

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

RHODE ISLAND BAR EXAMINATION

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: 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 application deadline for filing the application to take only the essay portion of the examination. Please see Article II, Rule 2(a) and Board Rule 3(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 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: 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 application deadline?**

Answer: Rule 1 applicants must file their application by December 1 for the February examination and May 1 for the July examination.

Rule 2(a) applicants must file their application by September 1 for the February examination and February 1 for the July examination.

The application deadlines apply to those applicants who deferred or who are reapplying to take the next Rhode Island Bar Examination after notification of failure. Deferring or reapplying applicants must submit all required documentation by the application deadlines.

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

Answer: Having a completed application by the filing deadline is preferred, however, certain supplemental forms submitted by third parties will be accepted after the deadline.

Rule 1 applicants must submit the following application materials by the filing deadline:

1. Completed Petition/Questionnaire for Admission to the Rhode Island Bar along with documents requested therein;
2. Credit report (obtained from Experian, Transunion, or Equifax);
3. Request for testing accommodations (if applicable); and
4. Check made payable to the Committee on Character and Fitness in the amount of \$725.00.

Rule 2(a) applicants must submit the following application materials by the filing deadline:

1. Original plus one (1) copy of a completed Petition/Questionnaire for Admission to the Rhode Island Bar with documents requested therein;
2. Completed NCBE Character Report Request form;
3. Three (3) executed NCBE Authorization and Release forms;
4. Check made payable to the Committee on Character and Fitness in the amount of \$725.00;
5. Check made payable to NCBE in the amount of \$500 (\$875 if foreign educated); and
6. Request for testing accommodations (if applicable).

These application materials must be postmarked by the filing deadline to be deemed timely.

Question: Do I submit the supplemental forms with my application?

Answer: Forms that must be completed by an individual other than the applicant should be submitted by that individual. The Certificate of Dean/Administrator of Law School, Certificates of Good Moral Character, and the Employment Verification Forms should be forwarded directly to the Committee on Character and Fitness from the individuals who complete the forms.

Question: The employment section of the Petition/Questionnaire for Admission to the Rhode Island Bar asks for a listing of all employment where I have been employed six (6) months or longer beginning after my 21st birthday. Do I include internships and clerkships?

Answer: Yes – paid and unpaid.

Question: What do I do if a Petition/Questionnaire for Admission to the Rhode Island Bar question is not applicable to me?

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

Question: What if I cannot answer a question fully?

Answer: All Petition/Questionnaire for Admission to the Rhode Island Bar questions 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 Petition/Questionnaire for Admission to the Rhode Island Bar. 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 provide law school applications and transcripts from all law schools?

Answer: Yes, along with copies of the letters sent to the law schools requesting those documents.

Question: Do you require Certificates of Good Standing from every jurisdiction I am a member of 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 he or she 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 history record repositories listing on our website.

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/Questionnaire. They can be 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/Questionnaire. 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: **When do applicants get interviewed before the Committee on Character and Fitness?**

Answer: All applicants will be interviewed by a member of the Committee on Character and Fitness approximately one (1) month prior to the examination. 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. Deferral and retake 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.

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

Answer: Yes, all applicants must bring two (2) color copies of valid photo identification (i.e., license or passport), proof of citizenship, or legal residence if not already provided. Additionally, all applicants must bring any outstanding items from their application and present valid photo identification upon registration. Applicants who have not submitted all required information and documentation will not receive a ticket for admission to the examination.

Question: **How will the Bar Administrator contact me about my application and the bar examination?**

Answer: The Bar Administrator communicates with applicants via e-mail. All contact with the Bar Administrator should be by letter or 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 Administrator 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 three (3) Rhode Island local questions (ninety (90) minutes timed), one (1) Multistate Performance Test (MPT) (ninety (90) minutes 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. This 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. 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.examsoft.com/ribar. The use of a laptop is highly recommended for applicants whose handwriting is illegible.

Question: How do I obtain a copy of my previously submitted bar application?

Answer: Please submit a formal letter request, a check made payable to the Committee on Character and Fitness in the amount of \$25.00 along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope suitable for the twenty-six (26) page Petition/Questionnaire for Admission to the Rhode Island Bar. Copies of the complete Petition/Questionnaire for Admission to the Rhode Island Bar will be provided only to bar applicants. If asked to send a copy directly to another jurisdiction, only Sections A and D of the Petition/Questionnaire for Admission to the Rhode Island Bar will be provided.

Question: How do I transfer a score from the MBE administered in Rhode Island to a different jurisdiction?

Answer: You must submit a completed MBE transfer form with a check in the amount of \$25.00 made payable to the Rhode Island Board of Bar Examiners, 250 Benefit Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02903. The MBE transfer form is available on the Supreme Court website and must be submitted by February 1 for the February examination and July 1 for the July examination.

Question: If I am sitting for the MBE in another jurisdiction, how do I transfer my score to Rhode Island?

Answer: Rhode Island only accepts MBE scores from concurrent bar examinations. To transfer your score from a concurrent administration of the MBE in another jurisdiction to Rhode Island, you must request transferal of the MBE score through the jurisdiction where you sat for the MBE. To ensure that your MBE score is forwarded properly, please have the other jurisdiction forward it directly to the Rhode Island Board of Bar Examiners, Rhode Island Supreme Court, 250 Benefit Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02903.

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 once the date is confirmed.

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

Answer: Swearing-in ceremonies are usually held 1 - 3 weeks after the bar examination results are released. Group ceremonies are held at the Rhode Island Supreme Court. 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). It is only after you register with the Court and obtain a bar number that 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 letter of intent to defer with a check made payable to the Committee on Character and Fitness in the amount of \$300.00. Deferral only holds an application open to the next scheduled exam. If you decide to withdraw, you must submit a formal withdrawal letter of intent to withdraw and your application file will be closed. Withdrawals are final. If a withdrawn applicant would like to sit for a later Rhode Island bar examination, an entirely new application and fee must be submitted.

Question: **If I fail, how can I reapply to take the Rhode Island Bar Examination?**

Answer: Information about how to reapply to take the bar examination immediately after failure is included in the bar results letter. Typically, applicants who fail the bar examination are afforded fourteen (14) days to reapply. The applicant must provide updated information and fees as outlined in the bar results letter.

Question: **Who do I contact for questions about the Rhode Island Bar Examination?**

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