



Format of March 2021 examinations

Information for Diploma in Law Students

Exams in March 2021 will be held at exam venues. They will NOT be held online. Students will be required to attend in-person to sit an exam, with limited exceptions. All exams will be 'open book' format.

This document contains further information about:

- the basis for this decision
- the availability of all exam venues *except the Parramatta venue*
- special arrangements for students unable to attend a venue
- our back-up plan if the COVID-19 situation deteriorates prior to completion of exams
- use of the 'open book' format for exams in all subjects in March 2021.

Please read all the details below before contacting the LPAB with any questions.

The LEC does not have any further details, so please do not contact the LEC about exams.

Basis for this decision

The Legal Profession Admission Board (the Board) has determined that Diploma in Law examinations will be staged in the traditional format in March 2021, with students required to attend an exam venue to sit their exams.

The Board recognises that advice given to students to date about March 2021 exams was that they were 'likely to be held online'. The decision to hold exams in the traditional format instead reflects improved control of the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia, as well as decisions being made by other educational institutions such as the NSW Department of Education which recently staged Higher School Certificate exams in-person in NSW.

The Board is also aware that:

- online exams in September 2020 presented additional challenges for many students, particularly in relation to the use of technology
- online exams carry heightened risks to the integrity of the Board's assessments of student knowledge
- the most effective invigilation is conducted in-person by supervisors at exam venues.

Availability of all exam venues except Parramatta

In March 2021 an exam venue will operate in each of the following usual locations:

- Sydney (Wentworth Park)
- Albury
- Canberra
- Dubbo
- Lismore
- Newcastle.

The exam venue at Parramatta **will not operate in March 2021** because the usual venue is not sufficient to accommodate expected student numbers while complying with physical distancing rules, and a suitable alternative venue is not readily available.

Students who nominated Parramatta as their exam venue will need to attend the Sydney venue at Wentworth Park instead. The Office of the LPAB will email affected students individually to confirm the necessary change of venue.

Any other student who wishes to change their nominated exam venue should send an email with the details to lpabexams@justice.nsw.gov.au before 4 February 2021. Your nominated exam venue is listed in the enrolment confirmation letter which the LPAB sent to you.

Every exam venue operating in March 2021 will adopt appropriate physical distancing and health safety measures to comply with NSW public health orders. Details about those measures, and what students will need to do when attending an exam venue, will be released closer to the start of the exam period.

Special arrangements for candidates unable to attend a venue

A student who is unable to attend an exam venue will be able to apply under the LPAB's Special Examination Arrangements Policy for an alternative arrangement.

The grounds on which such an application *may* be approved will include where a student:

- is overseas and unable to enter Australia due to government travel restrictions
- ordinarily resides outside NSW and is unable to travel to an exam venue in NSW due to government travel restrictions or other sufficient reasons
- has an existing medical condition which places the student at moderate or high risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

Applications for a special arrangement on any of the above grounds will need to be accompanied by official documentation that evidences the student's situation.

If approved, alternative arrangements which *may* be granted to an individual student will include sitting an exam:

- online via Canvas (similar to the approach in September 2020)* but with remote video invigilation and/or a post-exam integrity appraisal with the examiner
- under supervision at an unscheduled physical venue outside NSW.

A supplementary policy which covers the above situations (as well as the usual grounds for special exam arrangements) will be released in the coming weeks, along with the application form to be used for special arrangements in March 2021 only.

Please note that in March 2021, where students receive approval to sit an exam online, there will be no automatic grant of extra exam time to allow for downloads from/uploads to Canvas.

Back-up plan if the COVID-19 situation deteriorates

If the COVID-19 situation in NSW deteriorates prior to the completion of March 2021 exams to such an extent that exams cannot be held at venues while still complying with NSW public health orders, the LPAB will be fully prepared to hold all remaining exams online via Canvas (similar to the approach used in September 2020)*.

This option will serve as a back-up only, to ensure that exams will be held according to the published timetable, regardless of local developments in the COVID-19 pandemic. Students should prepare to sit their exams in-person at their nominated exam venue (unless they have obtained approval of a special arrangement) and they should not expect that the back-up of online exams via Canvas will be used other than in the scenario of a public health emergency in NSW that affects the Board's exam venues.

Use of 'open book' format in all subjects

Exam question papers in all subjects in March 2021 will adopt the 'open book' format. There will be no restrictions on written material which a student may bring in hard copy to an exam venue.

The Office of the LPAB will aim to publish exam cover pages in the usual way on its website in early February 2021.

There will be no change to the weighting of exams in the overall mark in each subject. The exam will constitute 80% of the total mark, with the assignment constituting 20%.

*** Approach to LPAB exams in September 2020**

For the information of students who did *not* sit an LPAB exam in September 2020, the approach was as follows:

- each exam was administered through the LEC's Canvas learning management system, in a similar way to LEC assignments, with some amendments
- each exam question paper became available at the precise scheduled start time of the exam, in accordance with the existing published exam timetable. Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST) applied
- students were required to:
 - log in to Canvas to access the exam question papers, and to upload their answer scripts before the scheduled end time of the exam
 - type their answers, or obtain prior approval to handwrite their answers
 - upload their answers in either a Word or PDF document
 - acknowledge and agree to an academic honesty and integrity declaration
 - be available to participate, if required, in a real-time video interview with the examiner in the days following the online exam, for the purpose of confirming the student's subject knowledge
- during each exam, the Office of the LPAB operated a telephone hotline for students experiencing technical or other difficulties.

Questions

After reading this information, if you have a question please email the Office of the LPAB at lpabexams@justice.nsw.gov.au. If your question is answered in this document, you will be referred back to this document. Questions about March 2021 exam issues that are not covered in this document cannot be resolved over the telephone, because they will require escalation and careful consideration.

Office of the LPAB
2 December 2020