



BAR EXAMINATION STANDARDS

INTRODUCTION

1. The Bar Examination is the qualifying examination for admission to the legal profession in the Maldives. It is a national level examination administered by the Bar Council of the Maldives (BCM) with the objective of assessing the capacity of law graduates to practice in the Maldives, in accordance with Section 32 of Law No. 5/2019 (Legal Profession Act of the Maldives).
2. These Standards set out the policies and procedures governing the administration of the examination, examination format, the marking methodology, the determination of the pass mark and the notification of results, relevant to the exam cycle.
3. These standards and procedures will be reviewed annually as part of the bar examination quality assurance framework. Any necessary amendments to the policies will be implemented upon publication on the official website of BCM.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

4. All examinees must possess the following qualities and must have complied with the following rules:
 - a) Examinee must be a Maldivian citizen;
 - b) Examinee must have obtained a qualifying law degree from an accredited institution;
 - c) Examinee must have fulfilled all applicable registration requirements; and
 - d) Examinee must have paid the examination fees.

APPLICATION

5. Examinees should register for the exam via the designated application form.
6. All details, personal and academic, on the application forms must be filled completely by the examinees.
7. A passport-size photo, taken according to the specified instructions, must be uploaded with the application form.
8. Examinees must upload the required supporting documents with the application form.
9. Examinees are advised to take a printout of the application form for future reference.

EXAMINATION FEE	10.	Examinees must make the full fee payment directly to the BCM bank account as informed to the examinees, prior to the Bar Exam.
	11.	Examinees must submit a receipt of deposit or transfer of payment to the BCM, upon which the BCM will issue a receipt of payment to the examinee.
	12.	The application fee is a non-refundable fee, which is finalised for the exam upon the calculation of the full cost of the exam, and which will be determined by the Executive Committee of the BCM.
EXAM CANDIDATE NUMBER	13.	Once an application and the corresponding payment have been submitted and accepted, the examinee will receive a Candidate Number for the exam.
EXAM DATE AND CENTRE	14.	The date(s) for the exam will be announced by the BCM 90 days in advance.
	15.	Exam hall(s) will be announced by the BCM on a date not less than 7 days prior to the date of the exam.
EXAM SYLLABUS AND EXAMINABLE AREAS	16.	The exam syllabus covers practice areas in the Maldives, and the examinable areas for the year will be decided by the Executive Committee and will be published by the BCM.
	17.	Detailed content outlines will be published by the BCM, at least three months prior to the date of the exam.
EXAM FORMAT	18.	The exam is paper-based and will be a multiple-choice test.
	19.	The exam is conducted in dual language.
	20.	The question paper will have 120 multiple-choice questions on 6 subject areas. There will be no further subdivision of the 60 questions in each session by subject area.
	21.	The total duration of the exam will be 4 hours, which will take place over two sessions with a break in between. Each session shall have a paper of 60 questions each.
	22.	Each of the questions on the exam is followed by 4 possible answers. Examinees should choose the best answer from the stated options.
	23.	Examinees must be able to respond to a question within 1.6 to 1.8 minutes.
	24.	Examinees should mark only 1 answer for each question. Multiple answers will not be counted. Marks are based on the number of questions answered correctly.

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| | 25. | The exam is a closed book examination. Examinees are not permitted to bring their own materials into the exam room. Answer sheets will be given to the examinees to mark the answers. Answers will only be counted if they are marked on the provided answer sheets. It is mandatory for the examinees to use a 2B pencil only, for all the entries on the answer sheets, including the filling of bubbles. Suitable pencils will be provided. If there is more than one answer bubbled against a question, it will be considered as an incorrect answer. |
| | 26. | Every correct answer carries 1 mark. |
| | 27. | There is no negative marking in the exam. |
| WITHDRAWAL
BEFORE THE EXAM | 28. | Examinees facing pre-exam mitigating circumstances are expected to withdraw and defer to a later date. Withdrawal requests must be submitted via the designated form at least 10 working days prior to the exam. |
| EXAM ROOM RULES | 29. | All examinees must strictly adhere to the following rules while the exam is in session. |
| REQUIRED ITEMS | 30. | Examinees must present their original National Identity Card, passport or driver's license for identification purpose. Photocopies or digital images of identification documents will not be accepted. |
| ALLOWED ITEMS | 31. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Clear, plastic, disposable water bottles which can be closed, are allowed to be taken inside the exam room.b) Any medically necessary item to which an examinee requires access, must have been approved prior to the exam via the Special Accommodations Form. Approved medical items must be placed in a clear plastic bag, labelled with the examinee's name, and placed under the seat. If the examinee needs to use any item in the bag during the exam, they must ask for the assistance of an invigilator, who will then allow access to the bag. |
| PROHIBITED ITEMS | 32. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Cell phones and other electronic devices are not allowed in the exam room. If an examinee is found to have any electronic device inside the exam room an incident report will be filed, and the matter will be reported to the Chief Invigilator (or their nominee) under the procedure for Malpractice and Improper Conduct outlined in the Assessment Rules. A finding of malpractice or improper conduct can result in an examinee failing the exam and being disqualified from sitting in the future.b) Examinees are also not allowed to bring clocks and/or watches into the exam room. Clocks with the official time will be displayed in the exam room. |

- c) All materials required to complete the exam will be provided by the BCM and, as such, no items, except for required and/or allowed items as provided in the sections below, are allowed inside the exam room. Examinees may not remove these items from the exam room at any time during the exam and these items are required to be left on the examination desk at the end of the exam.
- d) Any type of food or drinks, except for water as provided below, may not be taken into the exam room.

**DESIGNATED
STORAGE AREA**

- 33. Personal items (including, but not limited to, wallet, cash, credit card, keys, personal hygiene items, and medication) which are not permitted in the exam room may be left outside the exam room, in an unsecured designated storage area, at the examinee's own risk.
- 34. While the exam is in progress, examinees may not access such stored personal items.

DRESS CODE

- 35. Examinees are expected to be dressed appropriately for the exam. Examinees must consider layered clothing as BCM will have little control over fluctuating temperatures in the exam room.
- 36. Coats, jackets, and any other outerwear may be checked for **PROHIBITED ITEMS** before examinees are permitted to enter the exam room.
- 37. Examinees must wear quiet shoes (soft soles) as examinees may have to walk across the exam room to the restrooms during the exam.

**EXAMINEE
DECLARATION**

- 38.
 - a) Examinees sitting the exam are agreeing to abide by the rules and regulations set forth by the BCM with respect to the exam, including agreeing not to disclose the contents of the exam paper to anybody, agreeing that they are fit to sit the exam, and that they do not know of reasons why they might subsequently submit a claim for mitigating circumstances related to their health or other personal circumstances.
 - b) Exam testing information and data, including, but not limited to, personally identifiable information, may be shared by the Bar Council of the Maldives for scoring, research, exam security, statistical and other purposes.

**ENTRANCE TO
THE EXAM ROOM,
SEATING &
LEAVING
THE EXAM ROOM**

- 39. Admission to the exam room will begin 1 hour prior to the scheduled exam. Identity checks will be made, and belongings will be checked prior to admitting examinees inside the exam room.

40. All seats are preassigned with the Candidate Number. Examinees must sit in their assigned seat throughout the entire exam. A chart indicating the row numbers will be posted outside the exam room.
41. Examinees must be seated 20 minutes prior to the exam.
42. Examinees who complete the registration after 20 minutes from the commencement of the exam testing, due to late arrival, shall not be permitted to enter the exam room. Examinees who arrive after testing has started but before 20 minutes of testing has elapsed, may be admitted to the exam room. **However, the examinees who were allowed into the exam room after the exam began will NOT be given extra time to complete the exam and they may miss hearing the exam instructions.**
43. No examinee will be permitted to leave the exam room within the first 20 minutes of the exam.
44. If the examinee arrives after the Chief Invigilator starts reading the exam instructions, they will have to wait outside the exam room, until the reading is completed, and the Chief Invigilator gives the instruction to start the exam.
45. Examinees may briefly leave for restroom facilities with the permission of an invigilator.
46. The examinee may leave the exam room if they complete the exam before the last 15 minutes of each exam session.
47. No examinee will be allowed to leave the exam room within the final 15 minutes of each exam session.
48. Time advisory warnings will be given at 15 and 5 minutes prior to the end of each exam session.
49. If the examinee leaves the test site/ building, other than at the session break, they will be deemed to have left the exam and will not be re-admitted to that session.
50. Examinees missing one session remain eligible to take the other session.
51.
 - a) An Assessment Delivery Disruption (ADD) is any incident – caused by an error or a mistake on the part of the examiner; test center or events outside of the examiners control such as a fire, utility service failure or technical failure – that prevents the BCM from administering the bar exam.
 - b) An event will only be an ADD when declared by the Chief Examiner or designated BCM official. Decisions related to ADD must be consulted and communicated with the Assessment Expert(s) and the Chief Invigilator(s).

**ASSESSMENT
DELIVERY
DISRUPTION (ADD)**

- c) If an ADD is declared and the exam is to continue on the same day, the Chief Examiner or the designated BCM official may change the exam key times or allocate additional time to complete the exam.
- d) Examinees who consider that their performance in the exam are likely to have been adversely affected due to the ADD, must submit a mitigating circumstance claim in accordance with the Mitigating Circumstances Policy.

**LOSS OF EXAM
TIME DUE TO
OTHER ISSUES**

- 52. a) Expected test center events – such as brief announcements or table adjustments – do not constitute ADD, even if they result in loss of time.
- b) Minor disruptions lasting 15 minutes or less, may, at the Chief Examiner's discretion, be compensated with additional time based on the severity of the impact.

**EVENTS BEYOND
THE CONTROL OF
THE EXAMINER**

- 53. a) The BCM shall not be liable for any failure to perform, or delay in performing, its services regarding the Bar Exam if such failure results from events beyond its reasonable control, including but not limited to fires, utility failures, natural disasters or acts of government.
- b) If a minor disruption occurs due to circumstances beyond the examiner's control, the examination will continue, and examinees will be granted extra time to compensate for the lost time
- c) In the event of a major disruption beyond the examiner's control resulting in cancellation, the BCM will attempt to reschedule the impacted exam as follows:
 - (i) If a candidate has not yet started the exam, the BCM will reschedule it to the earliest available date. Should the candidate be unable to attend the new date, such candidate will automatically receive a successful mitigating circumstance claim and a full fee refund.
 - (ii) If an examination is disrupted after it has started, the BCM will reschedule it to the earliest available date. Examinees unable to attend the rescheduled examination will be granted a successful mitigating circumstance claim and receive a full fee refund.
 - (iii) If an examination is disrupted after it has started and the BCM is unable to reschedule the impacted exam, examinees will have the following options-based situations described below:

- (1) If the examination is marked and the candidate:
 - a) Passed: If the candidate passes, the disruption is ignored, and the passing grade stands.
 - b) Failed: If the candidate fails, they are automatically granted a successful mitigating circumstance claim, resulting in a full refund of the exam fee.
- (2) If the examination is not marked all examinees are automatically granted a successful mitigating circumstance claim, resulting in a full refund of the exam fee.

- d) All candidate instructions pertaining to cancellations and rescheduling of the exam will be notified by e-mail.

**INABILITY TO
COMPLETE THE
EXAM**

- 54. If an examinee is unable to complete the exam, the matter must be reported to an invigilator or a member of the staff of BCM immediately. The examinee will be required to turn in all test materials, complete an Exam Withdrawal Form and provided their name, Candidate Number, National Identification Number, and signature, prior to leaving the exam room. The applicable incident report will be filed.
- 55. If an examinee withdraws from Session 1 of the exam, the examinee will not be allowed to sit Session 2 of the exam.

**VIOLATION OF
RULES, POLICIES
AND STANDARDS**

- 56. An incident report will be filed in respect of any examinee who violates any of the rules, procedures, and instructions in respect of the exam. The matter will be reported to the Chief Invigilator (or their nominee) under the procedure for Malpractice and Improper Conduct outlined in the Bar Exam Assessment Rules. A finding of malpractice or improper conduct can result in an examinee failing the exam and being disqualified from sitting in the future.
- 57. Violation of the rules includes not putting down the pencil and/or continuing to write or mark the answer sheet once time is called.

**MARKING AND
STANDARD
SETTING**

- 58.
 - a) The Assessment Expert must establish the Bar Exam passing standards using internationally recognized best practices, such as the Modified Angoff method, the Hofstee method and/or statistical equating to previously validated standards.
 - b) Prior to evaluating the examination questions, standard setting panel members must receive training and discuss the application of the Threshold Standard.
 - c) The Assessment Board will determine the unrounded cut score (pass mark), expressed as the number of correct answers and will refer to the standard determined by the methods advised by the Assessment Expert.

- d) Assessment standards are rigorously maintained through a two-part process: in-depth standard setting (utilising the Modified Angoff method or other recognized approaches), supplemented by statistical equating between these sessions to ensure long-term consistency.
- e) Once the initial cut score is calculated, the Assessment Board will account for measurement error (Standard Error of Measurement – SEM) to set the final pass mark. This ensures that successful candidates have demonstrated sufficient competence to practice.
- f) Following any necessary corrections after the application of the SEM, the final unrounded cut score is rounded to the nearest integer to establish the official pass mark, which defines the total number of correct answers required to pass the assessment.
- g) If the candidate's number of correctly answered questions is greater than or equal to the pass mark, they will pass the exam.

NOTIFICATION OF RESULTS

- 59. The results will be emailed separately to examinees.
- 60. The results will display the qualifying/ non-qualifying status of examinees and their individual scores.

PUBLICATION OF THE BAR EXAM RESULTS

- 61. The BCM may publish partial or full results.
