



***The BarHacker Preparation
Report on the All India Bar
Examination in new format***

7 Steps to Strategize Your Preparation for the New Bar Exam

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Changes to the Bar Exam & 6 Step Preparation Strategy

Report on Bar Exam syllabus, past question papers and the new preparation strategy

If you are writing the Bar Exam on 7th September 2014, there is one important piece of information you need to know (some of you may already know it) before you begin preparation.

History of changes to the syllabus and format of the AIBE

- The Bar Council of India had released a completely new syllabus in late June – July 2014, which was a modified version of the 30th November 2012 syllabus (the first exam on this format was conducted in December 2012). There is no new model paper released on the basis of the new syllabus. However, note that the old format of the question paper, which was followed from 2010 till January 2012, is still accessible [here](#), on the website of the Bar Council of India, and frequently shows up in searches pertaining to the bar exam on Google and other search engines. **You should not rely on this question paper, as it pertains to the old format, which is no longer valid.** For guidance, please refer to the mock papers and the past years papers on the BarHacker platform.
- The new model paper, which is not available any more on the Bar Council of India's website, had some shocking questions (about which we will discuss later). The Bar Exam in December 2012 (the fourth AIBE), and the exams that followed in 2013 and early 2014 also featured similar questions. There was significant deviation from the question pattern that was followed in the earlier Bar Exams. Hence, **your preparation for the Bar Exam in September 2014 will be different from how you would have prepared for it earlier.**

The past years' papers of the 4th and 5th All India Bar Exam are accessible on BarHacker.

- *What is the difference between the current syllabus for the 7th AIBE and the previous syllabi?*



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The current syllabus is a modified version of the December 2012 syllabus, which was followed for the 4th, 5th and 6th All India Bar Exam. The new syllabus has certain additional subjects with a different distribution of marks, so preparation strategy will need to be modified accordingly.

The volume of preparation required now has increased. New chapters have been added to BarHacker to provide guidance on additional subjects for this purpose.

- *What impact can it have on the exam format?*

The Bar Council has not released a new model question paper, or provided any study materials for the 7th AIBE. In the absence of any study materials, we are inclined to believe that the September 2014 edition will be similar to the December 2012 format itself, the only difference being that there will be questions from more subjects, and the weightage given to the subjects will be as per the new syllabus. In any case, this is the safest and most risk-free preparation method.

Part 1 - Changes introduced for the 7th All India Bar Exam in September 2014 and the direction it is headed

This is the second time the bar exam syllabus has been modified. When the syllabus was first modified, the exam format changed significantly. This also coincided with Bar Exam ceasing supply of official study materials. As a result, most questions were from bare acts, with some questions testing knowledge of trivia, case laws or concepts.

The second modification to the syllabus has added a few subjects. Since no study materials are being supplied, we suppose that the BCI will follow a similar format, only with additional subjects.

To appreciate how this will affect your preparation, it is important for you to understand the evolution of the past few editions of the bar exam since 2011.

Change #1 - All new syllabus, a second time

Previously, the syllabus consisted of **20 subjects which was reduced to 15 subject for the 4th, 5th and 6th AIBE**. The syllabus has been expanded once again to include **19 subjects**. Environmental law and public international law have been included once again. The new subjects that have been added to this version are:

- Environmental Law,
- Public International Law,
- Cyber Laws,
- Companies Act 2013, and
- Companies Act 2013, and
- Corporate Social Responsibility.

Note that BCI has not stated which study materials should be used to prepare for them.

Change #2 – Overhauls in the question paper pattern and question style

The earlier question paper (for the first three bar exams) was divided into two parts, comprising **eleven subjects in Part 1** and **nine subjects in Part 2**. Part 1 had 77 questions

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(i.e. 7 questions per subject), and Part 2 had 23 questions (from any combination of the 9 subjects), and was entirely problem based. This division was abolished from the 4th Bar Exam onwards. There were no problem-based questions in the 4th, 5th and 6th Bar Exams. For the 7th Bar Exam, there is no indication of the format, but we are inclined to believe that the previous format followed for 4th, 5th and 6th Bar Exam will be followed. In case there are problem based questions, the conceptual understanding provided in the study materials for the essential subjects should help you in grasping the principle more easily.

Change #3 – Revamp in the relative importance of different subjects and impact on preparation strategy

Earlier, each of the eleven subjects in Part 1 was equally important. In Part 2, the Bar Council had assured that questions would be framed from at least 5 out of the 9 subjects. The pass percentage was 40%, **so mastery over 7 subjects (or at best Part 1) could ensure that you passed the exam.**

This division was abolished since the fourth Bar Exam in December 2012. As per the syllabus for December 2012 bar exam, the weightage for each of the fifteen subjects varied drastically. **However, due to the excessive importance accorded to certain subjects in the syllabus, it was still possible to have a very high chance of success if one prepared around 7 – 9 subjects thoroughly.**

This deviation has been smoothed out in the syllabus and allocation of marks for different subjects for the 7th bar exam is not so disparate anymore. Most subjects now carry roughly similar marks, with one exception - contracts, property, specific relief, negotiable instruments act and special contracts (e.g. bailment, pledge, agency, etc.) will together carry 20 marks. 4 more subjects have also been added.

Therefore, **the earlier strategy of preparing for limited subjects needs to be modified.**

Since there are more subjects prescribed in the syllabus, and the deviations in weightage of subjects have also been reduced, one is required to prepare for more subjects to ensure reasonable chance of success. It is still possible to identify subjects which you can master in relatively less time. For example, Evidence or Cyber Laws is much easier to master than, say,



public international law, administrative law or labour laws (explained in detail later in this report).

Change #4 – Absence of reading materials and detailed syllabus

While students who attempted the previous editions of the exam did not have a syllabus either, they had reading materials to rely on. They were expected to treat the reading material as some kind of a textbook for the entire syllabus. 90- 95% of the questions would be based on the reading material. Now, after the change in the paper pattern, candidates who contemplate writing the Bar Exam in July face a new problem in addition to the five surprises above – there is complete absence of reading materials or an indicative syllabus will make the task of preparation even more difficult.

The list of 19 subjects provided by the Bar Council is not really a ‘syllabus’. You need to decide to what extent you should study the subjects mentioned in the subject list provided by the BCI.

Change #5 – Types and arrangement of questions

Earlier, there was an expectation that at least some questions will test conceptual knowledge. At least the problem-based questions were successful in achieving this purpose. There have barely been a handful of questions in the 4th, 5th and 6th bar exams which test how you apply legal principles to a problem. There is no communication from the BCI on how many problem-based questions a student can expect in the 7th exam.

In fact, many questions in the past bar exams have tested arcane, esoteric knowledge about the law. They may be more suited towards a jurisprudence quiz contest, or obscure tort law cases, where PhDs compete with each other. Even practising advocates are likely to get such questions wrong. For example, a question on constitutional law actually asked what Ambedkar said about a particular part of the Constitution, and not the Constitution itself. A question in jurisprudence relates to how one jurist referred to another jurist, not about jurisprudential theory. When you begin preparing, these could be confusing and even misleading.

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Surprisingly, there were many of such questions in the 4th, 5th and 6th Bar Exams. Some questions are extremely vague, while others are extremely technical. We shall be providing you with detailed study material on the different types of questions on the BarHacker platform. There are plenty of questions which test knowledge of the **section numbers** of different legislations. The BarHacker materials will discuss strategies to tackle such questions if they come in the bar exam.

In this report we will analyse the new test papers and then try to explain the skills being tested under the new format, so that your preparation is based on solid grounding.



Part 2 - Six steps to creating your own preparation strategy to ace the bar exam

In light of the type of questions that have been asked and the fact that there is no prescribed study material any more, many practising lawyers would fail this exam, if they were required to answer all questions from memory. Thankfully, you are allowed to carry in study materials – you must use this to your advantage.

#1 – Understand the different types of questions asked

Before commencing preparation, it is essential to understand the types of questions as per the new format, so that you can prepare for answering each type of question. While we provide BarHacker students with a report on the different types of questions asked, it is also advisable to develop familiarity with the different types of questions by going through a model test paper based on the new format and question paper of the 4th AIBE (held in December 2012). These are accessible on the BarHacker platform. Practicing the model test papers that we have provided will also be very useful.

#2 – Identify the skillsets tested by each type of question

While going through the question papers, many students get tempted to learn the answers to the question paper and look them up from books. This strategy does not help you in effectively tackling the task at hand, especially since this is an open book exam. Instead, when you go through the question paper, try to identify the different types of skills that are being tested by each type of question to start with. For example:

- Do the questions test your knowledge of the provisions of a bare act?
- Are there any questions directly taken from illustrations?
- Do the papers contain problem-based questions?
- Do the questions test your knowledge of concepts?
- Are there any questions testing knowledge of case laws?
- Are there any general knowledge based questions?

#3 – Prioritize your preparation according to the relative importance of different subjects in the Bar Exam

Although the 7th Bar Exam has evened out the disparities in the weightage given to different subjects, you can still strategize smartly and plan your preparation such that you cover maximum ground with minimum preparation.

For example, Evidence carries 8 marks (and the Indian Evidence Act is extremely small compared to, say, Civil Procedure Code which carries the same marks). Or cyber law, which carries 5 marks, but is much easier to prepare for in comparison to public international law (5 marks), administrative law (5 marks) (these subjects don't have any bare acts but a huge body of principles to learn) or labour laws (5 marks) (which requires study of a huge number of bare acts) for a comparative level of mastery over the subject.

An optimal preparation strategy requires that you prepare the following subjects first, before moving on to other subjects:

- **Contracts**, (including special contracts and property law) – 20 marks
- **Constitutional law** – 5 marks
- **Civil Procedure Code** – 5 marks
- **Code of Criminal Procedure** – 10 marks
- **Evidence** – 8 marks
- **Indian Penal Code** – 6 marks
- **Cyber laws** – 5 marks
- **Companies Act 2013** – 5 marks
- **Corporate Social Responsibility** – 2 marks (you should prepare this because it is extremely easy)
- **Professional ethics** (4 marks)

As per the above division, you will see how preparing for only 10 out of the 19 subjects will enable you to target cracking 70 percent of the exam.

Apart from the subjects carrying most marks, it makes sense to prepare for subjects which have a smaller syllabus (e.g. only 1 or two statutes) but which carry some marks, as scoring

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in those subjects is very easy. For example, Arbitration and ADR (4 marks) or the Limitation Act (2 marks).

#4 – Studying essential concepts for subjects

It is extremely difficult to answer questions by referring to study materials that you don't understand – legal materials, especially provisions of bare acts, are often likely to be of this nature. Building familiarity with carry-in materials is crucial (as explained in the next step), and this will be extremely difficult if you do not understand basic concepts.

Let's take an example. If you are preparing for civil procedure, it helps to know how a civil case is initiated, the different stages through which it typically progresses and how it terminates. Once you know this, you will be able to appreciate the procedural and technical nuances of the subject much better, even if you do not have the nuances on your fingertips. You may not be able to figure these out by yourself by referring to the bare act, since bare acts are not drafted in a way that explains such issues systematically.

Hence, it is a good idea to study the basic concepts so that you can navigate through a bare act or a commentary conveniently during the exam. For this purpose, BarHacker has included instructional materials on essential subjects (for the first time), which are especially designed with a view to give you an overview of the basic concepts. Since you plan to enrol at the bar and practice law, a sound understanding of these concepts will be a valuable asset even in the future.

#5 - Planning carry-in materials in advance

Most students plan what to carry into the examination hall at the last moment. This is an inefficient strategy. Why? Let's take an example. Are you familiar with the chapter headings in Code of Criminal Procedure? If you are asked a question from the bare act, will you be able to look up the answer quickly? Do you think you will be able to find answers to a question pertaining to civil procedure if you browse through the bare act for the first time in the examination hall?

Planning carry-in materials cannot be postponed to the last moment. If you are going to write an open-book exam, it is sensible to plan your carry-in materials well in advance. You would



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even highlight and flag the material in such a way that it will be very easy to find answers during the exam. We will provide a guide for carry-in materials on the BarHacker platform.

#6 – Practise answering mocks tests and questions to develop familiarity with carry-in materials

In addition to teaching the basic concepts, our instructional materials have another purpose – to familiarize you with carry-in materials. Developing familiarity with using carry-in materials is not an easy task. In order to facilitate this, wherever possible, we have integrated questions of different types within the instructional materials themselves. These materials teach concepts at a logical and basic level (in a much simpler and coherent way than you can expect to learn anywhere else) – however, we do not discuss technical nuances (which are asked in the questions), specifically because we want you to practise finding the answers from your carry-in materials on your own.

In addition, we shall also upload question banks and mock test papers (on the format of the new All India Bar Exam) for further practice. As you go about finding answers to these questions, you should be able to gradually develop an ability to find answers using your carry-in materials quickly.

Note: Before you start attempt any practise quizzes, question banks or mock test`s, we expect you to keep the carry-in materials (at least the bare acts mentioned in the BarHacker note on carry-in materials) ready with you.

#7 - Use the BarHacker HackSheets™ to improve speed and accuracy wherever possible

We have prepared Hacksheets, either in the form of mindmaps, flowcharts, subject indexes or case law tables and glossaries which can significantly speed up accuracy and make navigation through various bare acts much easier. HackSheets can be printed and taken to the examination hall. They are available for subjects such as labour laws which have multiple statutes. HackSheets for subjects such as Public International Law can be used as handy reference guides to find answers to questions.



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Summary

As a result, it appears that the Bar Exam tended to test two abilities – 1) rote learning and 2) the ability to find answers to questions. BarHacker provides ways to master the second ability – that is, the ability to understand the concepts so well, plan and familiarize yourself with carry-in materials so well that you can easily find answers in the exam. As you begin preparing, keep in mind that questions from the same subject need not be bunched together and may be scattered across the paper. It will be useful if you identify the questions from the same subject first and tackle them – this will save time spent on using carry-in materials to find answers.

It may not be optimal to prepare for questions which test your knowledge of trivia. We do not encourage rote learning at all, as it is an extremely short-sighted strategy and it will reduce the time you have to prepare for other subjects, for which more systematic preparation is possible. For questions that test such knowledge, we have tried to provide lists and compilations through HackSheets for ready reference.

If they come in the exam, you may refer to the HackSheets or other suggested carry-in materials wherever possible. Where these do not have the answer, the best idea would be to make a calculated guess as far as possible. Don't leave the question unanswered, since there is no negative marking. It is best to attempt these questions as well in the paper.

What we do not promise

There is no exhaustive way to prepare for the Bar Exam. We do not guarantee that you will be asked the same questions that we have provided in the quizzes or practise tests, since the issues that must be studied for each subject are not specified by the Bar Council and coverage of each subject can drastically vary in scope. Hence, we strongly discourage you from cramming the correct answers to any of the questions provided in the BarHacker materials. We strongly recommend that you try to understand the underlying concepts as far as possible. As you go about practising, your aim should be to try to understand how to find the answers to different types of questions from the material you will carry to the exam within the time limit.



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This should enable you to develop an ability to answer any type of question that pertains to the carry-in materials (particularly the bare acts). If questions in the exam require you to answer questions from bare acts and other carry-in materials, you should be able to answer those comfortably, even if those questions were not asked in the practise quizzes or mocks.

