

## News Highlights

# Evaluating the cut score for the California Bar Exam



Wednesday, August 9, 2017 Categories: [Top Headlines](#)

The State Bar of California is carefully reviewing the California Bar Examination passing score in a series of studies, as directed by the [state Supreme Court](#).

On July 31, State Bar trustees and the Committee of Bar Examiners met to discuss the [2017 Standard Setting Study Report](#) of the passing score, reviewing both the study and a [staff memo](#) that presented two options, based on the standard setting study conducted by psychometrician Chad Buckendahl, Ph.D.

The State Bar is seeking [public comment](#) regarding the Standard Setting Study and related options for the California Bar Exam cut score before making a recommendation to the California Supreme Court, which will make the final decision.

- Read the [California Bar Exam Standard Setting Study](#)
- See the [news release on the California Bar Exam Standard Setting study](#)
- View [a fact sheet](#) outlining how the State Bar will study the California Bar Exam

## Input and Evaluation

Evaluating the California Bar Exam has included deans and other law school representatives. At an April 6 Law School Assembly meeting, the State Bar hosted deans and law school administrators to discuss the definition of minimum competence that was needed for the [Standard Setting Study](#). The initial draft was further refined after feedback from several groups of stakeholders, including from a State Bar working group, law school deans, and the psychometrician. (See page 11 of [the study](#) for the definition of minimum competence that was used.)

The State Bar has held biweekly conference calls, open to all California law school deans, since March to discuss progress on [the three bar exam studies](#). Deans of several law schools regularly participated.



Supreme Court, the Assembly Judiciary Committee and the governor's office.

To further ensure the study's integrity, the State Bar contracted with both the California Department of Consumer Affairs and an independent outside expert on psychometrics to review the project materials, observe the workshop and assess the validity of the study findings.

- **Evaluation submitted by Mary J. Pitoniak**, a leading national expert on standard-setting in educational measurement
- **Evaluation submitted by the California Department of Consumer Affairs, authored by Tracy A. Montez**, Chief of Programs and Policy Review Division

In order to ensure transparency the State Bar provided access to project materials to the Department of Consumer Affairs representative and Pitoniak and a variety of stakeholders and oversight bodies for review from early stages of the study.

Additionally, DCA staff and Pitoniak attended the workshop portion of the Standard Setting Study as observers to document the process and review both early drafts and the final report of the study completed by Dr. Chad Buckendahl to assess the validity of the findings.

The evaluations from the Department of Consumer Affairs and Pitoniak provide critique on different components of the Standard Setting Study. While both evaluations properly point to areas of concern – many of which related to the unavoidable time constraint of the study – they conclude that the method used for the Standard Setting Study was sound and produced valid results, and that it was implemented thoroughly and effectively.

## Public Comment

Conducting a careful review of the California Bar Examination will take time and involve input from the public, law schools, the State Bar Committee of Bar Examiners and the State Bar Board of Trustees. One of the next steps is to seek opinions and review from members of the public.

- Submit **public comment** before the Aug. 25 deadline



## Previous Article

Copyright © 2017 The State Bar of California