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Exam Restructure FAQs for Registrants

(ASWs, MFT Interns and PCC Interns ONLY)

Effective Date: January 1, 2016

OVERVIEW

Effective January 1, 2016, the Board's examination process for Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT), and Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (LPCC) applicants will be changing as follows:

- **REGISTRANTS MUST TAKE A CALIFORNIA LAW AND ETHICS EXAM:**

Those who hold an ASW, MFT Intern or PCC Intern registration will be required to take a California Law and Ethics Exam while a registrant. (The timing for those who do not hold a registration and have applied to take the exams will not change.)

- **PASSING SCORE REQUIRED FOR SUBSEQUENT REGISTRATIONS:**

Effective January 1, 2017: Applicants will be unable to obtain a subsequent (2nd or 3rd) ASW or intern registration without first passing the Law and Ethics Exam.

Effective January 1, 2016: Applicants will be able to obtain a subsequent registration number without passing the Law and Ethics exam. However, such applicants must **pass the exam prior to the first registration renewal**. The subsequent registration cannot be renewed until the exam has been passed.

- **NEW LCSW & LMFT EXAMS:**

LCSW and LMFT applicants will be required to pass two new exams that replace the existing exams, as follows. Both are written, multiple choice exams. There are no changes to the LEP or LPCC exam types.

- California Law and Ethics Exam. This exam is designed to assess an applicant's knowledge of and ability to apply legal and ethical standards relating to clinical practice. It will replace the Standard Written Exam.
- Clinical Exam. This exam is designed to assess an applicant's knowledge of psychotherapeutic principles and methods in treatment and their application, and the ability to make judgments about appropriate techniques, methods and objectives as applicable to the profession's scope of practice. It will replace the Clinical Vignette Exam.

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THIS FAQ APPLIES TO REGISTRANTS ONLY

**IF YOU HOLD OR ANTICIPATE NEEDING A SUBSEQUENT (2nd, 3rd etc.) REGISTRATION,
SEE QUESTIONS #13, 14 and 15 FOR CRITICAL INFORMATION**

1. Who is considered a “registrant” under the exam restructure?

A registrant is defined as an ASW, MFT Intern or PCC Intern who holds a current or delinquent registration capable of being renewed. If you are not a registrant, see the *FAQs for Non-Registrants*.

2. Will all registrants be required to take an exam? When?

Yes, as described below:

A. Individuals issued a new, first registration number after January 1, 2016:

You will be required to take the California Law and Ethics Exam within the first year of registration.

B. Individuals who currently hold a renewable registration (initial or subsequent):

You will be required to take the California Law and Ethics Exam before your registration’s first expiration date that occurs after January 1, 2016, EXCEPT during the grace period described in #4.

3. What happens if I don’t take the Law and Ethics Exam before my registration’s expiration date?

Unless your registration’s expiration date falls within the grace period described below, you will NOT be permitted to renew your registration until you have taken the exam.

4. What is the grace period and who is eligible?

If you hold a renewable registration that expires no later than June 30, 2016, and your application for renewal is postmarked between January 1, 2016 and June 30, 2016, you may renew without first taking the Law and Ethics Exam. However, you must take the exam during the following renewal cycle in order to renew next time.

5. Do I need to take the exam in order to renew if my registration expires between January 1, 2016 and June 30, 2016?

It depends. If your application for renewal is postmarked no later than June 30, 2016, you do not need to take the exam in order to renew this time. However, if your application for renewal is postmarked after June 30, 2016, you must have taken the exam in order for your renewal to be processed. There are no exceptions.

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6. Do I need to take the exam in order to renew a registration that expired before the exam restructure takes place? For example, my registration expired in 2014 and I may need to renew it after January 1, 2016.

If you meet ALL of the following requirements, you can renew without having taken the exam:

- Your registration must be renewable
- Your registration must have an expiration date that is no later than June 30, 2016 AND
- Your application for renewal must be postmarked no later than June 30, 2016

If you do not meet all three of the above requirements, you will be required to have taken the exam in order for your renewal to be processed. If your registration is not renewable, you will need to apply for a subsequent registration number.

7. What is a renewal cycle?

A renewal cycle is the one-year period that ends in the registration's expiration date.

8. What happens if I submit my renewal early and haven't yet taken the Law and Ethics Exam?

If you submit your registration renewal without having taken the exam during the renewal cycle immediately preceding the registration's expiration date, the Board will be unable to process your renewal.

9. What happens if I don't pass the Law and Ethics Exam?

You may retake the exam after at least 90 days have passed from the date you last took the exam. If you don't pass the exam prior to your registration's expiration date, you must complete a 12-hour course in California Law and Ethics before you will be allowed to retake the exam during the next renewal cycle.

10. Who can I take the 12-hour California Law and Ethics course from?

The course must be taken through a continuing education (CE) provider, a county, state or other governmental entity, or a college or university.

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11. What happens if I'm required to take the 12-hour course but am unable to complete it before my registration expires?

You will be permitted to renew your registration (provided your registration is eligible for renewal). However, you will not be permitted to retake the Law and Ethics Exam until the Board receives proof of course completion. Remember, if you do not take the exam at least once during any one-year renewal cycle, you will not be permitted to renew your registration until the exam has been taken.

12. How many attempts will I have to pass the Law and Ethics Exam during a renewal cycle? What is the waiting period between exam attempts?

The exam can be retaken after a 90-day waiting period, which provides registrants with at least three (3) attempts to pass the exam during each renewal cycle. To obtain the maximum number of attempts, applicants must submit a re-exam form and fee in a timely manner.

13. What happens if I haven't passed the Law and Ethics Exam by my registration's 6-year time limit?

California law permits a registration to be renewed a maximum of five (5) times before being cancelled. Effective January 1, 2017, an individual cannot be granted a subsequent registration number unless he or she has passed the Law and Ethics Exam. There are no exceptions.

14. How does the exam restructure affect individuals who will need to apply for a subsequent (2nd, 3rd, etc.) registration number?

Effective January 1, 2017, an individual cannot be granted a subsequent registration number unless he or she has passed the Law and Ethics Exam. There are no exceptions. However, this requirement will be phased in starting January 1, 2016, as described on the following page:

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If you will need to obtain a subsequent Intern or ASW registration number, and...

<p>A. Your application for subsequent registration is <u>postmarked</u> prior to January 1, 2016 (and is subsequently issued)</p>	<p>Your registration is treated the same as a first/initial registration in the exam restructure. You will be required to take the Law and Ethics Exam by your registration's first expiration date that occurs after January 1, 2016, (except during the grace period described in #4) in order to renew.</p>
<p>B. Your application for subsequent registration is <u>postmarked</u> between January 1, 2016 & January 1, 2017</p>	<p>You can be issued a subsequent registration without first passing the Law and Ethics Exam. However, you must <u>pass</u> the exam before your subsequent registration's initial expiration date if you wish to renew. You may continue to take the exam after your registration expires, and after passing, your registration can be renewed.</p>
<p>C. Your application for subsequent registration is <u>postmarked</u> after January 1, 2017</p>	<p>You will not be issued a subsequent registration until you have passed the Law and Ethics Exam. There are no exceptions.</p>

15. How does the exam restructure affect me if I already hold a subsequent (2nd, 3rd, etc.) registration number?

If you are issued a subsequent intern or associate registration number any time prior to January 1, 2016, and your subsequent registration is renewable, your registration is treated the same as a first/initial registration for purposes of the exam restructure.

This means you will be required to take the California Law and Ethics Exam by your registration's first expiration date that occurs after January 1, 2016, except during the grace period described in #4. Unless you meet the requirements of the grace period, you will not be permitted to renew your subsequent registration until you have taken the exam.

16. What happens once I pass the Law and Ethics Exam?

If you are still earning your hours of supervised experience, you will continue as a registrant until you have completed your hours. Once you have met all education and experience requirements, you will submit an *Application for Clinical Examination Eligibility*. Upon approval of your application, you will be required to take and pass either a California clinical or national clinical exam, as indicated below:

- LMFT: California Clinical exam
- LCSW: Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Clinical exam
- LPCC: National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Exam (NCMHCE)

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17. How are the new LMFT and LCSW Clinical exams different from the Clinical Vignette exams?

The clinical vignette exams and the new clinical exams are both designed to be directly related to clinical practice situations. Both types of exams require the ability to integrate and apply professional knowledge and skills.

A clinical vignette exam contains a series of multiple choice items related to a single vignette, and typically consists of 5 to 7 vignettes with 4 to 7 multiple-choice questions associated with each vignette, for a total of 30 multiple-choice questions administered over a 2-hour period. A clinical vignette exam item is longer and can be more complex than a standard multiple choice item.

The new clinical exams will consist of standard multiple choice items, and will continue to include items based on vignettes, though each item will stand alone. As of January 1, 2016, the new clinical exams will be as follows:

LCSW APPLICANTS

[ASWB Clinical Exam](#) - this is a 170-item multiple choice exam administered over a period of four hours.

LMFT APPLICANTS

California Clinical Exam - This exam is currently in development, and will be designed to evaluate candidate knowledge, skills, and abilities in the following content areas: Crisis Management, Clinical Evaluation, Treatment Planning, Treatment, and Law and Ethics

These are the same content areas upon which the Clinical Vignette Exam is currently based. The Clinical exam will consist of 170 multiple-choice items administered over a four-hour period.

18. What if I am an ASW or MFT Intern and have already been approved to take the Standard Written Exam?

The LCSW and LMFT Standard Written Exams will no longer be available as of January 1, 2016. If you do not pass the Standard Written Exam by that time, you will be required to take the new Law and Ethics Exam.

19. What if I am an ASW or MFT Intern and have passed the Standard Written Exam by January 1, 2016?

You will have fulfilled the new Law and Ethics Exam requirement unless your Standard Written Exam score is more than seven (7) years old.

20. What if I am a PCC Intern and have already passed the LPCC Law and Ethics Exam?

You will have already fulfilled the Law and Ethics Exam requirement.