



Supreme Court of Illinois

June 8, 2018

ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT ADOPTS UNIFORM BAR EXAM

Illinois became the 30th state to adopt the Uniform Bar Exam (UBE) on June 8, 2018, when the Illinois Supreme Court approved it to be the main component for bar admission. The UBE is a nationwide test that allows test takers to transfer scores between states, greatly improving the mobility of Illinois attorneys. It will be given for the first time in Illinois in July 2019.

“With a majority of jurisdictions in the United States now administering the Uniform Bar Exam, the time seemed right to adapt to a legal landscape that demands more flexibility and recognizes multi-jurisdictional practice,” Chief Justice Lloyd A. Karmeier said. “The switch to a portable bar examination acknowledges the changing reality while maintaining Illinois’ high standard of legal competency.”

In 2016, the Illinois Board of Admission to the Bar held public hearings in Springfield, Carbondale and Chicago to provide information on the UBE to those in attendance and to receive comments from individuals, organizations and entities interested in voicing their opinions on whether the UBE should be adopted and to answer questions. The comments received were overwhelmingly supportive of the change. Also in 2016, the Illinois State Bar Association Board and Assembly issued recommendations that the Illinois Supreme Court adopt the UBE.

"The Illinois Board of Admissions to the Bar and its staff are humbled, honored, and privileged to serve the Illinois Supreme Court, the members of the bench and bar, and the public. In fulfilling its responsibilities, the Board studied and ultimately recommended the adoption of the Uniform Bar Examination in Illinois," said Randy K. Johnson, Vice President and Treasurer of the Illinois Board of Admissions to the Bar. "It is evident that the practice of law is more mobile than it once was. Multi-jurisdictional and cross-border practice is now needed to effectively serve the public. The Board is pleased that Illinois will join the other UBE jurisdictions in meeting this need. The Board gratefully acknowledges the support of the Court along with the tireless efforts of all involved, especially past members of the Board. Adoption of the UBE in Illinois – The Land of Lincoln – is a significant positive for bar applicants which will protect and promote the public trust."

The UBE was first administered in 2011. It is a bar examination prepared by the National Conference of Bar Examiners, which has been adopted in 29 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Administered over two days, the UBE consists of: (a) the Multistate Bar Examination (MBE) - a 200-question multiple-choice test; (b) the Multistate Essay Examination

(MEE) - six essay questions on general principles of law; and (c) the Multistate Performance Test (MPT) - two hypothetical legal assignments requiring examinees to complete the tasks in writing. Persons who take the UBE receive a portable score which may be transferred to another UBE jurisdiction, provided certain criteria are met.

The Illinois Board of Admissions to the Bar had proposed to the Illinois Supreme Court that the UBE be adopted as the bar examination for the State of Illinois. In making this proposal, the Board considered three primary factors: (1) the Board's belief that the UBE is a high quality examination demonstrated by the fact that Illinois has utilized all of the UBE components - MBE, MEE and MPT - as parts of the Illinois Bar Examination (IBE) for the past 19 years; (2) the growing acceptance of the UBE throughout the country, which is establishing the UBE as the standard bar examination in the United States; and (3) the time-saving and cost-saving benefits to law school graduates that derive from having portable bar exam scores. Finally, the Board recognized that the IBE and UBE are already seven-eighths identical in content and that the changeover from the IBE to the UBE would be relatively easy, *i.e.*, replacing the three essay questions on Illinois law with a second MPT question. With the use of two MPTs, the Court believes that is consistent with the goal of measuring the skills and knowledge expected of beginning attorneys.

More information is available on the Board website at www.ilbaradmissions.org/home. The rule amendments (704, 704a, 706) are available on the Illinois Courts website at www.illinoiscourts.gov/SupremeCourt/Rules/Art_VII/default.asp.

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