Joe E. Covington Award for Research on Testing for Licensure
2023 Call for Proposals

The National Conference of Bar Examiners (NCBE) announces the 2023 Covington Award for Research on Testing for Licensure. The award honors Joe E. Covington, a former dean of the University of Missouri–Columbia School of Law who was the first Director of Testing for NCBE. The Multistate Bar Examination (MBE) was created and launched largely through his vision and perseverance.

The award is intended to provide support for graduate students in any discipline doing research germane to testing and measurement, particularly in a high-stakes licensure setting. While research or a literature review on any issue in testing will be considered, this year we are especially interested in any of the following topics:

- Analysis of the cognitive processes underlying performance on the bar examination. Could be a study using a think-aloud protocol or any other valid method of analysis.
- Applications of multiple correspondence analysis to test security.
- Use of natural language processing to inform rubric development and/or scoring.
- Innovations in the investigation of differential item and test performance (e.g., use of person fit statistics, factor analysis).
- Managing dependencies among items in scenarios/item sets

Each recipient is expected to work with a faculty advisor at his or her institution and with staff at NCBE to complete a project over a period of about six months; the exact time frame is flexible and can include the summer (for students seeking summer support). The proposed project need not focus on licensure testing, but relevance to bar examinations will be a consideration in final selection.
The student conducting the research must be enrolled in a doctoral program and have completed a minimum of one year of study toward the Ph.D. Students who are just completing their Ph.D. are also eligible. The faculty advisor must be willing to work with the student on the project and supervise the student’s progress. Each recipient will be awarded a stipend of $6,000, and the advisor will be awarded a stipend of $1,000.

We expect most studies to be fairly modest in scope or to be a part of a larger study, so that they can be completed in about six months. More than one award may be made in a given year.

The application should include (1) the student’s curriculum vita, (2) a letter of intent from the student’s project advisor, (3) a brief proposal of up to four pages (this may be very brief for those proposing a literature review), (4) a recent scholarly writing sample, and (5) a cover letter to Dr. Rosemary Reshetar at the address given below, to be received by Friday, November 11, 2022. The award committee will review all applications and will make the award(s) by March 1, 2023.

Submissions and questions should be addressed to:

   Dr. Rosemary Reshetar  
   Director of Assessment and Research  
   National Conference of Bar Examiners  
   302 South Bedford St.  
   Madison, WI 53703-3622  

   E-mail: rreshetar@ncbex.org

NCBE reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to withhold the award for any year in which the Covington Award Committee determines that none of the submissions merits the award.

The National Conference of Bar Examiners is a not-for-profit corporation founded in 1931. The mission of the Conference is to work with other institutions to develop, maintain, and apply reasonable and uniform standards of education and character for eligibility for admission to the practice of law; and to assist bar admission authorities by providing standardized examinations of uniform and high quality for the testing of applicants for admission to the practice of law, disseminating relevant information concerning admission standards and practices, conducting educational programs for the members and staffs of such authorities, and providing other services such as character and fitness investigations and research.

NCBE 10/3/2022