



Supreme Court of Illinois

May 15, 2025

ILLINOIS ANNOUNCES FIRST ADMINISTRATION OF NEXTGEN UNIFORM BAR EXAM FOR FEBRUARY 2028

Law school graduates will take a new bar examination starting in February 2028 to become licensed to practice law in Illinois, the Illinois Supreme Court and the Board of Admissions to the Bar (Board) announced today.

The NextGen Uniform Bar Examination (NextGen UBE) will replace the current Uniform Bar Exam (UBE), which Illinois has used since 2019. The National Conference of Bar Examiners developed both the NextGen exam and the current UBE. When in May 2024 Illinois announced its intention to adopt the NextGen exam beginning in 2028, it joined 18 other jurisdictions that had announced plans to adopt that exam. Presently, a total of 40 jurisdictions have announced that they will be adopting the NextGen exam, including Illinois. Illinois administers the bar exam twice a year – in February and July – and will continue to follow that schedule with the NextGen exam.

Announcement of the February 2028 launch date for the NextGen exam in Illinois provides certainty for law schools and law students as they plan for future bar exam administrations. In addition, full-time students starting in the fall of 2025, who typically would sit for the July 2028 bar exam, will have their entire three-year program to prepare for the NextGen exam. Illinois' adoption of the NextGen UBE also could serve as the basis for score portability between participating jurisdictions, an arrangement that has been in place in Illinois since its adoption of the current UBE in 2019.

The NextGen exam will be administered over nine hours in a day and a half. It will test students on a range of legal principles including contract and constitutional law, civil procedure and criminal law, evidence, real property, torts, family law, and business associations. The exam focuses on skills used by lawyers such as identifying and analyzing legal issues, negotiation and dispute resolution, and legal research and writing, as well as advising and counseling clients.

The new exam, like the current UBE, will include multi-choice questions and performance tasks, which require test-takers to apply lawyering skills to realistic scenarios. The NextGen exam also features questions that integrate a factual scenario with other legal resources, such as an excerpt from a statute or court opinion or related documents such as portions of a deposition or a police report. The integrated question sets might focus on drafting a legal document, for example.

The Supreme Court oversees the admission and regulation of attorneys in Illinois. The Illinois Board of Admissions to the Bar administers the bar exam and processes applications for admission to the practice of law.

(FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT: James Brunner, Public Information Officer of the Illinois Supreme Court at 217.208.3354 or jbrunner@illinoiscourts.gov.)