

PRESS RELEASE

Plan for Law School Graduates Announced

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

4/23/2020

Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court

Massachusetts Board of Bar Examiners

SJC Clerk's Office for the County of Suffolk

Massachusetts Court System

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BOSTON, MA — The Justices of the Supreme Judicial Court and the Massachusetts Board of Bar Examiners (BBE) today announced a plan for the Massachusetts Bar Examination to proceed amid the COVID-19 pandemic, and an expanded opportunity for graduates to appear in court under the student practice rule.

The plan for the bar examination outlines three elements:

- The bar exam will be conducted using the Uniform Bar Examination (UBE) on September 30 and October 1, if that exam can be conducted safely, with social distancing in place for all examinees.
- If the UBE cannot be conducted safely in-person, an alternative exam will be administered remotely and will grant admission only to the bar of Massachusetts. In that event, the BBE will work to ensure that the

exam will be similar in content to the subjects tested on the UBE, so that students who have been preparing for the UBE will not need to make major adjustments in preparing for the Massachusetts only exam.

- Regardless of whether the September 30 and October 1 bar exam is the UBE or a Massachusetts only exam, the BBE will work to expedite the grading of the exam and its character and fitness investigations so that law school graduates will have results by mid-to-late December. Admission to the bar will be postponed by only eight weeks -- from the week of November 16-20, 2020, when the bar admission ceremonies were going to be held, to the week of January 11-15, 2021, when they will now be held. If an applicant has a pressing need to be admitted in late December, the applicant can arrange with the Clerk of the Supreme Judicial Court for Suffolk County to be sworn-in, reducing the delay to only five or six weeks.

The Justices also [issued an order](#)

[\(/supreme-judicial-court-rules/supreme-judicial-court-temporary-emergency-order-re-supreme-judicial\)](/supreme-judicial-court-rules/supreme-judicial-court-temporary-emergency-order-re-supreme-judicial) removing a time restriction applying to students appearing in court under Supreme Judicial Court Rule 3:03. For those students who are most likely to need to appear in court before they can be sworn in, who are generally those who have or will obtain employment with a district attorney, CPCS, a state legal office, or a legal services provider, and who have yet to obtain the SJC Rule 3:03 certification necessary to do so, the order will permit them to obtain such certification at any time before graduation.

On April 22, Supreme Judicial Court Chief Justice Ralph D. Gants sent a [letter to law school deans](#) [\(/doc/supreme-judicial-court-chief-justice-ralph-d-gants-letter-to-law-school-deans-april-22-2020\)](/doc/supreme-judicial-court-chief-justice-ralph-d-gants-letter-to-law-school-deans-april-22-2020) outlining the plan. The Supreme Judicial Court also prepared [information for law school graduates](#) [\(/doc/information-for-law-school-graduates-regarding-measures-in-response-to-the-covid-19-pandemic\)](/doc/information-for-law-school-graduates-regarding-measures-in-response-to-the-covid-19-pandemic) outlining the plan and the temporary expansion of SJC Rule 3:03.

The BBE is established by G.L. c. 221 §§35 & 36 to evaluate the qualifications of persons seeking admission to the bar of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

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Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court (</orgs/massachusetts-supreme-judicial-court>)

The Supreme Judicial Court is the Commonwealth's highest appellate court.

More (</orgs/massachusetts-supreme-judicial-court>)

Massachusetts Board of Bar Examiners (</orgs/massachusetts-board-of-bar-examiners>)

Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Supreme Judicial Court

Press Release: March 30, 2020 (updated 4/6/2020)

The Supreme Judicial Court and the Board of Bar Examiners announced that, due to the ongoing public health emergency arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Massachusetts bar examination will not be administered on July 28 and July 29, 2020 as previously scheduled. The bar exam has been rescheduled to be held on September 30-October 1, 2020.

The Board of Bar Examiners, in consultation with the Supreme Judicial Court, will continue to closely monitor public health and safety guidelines, including prohibitions against large gatherings, related to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the event that limitations on large gatherings continue to interfere with a fall administration of the Massachusetts bar examination, alternative means for testing of applicants for Massachusetts bar admission will be devised and announced.

We thank you for your patience and understanding.

Sincerely,

Marilyn J. Wellington, Executive Director

Robert L. Harris, Chair

Marie Buckley, Bar Examiner

Barbara Healy Smith, Bar Examiner

Carol A. Kelly, Bar Examiner

Francis J. O'Connor, Bar Examiner

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More (</orgs/massachusetts-board-of-bar-examiners>)

SJC Clerk's Office for the County of Suffolk

(</orgs/sjc-clerks-office-for-the-county-of-suffolk>)

4/01/2020 - Message from Clerk Maura Doyle

During the coronavirus public health crisis, the SJC Clerk's Office for Suffolk County is open, however, there is no physical, public access to the Clerk's Office except for limited emergency circumstances. A limited number of staff are working in the Clerk's Office from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday, to docket and process any filings, including any new petitions, complaints and applications. Please be advised that processing times may be impacted by staff reductions related to the ongoing crisis. Contact information for the office and links to our business areas can be found below.

[More \(/orgs/sjc-clerks-office-for-the-county-of-suffolk\)](#)



[Massachusetts Court System \(/orgs/massachusetts-court-system\)](#)

The Massachusetts court system consists of the Supreme Judicial Court, the Appeals Court, the Executive Office of the Trial Court, the 7 Trial Court departments, the Massachusetts Probation Service, and the Office of Jury Commissioner.

[More \(/orgs/massachusetts-court-system\)](#)

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