

News Release
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Iowa Adopts Multistate Essay Examination

Des Moines, August 7, 2008— Beginning in February, 2009, the essay section of the Iowa Bar Exam, the examination that all aspiring Iowa lawyers must pass, will be the Multistate Essay Examination developed by the National Conference of Bar Examiners.

“After consulting with the Iowa Board of Law Examiners and the law school deans at Drake, Iowa and Creighton, the supreme court decided the time had come to adopt the multistate essay examination,” said Chief Justice Marsha Ternus, Iowa Supreme Court.

The six-question Multistate Essay Examination (MEE) will replace the traditional Iowa essay exam. With this change, all three components of the Iowa Bar Exam—the essay questions and the performance and multiple choice tests—will be produced by the National Conference of Bar Examiners. The Iowa Board of Law Examiners will continue to grade the exams. In addition, all applicants for the Bar must pass the multistate ethics exam administered by the National Conference.

“Given that Iowa has used a number of multistate test products for many years, the adoption of the Multistate Essay Exam is a logical step,” said David Ewert, Assistant Director of Admissions, Office of Professional Regulation. “Multistate exams ensure a high level of consistent quality from exam to exam. We cannot match the resources, time and expertise that the National Conference devotes to developing, testing and refining test materials.”

According to Ewert, the MEE questions are honed over a two-year period. They are professionally drafted and reviewed repeatedly by the drafters, by the drafting committee, and by a battery of experts for content and bias problems. The MEE questions are also pre-tested by recent successful bar applicants, and previewed by the jurisdictions for problems. At each stage, the questions are refined based upon the critiques given by law professors, leading practitioners in the area being tested, recent applicants, and the bar examiners. The resulting product consistently performs at a high level.

The National Conference of Bar Examiners prepares nine 30-minute essay questions for each examination. Members of the Iowa Board of Law Examiners will choose six of the nine questions to be included on the Iowa examination. The subjects available for testing include: Business Associations (Agency and Partnership; Corporations and Limited Liability Companies), Conflicts of Law, Constitutional Law, Contracts (including Uniform Commercial Code, Art. 2 (sales), Criminal Law and Procedure, Evidence,

Family Law, Federal Civil Procedure, Real Property, Torts, Trusts and Estates (Decedents' Estates; Trusts and Future Interests), and Uniform Commercial Code (Commercial Paper (Negotiable Instruments); Secured Transactions). Some questions may include issues in more than one area of law.

The Iowa bar examination is offered twice a year in Polk County.

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