

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Feb. 21, 2023**

**The Delaware Judiciary announces changes to the Delaware Bar Exam**

The Delaware Supreme Court today announced a series of reforms to the Delaware Bar examination and admissions process based on recommendations made by the Delaware Board of Bar Examiners. These reforms follow a two-year long comprehensive review by the Delaware Board of Bar Examiners of the test that is given to individuals, often recent law school graduates, looking to practice law in Delaware.

While that review was ongoing, the Steering Committee established to build and sustain a more diverse Delaware Bench and Bar issued a Strategic Plan that included recommendations on improving the Bar admissions process. The Board of Bar Examiners considered those recommendations as well as input from members of the judiciary, the Bar, and professional licensing, testing, and psychometric experts, in its review of the Bar application, examination, and admissions process.

Chief Justice Collins J. Seitz, Jr., in approving the recommendations from the Board of Bar Examiners, noted that this is not a lowering of the standards but a modernization of the process to better reflect how other states handle admission to the Bar. The Chief Justice said these reforms will keep Delaware competitive in attracting top legal talent to the state and keep Delawareans interested in the law from going elsewhere.

“Delaware is the only state to hold the bar exam just once a year. This can frustrate applicants because if they fail to pass the exam, which may be required for them to keep or land a job in Delaware, they have to wait a full year before they can try again,” he said. The Delaware Bar has also long been regarded as one of the most difficult Bar exams to pass in the nation. “The Bar Exam is not supposed to be a barrier to entering the profession but is supposed to be a test of an applicant’s ability to successfully practice law in Delaware and I believe these reforms will help better reflect that purpose,” he said.

Among the changes to the Delaware Bar exam:

- Going forward the exam will be offered twice a year (currently it is only offered in July; starting in 2024 it will also be offered in February).
- The “cut” or passing score for the exam will be reduced from a scale of 145 to 143.

- The essay portion of the exam will be reduced from eight essays to four and the number of topics that could be tested in those essays will be reduced from 14 areas of the law to 10 areas of the law.

In addition, the Supreme Court also adopted several recommended reforms to the admissions process for attorneys. Those include:

- A modification of the clerkship requirements, reducing it from a 21-week commitment to 12 weeks.
- A reduction in the “checklist” of activities for candidates – where potential lawyers need to sit in on certain legal proceedings – from a mandatory list of 25 items to 18 out of 30 potential items.
- A reduction in the late application fee from \$1,400 for law school graduates to \$900, and from \$1,600 for attorneys admitted in another jurisdiction to \$1,000.

There will also be other internal changes, such as partnering with the National Conference of Bar Examiners in the application process to compile the “character and fitness” application for the Board’s review.

All the changes will go into effect in time for the next administration of the Delaware Bar exam in July.

The Supreme Court order adopting the recommendations can be found here <https://courts.delaware.gov/forms/download.aspx?id=183428>

The memo to the Supreme Court from the Delaware Board of Bar Examiners can be found on the Judicial Branch publications and reports web page here <https://courts.delaware.gov/forms/download.aspx?id=183418>