



ASWB Examination Fee Change – Questions and Answers

When will the new fees take effect?

Candidates who register on or after January 1, 2010 will pay the new fees.

Why are exams being offered at different fees? The cost of creating test questions for the Bachelors and Masters examinations is lower than the cost of creating test questions for the Advanced Generalist and Clinical examinations. Because fewer Advanced Generalist/Clinical items survive the pretest process, more items need to be created. Additionally, the lower fee for the Bachelors and Masters examination reflects the reality that social workers at these levels, having just graduated from social work programs, are not likely to make as much money as social workers who have been employed for two years.

Why are the new fees at \$230 and \$260?

The examination fee has not been raised since 2001. Since that time expenses have increased for ASWB, as they have for every organization. The ASWB social work licensing examinations meet the highest psychometric standards, and the cost of maintaining these standards increases as the costs of contractual testing services and travel expenses for volunteers who work on the examinations to write and review the questions rise. There are also additional test security measures that have been planned due to increased test security risks, and these measures will incur additional costs. The amounts of the new fees were designed to serve the association's needs for at least the next five years—just like the fee increase adopted in 2000 and implemented in 2001.

Why doesn't ASWB increase fees by a small percentage each year, or at least more frequently than every 5-8 years?

The cost of making incremental fee increases would outweigh the benefits, both in terms of the publication costs and information changes that would need to be made at the board and association level, as well as the level of confusion and (likely ongoing) frustration that would occur at the candidate level.

Why not just cut expenditures? What about across-the-board reductions?

The association has a fiduciary responsibility to its members to provide a valid, reliable licensure examination, and expenses related to this program could not be cut without affecting the overall strength of the program. Leaving this expense area unaffected reduced the potential areas for cuts—so much so that in the first year of operations without a fee increase, several major association programs would have needed to be cut out entirely, and reserve funds used to offset any further projected deficits.

How do the new fees compare to other professional licensing exam fees?

The new fees make the clinical social work fee (\$260) 11th and the bachelors and masters social work fee (\$230) 13th out of 18 fees—still in the bottom half of the examination fees surveyed.

When examination fees are considered in reference to the average income of the professions that use each exam, ASWB's new fees still rank toward the bottom in comparative cost. Relative to average incomes of BSW and MSW social workers, the new fees rank 14th of the 17 professions surveyed. Relative to the average income for clinical social workers, the new fees rank 10th of the 17 professions.

Why in light of the bad economy?

The current state of the economy is not a factor in the new fees. The need for a fee increase at this point is part of a cycle that was predicted in 2000, when the last fee increase was approved. At that time, the ASWB Finance Committee predicted that the increased fees would serve ASWB for about five years. Careful financial management and a rise in exam administrations have allowed the association to survive on this fee for an additional three years. Theoretically, the timing of a fee increase might need to be adjusted if current fees were disproportionate to other professional examination fees, or to the earnings of social workers, but neither is the case (see “how do the new fees compare to other professional licensing exam fees?” above).

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