association is a professional organization of attorneys. All Rhode Island attorneys must join the Rhode Island Bar Association. An important distinction is that the Rhode Island Supreme Court is the licensing authority and regulates the practice of law in Rhode Island and the Rhode Island Bar Association is professional organization which offers various services to attorneys and members of the public.
