

ABA Gives Cooley Law a Thumbs Up



Summary: Western Michigan University Thomas M. Cooley Law School is back in compliance, according to the ABA accreditation committee.

The American Bar Association accreditation committee has put [Western Michigan University Thomas M. Cooley Law School](#) back in compliance. The law school was struggling with the admissions standard requiring the admittance of candidates with a strong likelihood of finishing law school and obtaining admission to a state bar, according to the [ABA Journal](#).

The ABA's Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar Council in November 2017 found that Cooley that was not in compliance with Standard 501(b) and Interpretation 501-1, both of which deal with admissions. Upon news of being out of compliance, Cooley filed a temporary restraining order motion to stop the council from making the letter stating their compliance issues from being made public. The U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan rejected the motion. Cooley currently has a lawsuit against the ABA, claiming the posting of the letter violates the Higher Education Act and common-law due process still pending.

ABA managing director of accreditation and legal education Barry Currier said, "The ABA law school accreditation process includes opportunities for schools to address matters of noncompliance determined by the accreditation committee and the counsel. When that occurs, and the committee or the council conclude that the steps taken by a school have addressed the concerns that led to the finding of noncompliance, then the appropriate action is to find that the school has returned to good standing on those issues."

Florida lawyer David Frakt frequently criticizes the accreditation process. He questions Cooley Law's method of reaching compliance with Standard 501, believing that perhaps there is a settlement agreement covering the details of the law school's "concrete steps" from being included in the latest accreditation committee finding. He said, "The public – and perhaps the Department of Education – is likely to be very skeptical about this decision without evidence of what the concrete steps taken are."

Frakt wonders if perhaps Cooley Law is following the same guidelines that other recent law schools have adopted to bring themselves back into compliance after struggling with admission standards. The other schools have stopped accepting applicants with LSAT scores under 142, sticking with a median LSAT score of at least 146. Some of these schools enacted their new score standards immediately while others have been given time to reach the standard score. Frakt really wishes Cooley's plan was clear. He noted, "This decision is highly opaque, which is a reversal of a recent trend [with the section] toward greater transparency."

From 2014 to 2017, Cooley Law had a median LSAT score under 146. Their median GPA during that time has ranged from 2.85 to 2.94.

Do you think the reasoning the accreditation committee used to find Cooley Law back in compliance should be made clear? Share your thoughts with us in the comments below.

To learn more about the law schools not in compliance, read these articles:

- [ABA Cites Duncan School of Law for Being Out of Compliance](#)
- [ABA Finds NCCU Law Not in Compliance](#)
- [ABA Publishes Letters on Law School Accreditation Statuses](#)

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