

Frequently Asked Questions:
Becoming Licensed as a Pharmacist in California

Effective January 1, 2004, California has a new examination program for applicants who seek to become licensed as pharmacists in California. These changes were made by SB 361 (Figueroa, Chapter 539, Statutes of 2003 – see Business and Professions Code sections 4200, et seq.).

The examination program will be comprised of two parts:

1. Passing the North American Pharmacist Licensure Examination (or NAPLEX) which is prepared by the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP). For the score to be valid in California, this exam must be passed on or after January 1, 2004.
2. Passing the California Pharmacist Jurisprudence Exam (CPJE). This exam is developed by the California State Board of Pharmacy. (Note: this exam is different than the Multistate Pharmacist Jurisprudence Examination Administered by NABP.)

Both of these examinations will be given via a computer, and will be available for qualified applicants to take the examination six days a week throughout the year.

The new exam structure replaces the board's prior written examination that was given twice a year.

You will apply to the California Board of Pharmacy with the application posted at www.pharmacy.ca.gov. This is the first part in the application process where California will review your eligibility to take the pharmacist licensure examination. You are also required to apply through NABP for the NAPLEX.

The requirements to become eligible to take the licensure examination will remain the same. Specifically, to take the pharmacist licensure examination for California, you must:

1. Be at least 18 years of age
2. Be a graduate of a domestic school of pharmacy or be a graduate of a foreign school of pharmacy and have been certified by the Foreign Pharmacy Graduate Examination Committee (FPGEC)
3. Have completed at least 150 semester hours of collegiate credit, 90 of which must be from a school of pharmacy
4. Have earned at least a baccalaureate degree in a course of study devoted to pharmacy

5. Have 1,500 hours of approved pharmaceutical experience as a registered intern or one year of experience as a licensed pharmacist in another state.

Questions and Answers:

The board will provide answers to frequently asked questions at this area of our Web site.

Q: I passed the NAPLEX already and I am licensed in another state, how can I reciprocate my license?

A: California law does not allow for reciprocity. You are required, at least, to take and pass both the NAPLEX and CPJE on or after January 1, 2004.

Q: Are the NAPLEX and CPJE computerized and multiple-choice examinations?

A: Yes

Q: I graduated, but my transcripts won't be available for another month. Can I take the NAPLEX prior to the board receiving my transcripts?

A: No, the board must receive your transcripts with the degree posted before the board will confirm your eligibility to NABP (which qualifies you to take the NAPLEX for California).

Q: If I take the MPJE examination offered by the NABP, do I still have the take the California Jurisprudence Examination?

A: Yes. The MPJE examination offered by the NABP is a separate examination required by some states for licensure. It is not a requirement for licensure in California. Rather, applicants must pass the CPJE in addition to the NAPLEX to become licensed in California.

Q: I am scheduled to take the NAPLEX examination for another state and would like to transfer my score to California. What are the procedures?

A: Score transfers are completed by the NABP. Please visit its Web site www.nabp.net for the specific requirements.

Q: I took the NAPLEX examination in October 2003. Can I transfer this score?

A: No. To become licensed in California, you must take and pass the NAPLEX and the CPJE on or after January 1, 2004.

Q: Does the California Specific Examination Content Outline posted on your Web site refer to the MPJE examination for California?

A: The content outline posted on the board's Web site is for the CPJE. There is no MPJE examination required for applicants to become licensed in

California. Rather an individual must pass the NAPLEX examination and the CPJE on or after January 1, 2004.

Q: I heard that the NAPLEX examination changed after January 1, 2004, and is more difficult to pass. Is this true?

A: The NAPLEX examination is developed and administered by the NAPB. The board is not aware of any changes being made to this examination.

Q: What do I need to do if I want to take the NAPLEX examination for California?

A: You must submit an examination application to the California Board of Pharmacy and satisfy all of the requirements. You must also submit a "Registration Bulletin" with the NABP to take the NAPLEX.

Q: If I pass the NAPLEX examination but fail the California Pharmacist Jurisprudence Examination, do I need to retake both exams or just the CPJE?

A: You will need to retake the CPJE only.

Q: I failed the California Board Examination four times and I am completing the 16 semester units required to reapply in California. At what point can I take the NAPLEX and CPJE?

A: You must complete the 16 semester units prior to reapplying in California.

Q: Your Web site states that the CPJE is different from the MPJE. Does this mean that you don't have to take an MPJE examination in California or is the CPJE taking the place of the MPJE?

A: The CPJE is required. This examination is different than the MPJE administered by the NABP.

Q: How will the four-time exam failure requirement (Business and Professions Code section 4200.1) apply with the new exam structure?

A: California law specifies that you will have four opportunities to pass the California licensure examinations. If you fail four times, before you can retake the examinations, you must complete 16 units in a school of pharmacy accredited by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE). (See, 16 California Code of Regulations section 1725.)

Prior to January 1, 2004, applicants for licensure as a pharmacist took a two-part multiple choice and short-answer essay examination developed by the California board ("pre2004 exam"). On or after January 1, 2004, the board requires passage of both the CPJE and the NAPLEX to become licensed as a pharmacist (current exam structure).

When counting four failed attempts at the examination (California Business and Professions Code section 4200.1), the board uses the

following criteria:

- Applicants who failed the prior examination (pre2004 exam) will have these failed attempts continue to count as failed examinations; the 2004 changes will not restart applicants to zero attempts at the pharmacist licensure examination.
- Applicants who fail the pharmacist exam on or after January 1, 2004, will have each attempt at the NAPLEX and the CPJE count separately as an attempt. For an applicant who has not taken the California examination before, he or she will have four attempts to pass the CPJE and four attempts to pass the NAPLEX on or after January 1, 2004.

Q: I have already taken the exam for California three times in the old format. How many times do I get to take the NAPLEX and the CPJE before I must re-qualify with an additional 16 semester units?

A: You have a total of one time to take the CPJE and one time to take the NAPLEX.

Q: I have already taken the exam for California three times in the old format. If I pass the NAPLEX in after January 1, 2004, but I do not pass the CPJE, can I retake the CPJE without having to re-qualify with 16 semester units?

A: No, you will need to complete the 16 semester units before you can apply to take the CPJE.

Q: Does the CPJE include clinical questions or just law questions like other states?

A: Please see the detailed content outline posted on the board's Web site. There are sample questions available in the CPJE Handbook. There are additional sample test questions on the board's Web site.

Q: If I take the NAPLEX after January 1, 2004, and do not pass, when can I take it again?

A: Unless this would be your fourth failed California exam attempt, you may take the exam after waiting 90 days. If you have four unsuccessful attempts at passing the California licensure exams, you are required to complete the 16 semester units before you can retake either portion of the exam. You will be required to submit a new application to both NABP and the board.

Q: I am applying with NABP to take the NAPLEX with another state as my primary state and California as a score transfer. Do I need to apply to the board to take the CPJE?

A: Yes

Q: How can I submit the \$155 application fee to the board?

A: You may do this by personal check, money order or cashier's check made payable to the "Board of Pharmacy." Do not send cash.

Q: What is the fee for the NAPLEX?

A: The NABP charges for the NAPLEX; this fee of \$465 is paid directly to the NABP.

Q: I took the board exam in June 2003. How do I submit an application to take the new exams? How long will the board keep my file? Is there a re-take application I should use?

A: If you are applying within 2 years from your previous attempt, you may submit a retake application and fee, if required. If you are applying after 2 years from your previous attempt, you are required to submit a new application, supporting documents and fee, if required.

Q: I had my Live Scan previously done and have not applied with the board yet. Do I have to have Live Scan redone?

A: If you had Live Scan done for the board within the past year, please submit with your application a copy of your Live Scan receipt. If the Live Scan was done more than a year ago, you are required to have Live Scan redone and submit a copy of the new receipt with your application. The board is able to follow up with the Department of Justice based on the receipt. If you had your Live Scan done for another agency (for example, employment or volunteer) you will need to have Live Scan done again as the results cannot be shared between agencies. You need to obtain both a state and federal background check.

Q: I live outside of California. How do I do Live Scan?

A: If you live outside of California, you can come to California and have Live Scan done. However, if you are outside of California, you cannot do Live Scan as other states' Live Scan systems are not connected to California's Live Scan system. Instead, submit your fingerprints on fingerprint cards. We strongly recommend that you have your fingerprints professionally rolled on two fingerprint cards provided by the Board of Pharmacy. You also will need to submit with the fingerprint cards a processing fee of \$66 made payable to the "Board of Pharmacy." You may request the fingerprint cards at www.pharmacy.ca.gov.

Q: I took and passed the NAPLEX after January 1, 2004. If NABP agrees to transfer my score, will the California board accept the score?

A: Yes, the board will accept a passing score on the NAPLEX provided the exam was passed on or after January 1, 2004.

Q: I would like to take the NAPLEX as soon as I can. I have applied for the Authorization to Test (ATT) from another state and will transfer the score to California. I already have the ATT from the NAPLEX and am scheduled to take it for the other state. Can I use this ATT to make an appointment for the CPJE when it is available or do I have to submit another application to CA to verify my eligibility to test?

A: No, you can't use the ATT from another state to take the CPJE. You will be required to apply with the California board and meet all application requirements to take CPJE.

Q: Where are the test sites for NAPLEX and CPJE?

A: You need to use the candidate handbooks for this information. Both the NAPLEX and CPJE Handbooks are online at our Web site. Both exams will be available nationwide but at different test locations (different firms provide each exam).

Q: Is it ok to send an application now for the NAPLEX and CPJE?

A: Yes, you may send your application to the board as well as the application to NABP for NAPLEX once you meet the requirements to take the exams. The application to be submitted to the board may be downloaded at www.pharmacy.ca.gov. Information pertaining to the application for NAPLEX may be found at www.nabp.net. The board does not mail out either application.

Q: Now that California is using the NAPLEX and the CPJE, is a pharmacist from Canada eligible to take the NAPLEX without applying through the board's foreign graduate process?

A: All foreign graduates must first apply to the board as a foreign graduate in order to be scheduled for an exam for California. A United States social security number is still required before a license can be issued.