

UNIFIED JUDICIAL SYSTEM POSITION DESCRIPTION

CHIEF OF BAR ADMISSION

CLASS CODE: 99-71-26

POSITION PURPOSE

Manages and oversees the administration, development, and integrity of the bar admission process including the preparation, scheduling, administration, grading, and evaluation of the bar examination and pathway applicants; the administration and evaluation of reciprocity applications; ensuring compliance with all applicable rules, regulations, and standards to maintain the fairness, consistency, and security of the bar admissions process.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURE

This position communicates recommended resolutions both verbally and in writing to the Supreme Court Justices and manages and oversees the bar admission process in South Dakota.

MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Note: The duties listed are typical examples of work performed by positions in this job classification. Not all duties are included, nor is the list exclusive.

1. Manages and oversees the Bar admission process for South Dakota to ensure adherence to both national and state requirements and maintain the integrity of the bar admission process.
 - a. Serves as the ex officio secretary to the Board of Bar Examiners and advises the Board on rule changes and issues regarding testing and admissions; and researches and drafts rule changes on behalf of the Board.
 - b. Manages the electronic application process.
 - c. Responds to any testing irregularities during the bar exam.
 - d. Reviews requests for accommodations pursuant to the ADA, seeks independent reviews, and makes necessary arrangements.
 - e. Coordinates with the law school regarding the public service pathway program.
 - f. oversees the Board member assignments.
 - g. Reviews each bar application and identifies character and fitness questions.
 - h. Conducts character investigations on each bar applicant.
 - i. Prepares memos to the Board regarding character issues.
 - j. Schedules and attends board meetings and character and fitness hearings.
 - k. Maintains the Bar Examiner files and applications.
 - l. Locates, contracts, and trains bar proctors and monitors the bar examination.
 - m. Monitors conditional admissions approved by the Supreme Court.
 - n. Evaluates the bar admission process and recommends any changes to the Board for consideration.
 - o. Schedules and arranges all the logistics twice a year for the bar examinations.

CHIEF OF BAR ADMISSION

- p. Evaluates bar examination and admission trends and new testing technologies and recommends improvements to enhance accessibility, efficiency, and candidate experience.
2. Assists, as time allows, to the Supreme Court and Supreme Court staff attorneys to ensure timely and efficient resolution of Supreme Court matters.
 - a. Screens appeals for jurisdictional error to ensure timeliness of appeals and that the Supreme Court has jurisdiction over appeals.
 - b. Reviews pro se submissions to determine appropriate procedures when documents are procedurally inappropriate or unclear as to grounds or authority for relief.
 - c. Assists the Chief Justice, Justices, Circuit Judges, and Court Clerks by providing legal research and analysis regarding legal matters.
 - d. Reviews petitions to the Supreme Court for certificates of probable cause in habeas corpus actions and recommends their grant or denial to the Court.
 - e. Reviews briefs in cases ready for the Supreme Court's consideration and divides cases into oral, non-oral, and per curiam categories; and proposes a calendar to the Court for the following month.
 - f. Drafts research memoranda and court opinions in death penalty cases, per curiam cases, pro se cases, and abuse and neglect cases to ensure application of pertinent legal authorities and standards to cases involved.
 - g. Drafts research memoranda and court opinions in expedited appeals and in original and special proceedings on issues which may affect the state as a whole or in disputes drawing public opinion.
 3. Performs other work as assigned.

SUPERVISORY FUNCTIONS

This position does not have supervisory authority but does provide work direction to clerical support and contracted bar proctors.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS REQUIRE

This position requires ordinary functions of a typical working day, sitting, standing, and walking; attendance in accordance with rules and policies; proficiency in the use of office equipment such as computers, telephones, copiers, etc.; and in-state and out-of-state travel for trainings and meetings. This position also requires working effectively with coworkers; managing stress appropriately; meeting deadlines; demonstrating initiative and motivation; identifying and analyzing legal issues; and communicating (verbally and in writing) complex ideas, concepts, dispositions, rules, policies, and procedures.

PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

Challenges include ensuring the confidentiality and fairness of the exam process; standardizing grading across multiple components to avoid bias or inconsistency, especially in subjective essay portions; managing the shift to computer-based exams, integrating changes like the NextGen Bar Exam, and ensuring exam delivery platforms are reliable and accessible; providing accommodations and addressing systemic disparities by ensuring all candidates—regardless of background—have a fair opportunity to succeed; overseeing large-scale exam administration

CHIEF OF BAR ADMISSION

under strict timelines, coordinating staffing, data management, and contingency planning for disruptions; and handling legal challenges from candidates ensuring regulatory compliance and protecting sensitive applicant data.

DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY

Decisions include setting testing schedules and locations, overseeing application and registration timelines and processes, selecting and managing bar proctors, implementing accommodation policies and bar admission rules, recommending bar exam rule changes, researching and evaluation of the bar exam processes and rules, and preparing bar exam materials for the Board and Supreme Court.

Decisions referred include final revisions to bar exam rules and processes.

CONTACT WITH OTHERS AND PURPOSE

Daily contact with the Supreme Court Justices, Board of Bar Examiners, coworkers, and the public to provide information and answer bar admission questions.

WORKING CONDITIONS

The incumbent works in a typical office environment.

COMPETENCIES/QUALIFICATIONS FOR APPOINTMENT

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities:

Knowledge of:

- the law and South Dakota law;
- bar admission requirements;
- national testing frameworks;
- court and judicial systems;
- testing accessibility standards.

Skill in:

- use of computer resources;
- legal writing, editing, and proofreading.

Ability to:

- analyze and interpret exam data;
- collaborate with diverse stakeholders;
- coordinate large-scale logistics;
- lead during regulatory and technology transformations;
- balance competing demands;
- conduct necessary legal research;
- present and communicate complex topics effectively in oral consultations with supervisory and decision-making authorities;
- analyze rule proposals and draft amendments and rules.

CHIEF OF BAR ADMISSION

Education:

Graduation from an accredited law school and membership in the State Bar of South Dakota (or successful completion of the first South Dakota bar examination following employment with the Supreme Court).

Experience:

Experience is not necessary but is highly preferred.