

AAdministrative
Services
Letter

07-15
Examination Guide



Signed By	/s/ Marie Stephans, Chief Administrative Services Division	Number	07-15
Distribution	All Employees	Date Issued	October 19, 2007
Subject	Examination Guide	Expires	When Canceled
Guide Section	Human Resources	Reference	Cancels ASL 02-04

This is the updated [Air Resources Board \(ARB\) Examination Guide](#). This guide will give employees a better understanding of the examination process. If you have any questions on the examination process, please contact any member of the Examination Unit listed in the [Directory of Administrative Services](#).

Air Resources Board

Examination Guide

Prepared By:
Human Resources Branch
Administrative Services Division

Table of Contents

Civil Service Merit System	1
Examination Plan.....	1
Examination Process.....	1
Types of Examinations	2
Examination Information.....	3
Examination Bulletin.....	3
The Application Form.....	4
Application Filing	4
Application Security Measures	5
Late Submission of Applications.....	5
Application Review	6
Rescheduled Examinations	6
Examination Components.....	7
Non Confidential Pre-Examination Study Material.....	8
Interview Preparation.....	8
Interview Process	9
Evaluation Criteria	10
Eligible Lists.....	11
List Life	11
Certification.....	11
Appeal Process	11
Examination Security.....	12
Executive Branch Exempt Employees.....	12
CEA Employees With No Prior Permanent Civil Service Status	13
Legislative Exempt Employees.....	13
Career Executive Assignment (CEA).....	13

EXAMINATION GUIDE

This guide provides general information on the examination process including the annual examination plan, examination announcements, examination applications, etc. This overview of the examination process is provided as a reference. Additional information may be obtained by contacting the Air Resources Board (ARB) Examination Unit.

CIVIL SERVICE MERIT SYSTEM

ARB operates under the civil service merit system of the State of California. Hiring decisions are based on a candidate's eligibility on employment lists which are established through competitive examinations (written examinations, supplemental application, interviews, etc.). Non State employees MUST establish appointment eligibility by competing in an examination for the specific classification and be on the hiring list in the first three ranks. Existing State employees, however, can be appointed from Open lists, ARB promotional lists or via transfers from other State classifications, consistent with State Personnel Board (SPB) laws and rules.

EXAMINATION PLAN

Prior to an examination being administered, an annual Examination Plan is developed based upon ARB's testing needs. The annual plan is normally published at the beginning of the calendar year. Each Division is asked to provide input regarding their needs for examinations in priority order. Subsequently, the plan is developed taking resource and staffing requirements into consideration.

Departmental Subject Matter Experts (SME) from El Monte and Sacramento work with the examination staff to determine the type of examination needed. In addition, SMEs may assist with the job analysis, application review, development of test questions, and serve as panel members.

The timeframe for administering a departmental promotional examination generally requires four to six months from start to finish, while open exams require a minimum of six to nine months from start to finish.

EXAMINATION PROCESS

The steps in the examination process are as follows:

1. As part of the annual examination plan, ARB Management is requested to identify their need for examinations.
2. The annual Examination Plan is finalized and the examinations are scheduled.
3. The examination bulletin/announcement is released.

4. Candidates submit a Standard State Application Form (Std. 678) applying to participate in the examination.
5. Applications are reviewed by the Exam Analyst to determine whether candidates meet the requirements for admittance to the examination.
6. Candidates that do not meet the minimum requirements for admittance are notified.
7. Candidates that meet the minimum requirements for admittance are notified of their examination date and time.
8. The examination is administered.
9. Final scores are assigned.
10. Candidates are notified of test results.
11. The eligibility list (i.e., employment list) of successful candidates is established.
12. Management hires/promotes individuals from the employment list.

TYPES OF EXAMINATIONS

Listed below are some of the types of examinations administered:

- **Open Only** - competition is open to all qualified applicants. Candidates do not have to be a State employee to participate in this type of examination.
- **Open and Promotional** - competition of qualified State employees and non State employees is allowed. Both open and promotional lists are the result of this type of examination.
- **Open/Non Promotional** - competition of qualified State employees and non State employees is allowed. A single list results from this type of examination.
- **Departmental Promotional** - competition is limited to qualified State employees. Applicants must have a permanent civil service appointment with the ARB. An exception is given for prior ARB employees who transferred to another State agency within three years of the final filing date of the examination. Only promotional appointments can be made from this type of employment list.
- **Service Wide Promotional** - competition is limited to qualified State employees holding permanent civil service appointments with any department. The result of this type of examination is a service wide list of qualified candidates available for use by any State department.
- **Spot** – Competition is limited to the candidate group willing to work in a specific location. Competitors must take the examination in the location indicated on the examination announcement regardless of their place of residence. The result of this type of examination is a departmental list for the specified geographic location.

EXAMINATION INFORMATION

Testing information regarding current/future promotional and/or open examinations can be found in the following locations:

- ARB website (<http://arb.ca.gov/as/personnel/jobs/examvac.htm>).
- ARB email notification via List Serve (<http://arb.ca.gov/as/personnel/jobs/examvac.htm#ListServ>)
- State Personnel Board (SPB) web site (<http://spb.ca.gov/jobs/index.htm>).

EXAMINATION BULLETIN

The examination bulletin is an announcement that provides applicants with important details concerning a specific examination, including the:

- Name of the **testing department(s)**.
- **Type of examination** (whether it's an open or promotional examination).
- **Title of the classification**.
- **Position statement** (which describes the typical duties).
- **Salary range** (minimum and maximum salary).
- **Location** (where the vacancies exist).
- **Final filing date** (the last day an application will be accepted).
- **Written test date, if applicable**, and/or the anticipated **interview dates** (the timeframe allowed to prepare for the examination).
- **Desirable qualifications** (qualifications that are beneficial to the candidate's competitiveness in the examination but are not a requirement for entry).
- **Special requirements** (a requirement that must be met prior to being hired).
- **Minimum qualifications** (the education and/or experience entrance requirements to compete in the examination).
- **Scope** (the knowledge, skills, and abilities that examination questions are based on), also referred to as the **critical class requirements**.
- Any **special feature** which pertains to that specific testing class.
- **Veteran's points and/or career credit** (Extra points given to candidates who are veterans or current State employees. If granted, those points are added to the final score only after the candidate has successfully passed all parts of the examination.) Such credits are not granted in Promotional examinations.

Most examination bulletins are color coded to distinguish the different types of examinations, as follows:

BULLETIN COLOR	TYPE OF EXAMINATION
White	Open or Open/Non Promotional examinations.
Blue	Open or Open/Non Promotional examinations with continuous filing. Testing is done at various intervals.
Blue	LEAP (Limited Examination and Appointment Program). This testing program allows alternative entry into State service for persons with disabilities.
Green	Open/Spot examinations. Geographic location(s) for which the examination is being given.
Pink	Promotional examinations. State employees who meet minimum requirements may compete in these examinations.

Note: Bulletins posted on the Internet are displayed on a white background regardless of the type of exam being given, so candidates should carefully read the top of the bulletin to determine the examination type.

THE APPLICATION FORM

A Standard State Application Form Std. 678 must be completed and signed prior to submission. The State application form may be obtained:

- On SPB's website (<http://spb.ca.gov/jobs/stateapp.htm>).
- At local offices of the Employment Development Department.
- At local SPB offices.
- By contacting the Examination Unit.

APPLICATION FILING

Applications must be submitted as instructed on the examination bulletin. In most instances, applications for ARB examinations may be mailed and/or hand delivered to:

Air Resources Board Human Resources Branch/Examination Unit 1001 "I" Street/P.O. Box 2815 Sacramento, CA 95812

If mailed, it must be postmarked on or before the final filing date. If it is delivered in person, it must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. on the final filing date.

Note: Applicants are encouraged to make a copy of their application package for their own records.

APPLICATION SECURITY MEASURES

Laws have been passed which affect the information disclosed on the application form.

- Assembly Bill 3050 provides that persons convicted of any offense specified in Health and Safety Code Section 1136.5 need not disclose such conviction. This section pertains to various marijuana offenses.
- Government Code 19706 states that applicants need not disclose the following dates on the application; birth date; completion of high school and GED tests; certifications of proficiency or vocational competence; and license or membership in professional organizations. However, this information may be requested prior to a job offer.

LATE SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS

Late applications may be accepted under the following conditions:

- The application was delayed due to a verified error on the part of staff, administrative error, or postal authorities.
- The application was delivered to the wrong State agency, was postmarked by the postal service, and/or was date stamped on or before the final filing date specified.
- A verified distribution problem prevented timely notification to the employee.
- It is verified that the applicant failed to receive timely notice of a promotional examination because the employee was away from his/her normal place of work during the entire examination publicity period.

Late applications will not be accepted for the following reasons:

- The applicant claims the application was mailed or hand delivered prior to the final filing date; however, ARB does not have the application.
- The application is postmarked or delivered after the final filing date (unless the post office verifies this was due to an error on their part).
- The applicant states they did not see the bulletin.
- The applicant claims they put the application in interagency mail prior to the final filing date, but ARB Examination Unit received it after the final filing date or did not receive it at all.
- The applicant gives their application to another person to turn in, but it is not received by ARB Examination Unit by the final filing date.

APPLICATION REVIEW

Once a completed State application form is received, it will be reviewed to determine whether the candidate meets the minimum requirements for admittance to the examination for that specific classification.

If the candidate meets the minimum requirements, the candidate will receive a notice in the mail scheduling the candidate for the next phase of the examination (which is normally the oral interview), approximately three to four weeks after the final filing date.

If the candidate does not meet the minimum requirements, a notice of that determination will be sent to the candidate in the mail. Candidates will be allowed seven working days from the date of the notice to provide any additional information that may qualify the candidate for the examination.

RESCHEDULED EXAMINATIONS

At times it is necessary to reschedule candidates for examinations.

Acceptable reasons for rescheduling an examination date include:

- The candidate is entitled under Government Code 18940 to a deferred examination because of the candidate's religious convictions (applies from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday). The candidate may also be rescheduled if the examination date coincides with a religious holiday of the candidate's particular faith. This request must be made on or before the final filing date.
- The candidate has a military obligation on the date of the examination that cannot be changed. This requires orders or written substantiation from the candidate's Commanding Officer.
- A rescheduled examination is necessary to rectify an error by ARB staff.
- The candidate's examination notice is not received on time due to a verified postal error. This requires proof from the postal service and a signed statement from the candidate.
- The date of the written examination is changed from the initially announced date and the candidate has other obligations on the new date.
- ARB does not conduct the interviews during the announced anticipated timeframe and the candidate has other obligations when the interviews are conducted.
- The candidate is on an official summons for jury duty or under subpoena to appear in court.

Additional reasons for rescheduling an examination that apply to current State employees only, include:

- The candidate is entitled under Government Code 19776 to a deferred promotional examination because of being on military leave at the time of the original examination (application must be made no longer than six months after reinstatement from military leave). This requires a copy of orders and written substantiation from the candidate.
- The candidate is on an official department assignment that cannot be changed. This requires written substantiation by the employee's supervisor or departmental Personnel Officer.

- Candidate's illness or accidental injury, family illness, or death of an immediate family member prevents the employee from taking the regularly scheduled examination. This requires written substantiation from the employee's supervisor and/or physician.

Note: At the time of a rescheduled written test, the candidate will be required to complete an affidavit stating that they have neither discussed the test with other competitors nor reviewed the test material.

EXAMINATION COMPONENTS

All examinations consist of at least one component designed to assess the candidate's knowledge and/or abilities relative to the classification being examined. The "Examination Information" on the examination bulletin will tell you what examination component is being used and what effect (known as "weight") each component will have on your final score. There are several types of tests. The most common examination components are described below. Any one or a combination of the following types of tests may be used.

- **Written Test** - is utilized in some examinations and typically consists of 50 to 100 job-related, multiple-choice questions. Examinations usually last two to three hours. Applicants competing in the examination will be notified of their test results four to six weeks after the test date. Candidates that pass the written test will be scheduled to participate in the oral portion of the examination. If the entire examination consists only of a written component, weighted pass/fail only, candidates will not receive a score.
- **Oral Interviews** – also known as Qualifications Appraisal Panel (QAP), Employee Development Appraisal, and/or Promotional Readiness Examination. There are two types of oral interviews; both consist of a panel of two or more people who are responsible for evaluating responses to job-related questions. The candidate is rated on what is discussed in the interview. This is the candidate's opportunity to convince the panel how their qualifications (e.g., education and experience) meet and/or exceed the qualifications of the testing classification.
 - **Structured Interview** - the candidates will be given a number of questions to respond to before their oral interview and are usually asked to present those responses to the panel. (Note: There may be additional questions asked in the interview.)
 - **Patterned Interview** - the candidates have no advance knowledge of questions, instead must respond to a set of core questions asked of every candidate.
- **Supplemental Application** - is utilized for screening large candidate groups and is always used in addition to the Standard State Application. It consists of a self-assessment questionnaire. Qualifying candidates are required to respond to several job-related questions that include areas regarding training (formal and informal), education, and experience. There may or may not be an oral interview. See the examination bulletin for specifics.
- **Education and Experience** - consists of an evaluation of information contained in the candidate's standard employment application. The candidate's score depends entirely on the information he/she provides in relation to the information provided from other competitors. There is no written test or oral interview.

Note: The resulting eligible list is limited to three ranks. All of the applicants who meet the requirements for admittance to this type of examination will be ranked in one of the three passing ranks.

NON CONFIDENTIAL PRE EXAMINATION STUDY MATERIAL

Departments may develop non confidential pretest study material for on-site study group sessions. If departmental staff (including prior competitors and supervisors of those testing), are asked to instruct the sessions, their discussion and/or material should be limited to generalization of the class concept, critical class requirements, knowledge, skills, abilities, and an overview of their unit's duties and responsibilities.

Informal study groups – consist of two or more candidates participating in specific examinations who wish to meet on their own time to prepare for the examination.

Formal study groups – are permissible, however, organizers of such study groups must notify ARB's Examination Unit and/or Equal Employment Opportunity Office of all planned sessions. All material must be approved in advance. All departmental competitors should be provided the opportunity to attend. (A notice of each session to notify all potential departmental competitors will be posted on ARB's Intranet.)

No test material from prior examinations shall be used. No person with direct knowledge of the current examination (e.g., persons acting as departmental consultants in preparing test material or who will serve on the interview panel), should participate in either formal or informal study group sessions. Study group instructors and participants must be careful not to compromise the integrity or confidentiality of the current examination.

Questions regarding the appropriateness and content of formal study groups may be referred to the Equal Employment Opportunity Office and/or Examination Unit. ALL material must be reviewed and approved in advance.

Note: When an official pretest study guide is not available, examination staff members may not suggest materials to candidates. Staff may assist competitors by referring them to the "Scope" section of the examination bulletin.

INTERVIEW PREPARATION

Following are some tips to assist candidates in preparing for interviews:

- **Keep a copy of your application and review it carefully before the interview.** Panels often use the application as the starting point of the interview.
- **Study the "Scope" on the examination bulletin.** These are the areas in which you will be asked questions.
- **Never go into an interview without any knowledge of the duties and responsibilities of the testing class.** Talk to people who work in that particular area.

- **Think through each qualification required.** Try to come up with the kinds of questions you would ask if you were a member of the interview panel.
- **Do some general reading in areas in which you feel you may be weak.** For example, if the job involves supervision, some general reading about supervisory methods and practices may be useful. It may also be helpful to study agency procedures or detailed manuals.
- **Get a good night's sleep and watch your general health and mental attitude.** You will want a clear head at the interview.
- **Give yourself plenty of time to get to the interview.** Plan to arrive early. You may want to take along a copy of your application to review while you wait.
- **Personal appearance is important.** You are not scored for appearance, manners, attitudes, and expressions. However, it is important for you to give the best overall impression of yourself.
- **Upon arrival at the interview location, note the names of the panel members.** Names/roles are usually posted near the interview room.
- **Remember that the interview panel's job is to help you do your best.** Panel members are obligated to make a fair and impartial appraisal of your qualifications for the classification in question and want to see you in your best light.
- **Be pleasant but do not initiate extensive small talk.** This is a business situation, and should be considered as such. Further, the interview panel's time is limited; however, the panel may choose to make small talk at the beginning of the interview to make you feel more comfortable.
- **Inform the panel chairperson if you discover that you are related to a member of the interview panel.** The panel member will be excused during your interview.
- **The interview usually lasts 20 to 30 minutes.** Allow the panel member to present the question and then reply to that person; however, do not exclude the other members.
- **Do not interrupt.** Panel members may be stating a problem for you to analyze. Let the problem be stated and wait for the question.
- **Make sure you understand the question.** Do not try to answer until you do. If the question is not clear, restate it in your own words or ask the panel to repeat it for you.
- **Reply promptly but not hastily.** It is all right to pause for a couple of seconds before answering. A brief answer is proper; but make sure it is complete.
- **Keep your replies to the point.** Be brief when you illustrate your relevant experience.

INTERVIEW PROCESS

Those that meet the entrance requirements are scheduled for an oral interview by a panel of select individuals. The interview panel is composed of a chairperson and one or more State service representatives. The chairperson has been trained to make sure that the interviews are administered in a fair and equitable manner. The State service representatives usually work in the program area where the testing class is used and are considered the experts in the field.

When it is time for the interview, the interview will proceed as follows:

- You will be greeted by a panel member (usually the chairperson), who will escort you to the interview area. There you will be introduced to the other panel members and asked to take a seat.
- The chairperson will begin by explaining the interviewing process. He/she may then have the State service representative describe the class you are being tested for (e.g., such as the use of the classification in the department and the location of anticipated openings).
- You will be informed that your interview is being recorded. The recording is standard practice and in your best interest.
- You may be asked a general question, such as... "What aspects of your background do you think have best prepared you for this classification?" The interview is now under way and you will be asked several more job related questions.
- The chairperson usually concludes the interview by asking if the candidate has anything to add. If you have a significant qualification to emphasize, or if you feel that something was overlooked, please advise the panel, but keep it brief. If you do not wish to speak, a simple "No, thank you" will suffice. If it seems appropriate to shake hands with the members of the interview panel, it is fine to do so. If it would be awkward or uncomfortable for you, then you would probably be better off not doing so. A smile and a simple statement, such as "Thank you," should end the interview on a positive note.

Note: All candidates are asked the same questions and are then rated competitively. It is extremely important that candidates keep the questions confidential. If interview questions are disclosed to candidates who have not yet been interviewed all previous scores can be adversely affected. This breach of security is considered to be extremely serious. If it is proven that a candidate disclosed the interview questions, he/she may be removed from the list or even barred from participation in future examinations. In addition, the examination may be cancelled and deemed invalid.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The Examination Analyst is responsible for reviewing the application to ensure that all candidates meet the requirements for admittance. Once those requirements have been met, the candidates are interviewed, evaluated, and given a score. The interview panel rates the competitors based on the following:

- The breadth and depth of your education and work experience.
- Your ability to analyze situations and take the effective course of action.
- The extent of your ability to understand the questions being asked.
- Your ability to communicate and the directness of your response.
- Your knowledge of the classification for which you have applied.
- Your attitude toward and aptitude for accepting increased responsibilities.
- Your ability to relate experience to that of the testing class.

ELIGIBLE LISTS

Names of all successful competitors are placed in a specific rank according to their final score. The resulting eligible list is either "dated" or "merged". See the exam bulletin for specifics.

- **Dated list** - all competitors will have the same effective date and expiration date.
- **Merged lists** - the names of all successful competitors are merged into the list in score order regardless of the exam date. Candidate's effective dates and expiration dates may vary.

Note: The resulting list is posted for viewing on SPB's website
(http://www.spb.ca.gov/employment/eligible_list_disclosure.htm)

LIST LIFE

The minimum length of time an employment list will remain in effect is 12 months. Lists will automatically be extended until the next examination is given (up to a maximum of 48 months). See the examination bulletin for specifics.

CERTIFICATION

A certification list is an official hiring register categorizing candidates by specific geographical locations, tenure (permanent, limited term), and time base (full-time, part-time, intermittent).

APPEAL PROCESS

Formal Appeals are usually based on unfairness. If you feel that you have been treated unfairly in some way during the testing process, you may file an appeal. A competitor has 30 days, after the notice of the result of the examination is postmarked, to file such appeal. The appeal must be in writing and addressed to the SPB, Merit Appeals Office; stating the facts, information, or circumstances upon which the appeal is based. Appeals must be submitted in writing to:

State Personnel Board Merit Appeals Office 801 Capitol Mall/P.O. Box 944201 Sacramento, CA 94244-2010
--

The staff of the Merit Appeals Office will review the appeal and make the final determination. A hearing may or may not be warranted. At the conclusion of its investigation, the SPB decides whether to sustain or reject the appeal. State departments will abide by the Board's decision.

EXAMINATION SECURITY

Under Government Codes 19680 and 19681, it is unlawful for any person to:

- Willfully by himself or in cooperation with another person to defeat, deceive, or obstruct any person with respect to their right of examination, application, or employment under this part or board rule.
- Willfully and falsely to mark, grade, estimate, or report upon the examination or proper standing of any person examined or certified under this part or board rule, or to aid in so doing, or make any false representation concerning the same or the person examined.
- Willfully furnish to any person any special or secret information for the purpose of either improving or injuring the prospects or chances of any person examined, certified or to be examined or certified under this part or board rule.
- Practice any deception or fraud with regard to their identity in connection with any examination, application, or request to be examined.
- Obtain examination questions or other examination material except by specific authorization before, during, or after an examination or use or purport to use any such examination questions or materials for the purpose of instructing, coaching or preparing candidates for examinations.
- Use any unfair means to cause or attempt to cause any eligible person to waive any rights obtained under this part.

EXECUTIVE BRANCH EXEMPT EMPLOYEES

Government Code 18992 provides eligibility for Executive Branch Exempt employees who meet the following criteria to participate in promotional examinations, including Career Executive Assignment (CEA) examinations:

- They are non elected exempt employees; and,
- Their salaries are not set by statute (for the most part salaries set by statute include Agency Secretaries and Department Directors). Refer to Government Code 11550 ET seq.; and,
- They have been employed as an Executive Branch Exempt employee for at least two consecutive years. (The two years do not have to be current); and,
- They have been appointed pursuant to subsections (c), (e), (f), (g), (i), or (m) 1 of Section 4 of Article VII of the Constitution; and,
- They are currently employed in the Executive Branch Exempt appointment; or,

An Executive Branch employee who resigns or is released from service may take promotional examinations, including CEA examinations for one year following their resignation or release.

Executive Branch employees retain eligibility on promotional lists as follows:

- Individuals shall maintain promotional list eligibility for the life of the list.
- As with civil service employees, the individual's name is removed from the list when they receive a permanent civil service appointment in that class.

CEA EMPLOYEES WITH NO PRIOR PERMANENT CIVIL SERVICE STATUS

Government Code 18993 provides authority for CEA employees that have no former civil service position to participate in promotional examinations under the following circumstances:

- For as long as the employee remains in the CEA position, they may take promotional examinations for any class for which they meet the minimum qualifications for the department where they are serving.
- When the CEA has been terminated, they are entitled to take deferred examinations for any promotional eligible list for their department in existence at the time of the appointment termination provided they meet the minimum qualifications specified for the promotional examination. The employee must request the deferred examination within 10 calendar days of the CEA termination and the department shall administer the deferred examination within 30 days of the date of the request.

LEGISLATIVE EXEMPT EMPLOYEES

Government Code 18990 provides eligibility for Legislative Exempt employees who meet the following criteria to participate in promotional civil service examinations, including Career Executive Assignment (CEA) examinations. Such candidates are eligible under the following circumstances:

- Have been employed by the Legislature for at least two consecutive years (does not have to be current); and are either currently employed by the Legislature or are no longer employed by the Legislature but were released or resigned less than one year ago;
- Meet minimum qualifications as prescribed by the class specification (in evaluating minimum qualifications, related legislative experience shall be considered State civil service experience in a class deemed comparable by the State Personnel Board based on the duties and responsibilities assigned).

Note: In cases where the promotional examinations are given by more than one department for the same classification, the employee must select one department in which they would like to compete. Those employees placed on promotional lists shall retain their eligibility for the life of the list or until appointed from that list to a permanent, full-time position.

CAREER EXECUTIVE ASSIGNMENT (CEA)

See ASL: 02-02: Career Executive Assignment Process (<http://arb.ca.gov/asl/02-02.htm>)