



## Rightsizing the CLM Exam

For many of us, the prospect of preparing for and taking the CLM exam can be daunting. Test takers must prepare for the exam by knowing how to interpret financial statements, read blue prints, prepare performance evaluations in addition to becoming familiar with the Rules of Professional Conduct — the list goes on.

With all these competencies noted, the suggested reading materials would more than likely strain any bookshelf. The list of reference materials proposed to prepare for the certification exam is, in fact, more than anyone can read and apply in anticipation of sitting for the exam.

And that is the point. The CLM certification is not a passing grade on an exam or recognition that you have read and mastered a single body of knowledge. Most of us are generalists. *Our expertise and skills are not measured by our depth of knowledge of any particular subject, but rather, our ability to bring together diverse knowledge, skills and ability to solve complex problems.* Like the conductor of a symphony, we string together diverse talents for a desired purpose. *The CLM certification is a validation that one has applied his or her knowledge to successfully oversee the complex operations of a law firm.*

CLM certification is earned in three steps: serving as a legal administrator for the required number of years, satisfying the educational requirement and finally, passing the CLM exam. The latter item causes many of our colleagues to back away from the process. Rather than consider the breadth of competencies tested, the mountain of material to read, and the stress and cost of taking the exam, many of us would prefer to find other activities that require our attention instead - this is simply human nature.

*Before taking on other activities that would postpone your pursuit of certification, consider the following:* The content outline for the exam is two pages long, as published in the Certification Program Information and Application Packet. All the competencies that can be tested on the exam are listed on those two pages. *If you have satisfied the years of experience requirement, then you already know a fair amount of what will be on the exam, so give yourself some credit.*

Because you already know a good bit of what will be on the exam, you don't need to read all the reference materials. *What you should do is read as much as you feel is necessary to satisfy yourself and ensure that you know the competencies in the content outline.* Also, remember that you don't need to answer every question correctly to pass the exam. Finally, now you can take the exam at a test center near where you live, thereby eliminating burdensome travel time and cost.

Having right-sized our challenge, let's put it in perspective: We chose to be legal administrators. Having done so, are we not obligated to our employers, ourselves and other stakeholders in our employment

realm to be competent in our chosen field? The knowledge, skills and abilities that are reviewed in the CLM certification process have been promulgated by our peers and managing partners as those that are necessary to be a competent legal administrator. If we are pursuing these qualifications, then preparing for the CLM exam is a natural extension of the commitment we have already made. The CLM certification is a symbol of our ongoing dedication to our profession. While the exam is not easy, the certification process is one of the best ways to demonstrate that you are committed to being a qualified legal administrator. There is no better time to start than now.

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