

The NextGen Bar Exam: A Revolutionary Step Forward in Legal Education



The legal community is witnessing the fruition of the first significant overhaul of the bar exam in a quarter-century. This transformative initiative, the NextGen bar exam, has gained substantial traction, with nine jurisdictions pledging their commitment to its adoption.

Bridging the Gap: A Practice-Ready Approach

To better equip new graduates for the dynamic legal landscape, the NextGen bar exam replicates the day-to-day challenges newly licensed attorneys encounter. The National Conference of Bar Examiners (NCBE) emphasizes that the exam incorporates essential skills for both litigation and transactions. A comprehensive, multiyear, nationwide legal practice analysis involving approximately 15,000 U.S. attorneys, jurists, and legal educators played a pivotal role in shaping this groundbreaking test.

Innovative Features of the NextGen Exam

While maintaining some elements of the current exam, such as multiple-choice questions and performance tasks akin to the Multistate Performance Test section, the NextGen exam introduces a novel type of question. Notably, candidates will now be tasked with selecting two correct answers, uniquely challenging them.

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Navigating Controversies: A Dynamic Evolution

The journey towards the NextGen bar exam has not been without its share of controversies. In a recent development, family law faced exclusion from the list of foundational concepts and principles covered in the exam. However, objections from jurists led to its reinstatement, showcasing the dynamic nature of the exam's evolution.

Transitioning Period: Current Exam Availability

As the NextGen exam gains momentum, the NCBE has announced that the current bar exam will remain available to jurisdictions through the February 2028 administration. This marks a departure from previous plans to sunset the current exam in July 2027.

States Embracing Change

Several states have boldly embraced the NextGen bar exam, committing to its implementation in the coming years. These states include Maryland (July 2026), Missouri (July 2026), Oregon (July 2026), Arizona (July 2027), Iowa (July 2027), Kentucky (July 2027), Nebraska (July 2027), Wyoming (July 2027), and Connecticut (date to be announced).

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Exploring Experiential Education: A Path to the Bar

Simultaneously, some states contemplate experiential education as an alternative path to the bar. The American Bar Association's council of the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar has initiated discussions, inviting comments on this potential shift.

Don't be a silent ninja! Let us know your thoughts in the comment section below.