

## **Admission to a State Bar: Character and Fitness Requirements**

Applicants for admission to a state bar will undergo an extensive evaluation to determine whether they have the character and fitness required for the practice of law. For this reason, both the College of Law and the American Bar Association (ABA) encourage all applicants to “determine what those requirements are in the state(s) in which [applicants intend] to practice” before they matriculate to law school. (ABA Standard 504(a).)

Each state will require bar applicants to disclose information relevant to their character and fitness. States typically ask applicants about the following, whether it occurred before or during law school:

- unlawful conduct
- academic misconduct
- making of false statements, including omissions
- misconduct in employment
- acts involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation
- abuse of legal process
- neglect of financial responsibilities
- neglect of professional obligations
- violation of an order of a court
- evidence of mental or emotional instability
- evidence of drug or alcohol dependency
- denial of admission to the bar in another jurisdiction on character and fitness grounds
- disciplinary action by a lawyer disciplinary agency or other professional disciplinary agency of any jurisdiction

NCBE Comprehensive Guide to Bar Admission Requirements,  
Code of Recommended Standards for Bar Examiners § 3(13)

Applicants should provide full and frank answers to these questions on both their applications for admission to the College or Law and their applications to a state bar because bar examiners often compare the two applications. Inconsistencies between the two can reflect negatively on the applicant.

For more information on states’ specific character and fitness requirements, see both Chart II in the National Conference of Bar Examiners Comprehensive Guide and Character and Fitness FAQs at [www.ncbex.org](http://www.ncbex.org).

For your convenience, the Office of Admission offers the following responses to frequently asked questions about the Application for Admission to the University of Iowa College of Law:

Question:

If I don't know how to respond to a question on the application, who should advise me?

Answer:

Please email questions about the application to the Office of Admission to [law-admissions@uiowa.edu](mailto:law-admissions@uiowa.edu) . Other sources of information, however well-intentioned, may be misinformed about the scope of our questions or the impact of an incomplete or inaccurate response.

Question:

Must I include information about juvenile and adult matters? Must I include reversed, set aside, vacated, expunged, deferred and dismissed matters? Must I include information about citations, arrests, charges, convictions, acquittals or pretrial diversions?

Answer:

Yes, the application seeks your entire personal history even if it is not currently included in your record of civil or criminal violations.

Question:

Must I include information regarding traffic violations?

Answer:

Yes, although the application does not seek information on **speeding or parking** violations, please disclose all other traffic violations. The following list includes frequently issued but frequently omitted violations:

- Running a red light
- Not signaling
- Crossing the median
- Driving in car pool lane
- Not stopping for school bus
- Not stopping for pedestrians
- Not using seat belt
- Driving on shoulder
- Passing in a no passing zone
- Drunk driving
- Reckless driving
- Driving without a license, insurance, or registration

Source: <http://www.calculateme.com/car-insurance-articles/common-traffic-violations.htm>

Question:

Must I include violations received after I submit my application but before I matriculate?

Answer:

Yes, “after submission of [the] application, until denial or acceptance and matriculation “the certification you signed obligates you to “inform the Admissions Committee of any changes to [your] class standing and expected graduation date, the initiation of disciplinary proceedings or criminal charges, and any arrests or citations of the resolution of any pending disciplinary proceedings or criminal charges, arrests, or citations.”

Furthermore, “any material omission or misinformation contained in this application or any required supplements may void my admission and scholarship awards...result in dismissal” or charges of non-academic misconduct.

Question:

Will my disclosures bar me from admission the College of Law?

Answer:

Most disclosures are not considered automatic disqualifiers for admission. However, the College of Law will consider all adverse and positive information relevant to the individual situation, including:

- the applicant’s age at the time of conduct
- the recency of the conduct
- the reliability of the information concerning the conduct
- the seriousness of the conduct
- the cumulative effect of conduct or information
- the evidence of rehabilitation
- the applicant’s positive social contributions since the conduct
- the applicant’s candor in the admissions process
- the materiality of any omissions or misrepresentations

-NCBE Comprehensive Guide to Bar Admissions,  
Code of Recommended Standards for Bar Examiners § 3(15)

The Office of Admission offers or withholds offers of admission after evaluating these factors.