



**CODEX**  
The Stanford Center for Legal Informatics

# CodeX Bar Exam Grand and Mini-Challenges

<b>Grand Challenge</b>	Can a computer pass the Multistate Bar Examination (MBE)?
<b>Purpose</b>	<p>The CodeX Bar Exam Grand Challenge has the overarching goal of opening wider access to legal services for all who need or seek them. To this end, the Challenge specifically aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Determine if artificial intelligence (<b>AI</b>) can demonstrate high level legal reasoning skills</li><li>• Inform the conversation around state regulation of the Unauthorized Practice of Law (<b>UPL</b>).</li></ul>
<b>Targeted Grand Prize</b>	<b>\$1 Million for the winning team</b> [possibly also \$1 Million donated in their name to the Stanford Law School (SLS) Scholarship Fund supporting Equal Access to Legal Education <sup>1</sup> ]
<b>Mini-Challenge</b>	At Future Law 2018, CodeX – The Stanford’s Center for Legal Informatics ( <a href="http://codex.stanford.edu">http://codex.stanford.edu</a> ) will announce the Grand Challenge, and invite AI researchers around the world to create a system that can derive the correct legal result from a computer-readable fact pattern simulating the [Contracts] portion of the MBE.
<b>Targeted Mini-Prize</b>	\$25,000 to the Mini-Challenge winning team, plus \$25,000 donated to the SLS Scholarship Fund.
<b>Sponsorships</b>	Like Google’s Lunar X Prize, the Netflix Prize, and other challenges sponsored by corporations and foundations, we envision the CodeX Bar Exam Challenge to attract keen AI researcher interest and media attention. Our Challenge reimagines how the legal services profession is licensed, and asks what advances in computational reasoning will mean for lawyers in the profession. For prospective sponsors who provide legal services (major law firms), who use legal services (tech companies, government agencies), or who see access to legal services as a civil right in a participative democracy (foundations and family offices), our Challenge can raise brand awareness, attract talented legaltech founders and teams, and advance academic research in computer science and related fields
<b>Background</b>	CodeX has a long history of anticipating and prompting advances in using information technology to improve access to quality legal services, generally referred to as legal technology (legaltech). A potential barrier to widespread adoption of legaltech is the risk that UPL regulations

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<sup>1</sup> Stanford Law School Financial Aid Programs, <https://law.stanford.edu/apply/tuition-financial-aid/jd-financial-support/>

would unduly or inappropriately burden innovative startups. A concurrent concern for state licensing boards is how to prevent the “AI hackability” of bar examinations. If a computer can achieve a passing score on the standardized test which is a core requirement for lawyers to be admitted to practice, then the reasoning ability within such computer might someday meet or exceed the Unauthorized Practice of Law (UPL) criteria that frequently represent an impediment to automation of legal services.

## Licensure

Generally speaking, becoming licensed as a lawyer in the United States entails a multi-step, multi-year process,<sup>2</sup> including: (1) graduating from one of 205 law school that have been accredited by the American Bar Association (ABA),<sup>3</sup> (2) passing the Multistate Bar Exam (the MBE)<sup>4</sup> (or an exam similar thereto)<sup>5</sup>, (3) passing any other state-specific bar exam requirements (e.g., a written exam portion),<sup>6</sup> (4) passing the Multistate Professional Responsibility Exam (known as the Ethics Exam),<sup>7</sup> (5) registering for admission to practice law before the state supreme court of the applicant’s choosing<sup>8</sup> and (6) passing an examination of the applicant’s moral character.<sup>9</sup>

Unlike professional licensure in medicine, finance and engineering, the license to practice law is state specific, and a lawyer, say in New York, would need to apply for and pass nearly all of the requirements California imposes on a person who has never practiced law elsewhere.

## MBE Exam

The Multistate Bar Exam (MBE) consists of 200 multiple choice questions covering a wide range of legal topics such as civil procedure, constitutional law, contracts, criminal law and procedure, evidence, real property, and torts.<sup>10</sup> The MBE is offered as an in person exam twice per year, and the scaled scores are published shortly thereafter.<sup>11</sup> Based on prior MBE exam questions, sample test questions are offered online.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> National Conference of Bar Examiners (NCBE) and the ABA, *Comprehensive Guide to Bar Admissions Requirements (2017)*, <http://www.ncbex.org/pubs/bar-admissions-guide/2017/index.html#p=1>

<sup>3</sup> ABA, *Approved Law Schools*, <http://tasks.posm.hotosm.org:6543/project/5>. Many states permit waiving the requirement of attendance at law school if the attorney-applicant has been supervised by a judge or licensed attorney or completed several years of legal studies by other means. For example, in California, see California, State Bar of California (CalBar), *Bar Admission Education Requirements*, <http://www.calbar.ca.gov/Admissions/Requirements/Education>.

<sup>4</sup> NCBE, *Multistate Bar Exam*, <http://www.ncbex.org/exams/mbe/>.

<sup>5</sup> NCBE offers the Multistate Uniform Bar Exam, <http://www.ncbex.org/exams/mbe/>.

<sup>6</sup> For example, California requires an essay exam in addition to the MBE, and publishes the essay questions and model answers to past exams online. CalBar, *Past Exams*, <http://www.calbar.ca.gov/Admissions/Examinations/California-Bar-Examination/Past-Exams>.

<sup>7</sup> NCBE, *Multistate Professional Responsibility Exam*, <http://www.ncbex.org/exams/mpre/>.

<sup>8</sup> For example in California, CalBar, [https://www.calbarxap.com/applications/calbar/California\\_Bar\\_Registration/](https://www.calbarxap.com/applications/calbar/California_Bar_Registration/).

<sup>9</sup> For example in California, CalBar, *Moral Character Determination Application*, [https://www.calbarxap.com/Applications/CalBar/California\\_Bar\\_Moral\\_Character/default.asp](https://www.calbarxap.com/Applications/CalBar/California_Bar_Moral_Character/default.asp).

<sup>10</sup> NCBE, *2018 MBE Subject Matter Outline*, <http://www.ncbex.org/pdfviewer/?file=%2Fdmsdocument%2F201>.

<sup>11</sup> NCBE, *2016 MBE National Summary Statistics (Based on Scaled Scores)*, <http://www.ncbex.org/publications/statistics/mbe-statistics/>.

<sup>12</sup> NCBE, *MBE Sample Test Questions*, <http://www.calbar.ca.gov/Admissions/Examinations/California-Bar-Examination/Past->

Private test preparation services are offered to law students and others studying for the MBE, specifically BARBRI<sup>13</sup>, Kaplans<sup>14</sup> and Themis<sup>15</sup>. Over several decades, these bar exam preparation services have prepared outlines (Bar Review Outlines) that distill the topics that MBE tests across the bar exam’s landscape of testable subject matter.

**Test Format**

Our Grand Challenge would test all MBE subjects. Our Mini-Challenge would simulate a scaled-down version of the full MBE, focused on a single subject area, such as Contracts. Both Challenges will provide complete anonymity for entrants.

**Question**

If a computer learned the reasoning within all the material in the Bar Review Outlines and took the MBE practice tests, would the computer be able to pass the MBE exam?

**Team**

The CodeX Bar Exam Challenge is curated by Michael Genesereth (Stanford Professor of Computer Science and Co-Director of CodeX), Roland Vogl (Executive Director of CodeX) and Bruce Cahan (Stanford Lecturer in Engineering and CodeX Fellow)

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[Exams.](#)

<sup>13</sup> BARBRI Bar Exam Review Course, <http://www.barbri.com/bar-review-course/>.

<sup>14</sup> Kaplan Bar Review Course, <https://www.kaptest.com/bar-exam/courses/complete-bar-review-course>

<sup>15</sup> Themis Bar Review Course, <https://www.themisbar.com/>