

What Matters for Bar Success: Doctrinal Performance, Coursework Exposure, and First-Time Bar Passage

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Abstract

This study examines how enrollment and academic performance in doctrinal law courses relate to first-time bar passage. Drawing on a large, multi-institutional data set, we estimate the associations between doctrinal GPA, course completion, credit accumulation, and first-time bar passage using regression adjustment and doubly robust methods designed to reduce selection bias. Across all models, performance in doctrinal coursework emerges as the strongest and most consistent predictor of first-time bar passage, far outweighing the influence of credit accumulation or course completion. Although greater exposure to doctrinal and skills-based coursework is positively associated with bar passage, these effects are comparatively modest, reinforcing that simply mandating additional coursework is unlikely to meaningfully improve bar outcomes. Course-level analyses further indicate that grades earned within upper-level doctrinal courses predict bar passage more strongly than completion alone. Taken together, the findings suggest that learning and mastery — rather than exposure — drive bar readiness, highlighting implications for curricular design and advising as jurisdictions prepare for the NextGen Uniform Bar Exam (NextGen UBE)’s greater emphasis on applied competencies.

1 | Introduction

Bar examinations are high-stakes assessments for both law graduates and the institutions that educate them. Failing the bar on the first attempt carries significant professional, financial, and personal consequences for graduates and poses accreditation risks for law schools that fall short

of the American Bar Association's bar passage standards.¹ Prior research consistently demonstrates that graduates who do not pass the bar have lower job placement rates, earn substantially lower incomes, and experience diminished career mobility.² These downstream consequences underscore bar passage as a critical determinant of early professional opportunity, particularly for graduates from lower-ranked institutions and those with fewer alternative career pathways.

Law school performance, rather than pre-admission credentials, is the strongest predictor of bar exam success. Although LSAT scores and undergraduate GPAs are often used in admissions decisions, prior research finds that these measures explain relatively little variance in bar outcomes once students matriculate.³ Recent research indicates that first-year law school GPA mediates the majority of the relationship between pre-admission metrics and bar passage, underscoring the central role of the law school experience in shaping bar readiness.⁴

Evidence that law school GPA is the strongest predictor of bar success has shifted attention toward the curriculum as a site of preparation. Rather than viewing bar readiness as the responsibility of commercial courses or post-graduation study alone, many scholars and educators argue that preparation should be embedded throughout the law school experience.⁵ This perspective emphasizes the complementary roles of doctrinal instruction, skills training, and experiential learning, while also raising questions about potential tradeoffs among these curricular components. Emerging changes to licensure exams, including the forthcoming NextGen UBE's greater emphasis on applied skills, make these questions even more salient for the design of legal education.

Despite strong evidence that overall GPA predicts bar passage, relatively little research examines how completion of specific coursework and performance within courses relates to bar outcomes. Most existing studies focus on cumulative academic performance or rely on small samples drawn

¹ See AM. BAR ASS'N, STANDARDS AND RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR APPROVAL OF LAW SCHOOLS §§ 316, 501(b) (2025).

² See Jane Yakowitz, *Marooned: An Empirical Investigation of Law School Graduates Who Fail the Bar Exam*, 60 J. LEGAL EDUC. 3, 28–29, 33 (2010).

³ See Aaron N. Taylor, Jason M. Scott & Joshua L. Jackson, *It's Not Where You Start, It's How You Finish: Predicting Law School and Bar Success*, 21 J. HIGHER EDUC. THEORY & PRAC. 103, 117–19 (2021).

⁴ Jason M. Scott, Andrea Pals & Paige Wilson, *Predicting Bar Success: The Mediating Effects of Law School GPA* 26 (AccessLex Inst. Rsch. Paper No. 24-02, 2024), <https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4789411>.

⁵ See, e.g., Sabrina DeFabritiis, *IL Is the New Bar Prep*, 51 CREIGHTON L. REV. 37, 39 (2017); Mario W. Mainero, *We Should Not Rely on Commercial Bar Reviews to Do Our Job: Why Labor-Intensive Comprehensive Bar Examination Preparation Can and Should Be a Part of the Law School Mission*, 19 CHAPMAN L. REV. 545, 556 (2016).

from one or two institutions. As a result, there remains limited empirical guidance on whether enrollment in particular courses — or strong performance within them — meaningfully improves first-time bar passage.

This study addresses these gaps by examining the relationships between coursework completion, academic performance, and first-time bar passage across a large, multi-institutional sample. Using data from more than 13,000 graduates across 36 law schools, we analyze the extent to which doctrinal GPA and credit hours earned in different types of courses are associated with first-time bar passage. We use a subset of this sample (approximately 3,500 students across six schools) to examine the relationships between bar passage and completion of and performance in specific upper-level doctrinal subjects. We focus particularly on whether upper-level doctrinal coursework augments bar readiness beyond what is expressed by first-year performance.

This study is structured around three research questions that align with two pathways (see Conceptual Framework below) linking academic performance and coursework exposure to bar passage. Specifically, we ask:

1. To what extent are credit hours earned in doctrinal, skills-based, clinic-based, and externship coursework associated with first-time bar passage, after controlling for selection into course types?
2. To what extent does academic performance in doctrinal coursework (overall doctrinal GPA and first-year GPA) predict first-time bar passage, and does the magnitude of these associations suggest added value of upper-level doctrinal performance beyond first-year performance?
3. Among upper-level doctrinal electives (business associations, criminal procedure, conflict of laws, evidence, family law, secured transactions, and trusts and estates⁶), to what extent (a) is completion associated with first-time bar passage, and (b) among completers, is course performance associated with bar passage?

These questions carry practical importance for law schools and regulators. Prior research and our findings indicate that academic performance, particularly in doctrinal courses, consistently outweighs credit-hour accumulation or completion of specific bar-tested subjects as a predictor of bar passage. As a result, interventions that focus on supporting students' mastery of core legal competencies may offer greater benefits than mandating additional courses or rigid curricular sequences. This insight aligns with ongoing debates within legal education about whether requiring more bar-related coursework meaningfully improves outcomes for students who struggle academically. It also gains urgency as jurisdictions transition to the NextGen UBE, which emphasizes applied skills and analytic reasoning alongside doctrinal knowledge.

⁶ This selection of courses is based on the tested topics on the legacy Uniform Bar Exam.

2 | Literature Review

Existing research on bar exam success consistently identifies law school academic performance as the most reliable predictor of first-time passage. While LSAT scores and undergraduate GPA are modestly associated with bar outcomes, their predictive power diminishes substantially once students' law school grades are taken into account.⁷ Studies consistently find that cumulative law school GPA — and especially performance in doctrinal courses — is the strongest indicator of bar readiness, with later-year grades often exerting additive effects.⁸

The structure and content of law school coursework shape both academic performance and bar preparedness. During the first year of law school, students primarily enroll in core doctrinal courses covering subjects tested on the Multistate Bar Examination (MBE) component of the Uniform Bar Examination (UBE). In subsequent years, students choose among upper-level doctrinal courses, skills-based instruction, clinics, simulations, and externships. These choices introduce variation not only in exposure to tested subject matter but also in the development of competencies relevant to the bar exam.

Research on the relationship between doctrinal coursework and bar passage yields mixed and often inconclusive findings. Early studies on mandated doctrinal curricula found minimal evidence that course selection alone improved bar outcomes beyond the influence of overall GPA.⁹ More recent research similarly suggests that participation in bar-related doctrinal courses is, at best, modestly associated with bar passage.¹⁰

Scholars increasingly emphasize integrating doctrinal instruction with skills-based and experiential learning. Proponents argue that blending substantive law with exam-focused skills, time management, and applied learning may enhance both bar performance and professional competence.¹¹ Empirical evidence suggests that skills courses and experiential learning may

⁷ Taylor, Scott & Jackson, *supra* note 3, at 118; Pals, Scott & Wilson, *supra* note 4, at 26.

⁸ See Amy N. Farley et al., *A Deeper Look at Bar Success: The Relationship Between Law Student Success, Academic Performance, and Student Characteristics*, 16 J. EMPIRICAL LEGAL STUD. 605, 622–23 (2019); Katherine A. Austin, Catherine Martin Christopher & Darby Dickerson, *Will I Pass the Bar Exam?: Predicting Student Success Using LSAT Scores and Law School Performance*, 45 HOFSTRA L. REV. 753, 758 (2016); Taylor, Scott & Jackson, *supra* note 3, at 118–19.

⁹ See Phillips Cutright, Karen Cutright & Douglass G. Boshkoff, *Course Selection, Student Characteristics and Bar Examination Performance: The Indiana University Law School Experience*, 27 J. LEGAL EDUC. 127, 129 (1975).

¹⁰ See Robert R. Kuehn & David R. Moss, *A Study of the Relationship Between Law School Coursework and Bar Exam Outcomes*, 68 J. LEGAL EDUC. 623, 640 (2019).

¹¹ See, e.g., Emmeline Paulette Reeves, *Teaching to the Test: The Incorporation of Elements of Bar Exam Preparation in Legal Education*, 64 J. LEGAL EDUC. 645, 646 (2015); Roger C. Cramton, *The Current State of the Law Curriculum*, 32 J. LEGAL EDUC. 321, 325 (1982); Sara J. Berman, *Integrating Performance Tests Into Doctrinal Courses, Skills Courses, and Institutional Benchmark Testing: A Simple Way to Enhance Student Engagement While*

boost confidence and engagement, but their direct effect on bar passage is limited and uneven across student populations.¹²

Selection bias complicates efforts to isolate the effects of coursework on bar outcomes. Students do not randomly enroll in courses; rather, course-taking decisions are shaped by prior academic performance, institutional requirements, and advising practices. As a result, estimating the causal impact of coursework requires analytic strategies that account for systematic differences between students who select into different curricular paths.

3 | Conceptual Framework

This study adopts a conceptual framework that posits two primary pathways linking law school coursework to first-time bar passage. The first pathway operates through academic performance, measured by course-level and cumulative GPA. Higher grades serve as indicators of mastery in substantive legal knowledge and analytic reasoning skills assessed on the bar exam. Under this pathway, stronger performance in doctrinal courses is expected to increase the likelihood of first-time bar passage.

The second pathway operates through exposure to different types of coursework, measured by credit hours earned. Enrollment in doctrinal, skills-based, clinic-based, and externship courses may influence bar readiness by shaping the content students encounter and the competencies they develop. However, since course-taking patterns are often influenced by prior academic performance, institutional policies, and student characteristics, these relationships must be evaluated with careful attention to selection effects.

Both pathways are embedded within broader individual and institutional contexts that influence bar outcomes. Demographic characteristics, prior academic preparation, law school support structures, and institutional practices may affect both coursework decisions and bar passage.

Furthering Assessment, Bar Passage, and Other ABA Accreditation Objectives, 42 J. LEGAL PROF. 147, 152–53 (2018); AM. BAR ASS’N, LEGAL EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT — AN EDUCATIONAL CONTINUUM (REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON LAW SCHOOLS AND THE PROFESSION: NARROWING THE GAP) 4 (1993) (the “MacCrate Report”). This trend was arguably underway even prior to the publication of the MacCrate Report; Hightower and McGaugh, for example, document an academic support program in Illinois that was launched in the 1970s. Doris A. Hightower & Raymond S. McGaugh, *The MLER Supplementary Bar Preparation Program*, 10 ST. LOUIS U. PUB. L. REV. 271 (1991).

¹² See Sonia Bychkov Green, Maureen Straub Kordesh & Julie M. Spanbauer, *Sailing Against the Wind: How a Pre-Admission Program Can Prepare At-Risk Students for Success in the Journey Through Law School and Beyond*, 39 U. MEM. L. REV. 307, 342 (2009); Scott Johns, *A Statistical Exploration: Analyzing the Relationship (If Any) Between Externship Participation and Bar Exam Scores*, 42 OKLA. CITY U. L. REV. 281, 305 (2018); Sabrina DeFabritiis & Kathleen Elliott Vinson, *Under Pressure: How Incorporating Time-Pressured Performance Tests Prepares Students for the Bar Exam and Practice*, 122 W. VA. L. REV. 107, 131–32 (2019).

Accordingly, our analyses account for these co-varying factors to better isolate the associations between coursework, academic performance, and first-time bar success.

4 | Data and Methods

We draw on two complementary student-level datasets derived from two AccessLex Institute® study initiatives. The primary dataset includes 13,115 graduates from 36 ABA-approved law schools who sat for the bar examination between 2015 and 2023. This dataset is used to examine associations between overall coursework exposure, academic performance, and first-time bar passage. A secondary analytic subsample includes 3,674 graduates from six institutions who sat for the bar exam between 2018 and 2022 that provided detailed course-level records for upper-level doctrinal electives, enabling more granular analyses of course completion and performance.

Although our sample is not nationally representative, its demographic and performance characteristics closely resemble national patterns (see Table 1). Approximately 63% of law students nationally identify as White, compared to 65% in our full sample and 59% in our analytic sub-sample. Bar outcomes are likewise comparable: the national first-time bar passage rate is approximately 74%, which aligns with the 73% rate observed in our full sample. The analytic sub-sample exhibits a modestly lower first-time bar passage rate, with just over 66% of students passing the bar on the first attempt. Taken together, these similarities suggest that, while not fully representative, our sample reflects key features of the broader law student population, supporting cautious generalization of our findings.

Our sample diverges most notably from national patterns in the distribution of *U.S. News and World Report* law school rankings. While about one-third of bar takers nationwide graduated from a top 50 law school, only 19% of our full sample attended one of these schools. Moreover, none of the schools in our sub-sample fell within the top 50. Conversely, about one-third of our full sample and half of our sub-sample attended a law school ranked outside of the top 150 law schools. As a result, our findings may be less generalizable to graduates of highly ranked law schools and should be interpreted as more reflective of outcomes among graduates of institutions with lower *U.S. News* rankings.

Table 1 | Sample Overview (Individual-Level)

Variable	Full Sample		Sub-Sample		National
	Count	%	Count	%	National %
Race					
White	8,459	65	2,159	59	63 ^a
Hispanic	1,462	11	638	17	12 ^a
Black	1,081	8	337	9	7 ^a
Remaining Categories	1,225	9	383	10	13 ^a
Race Unknown	812	6	157	4	4 ^a
Gender					
Male	6,090	47	1,687	46	46 ^a
Female	6,867	53	1,944	53	54 ^a
Other/Gender Unknown	82	1	43	1	<1 ^a
School Region					
Northeast	2,304	19	642	18	25 ^b
Midwest	2,403	20	0	0	19 ^b
South	4,671	39	2,024	55	37 ^b
West	2,692	22	1,008	27	18 ^b
School Rank Tier (2023)					
1-50	2,254	19	0	0	34 ^{b c}
51-100	2,305	19	545	15	26 ^{b c}
101-150	3,253	27	1,305	36	19 ^{b c}
151+	4,258	35	1,824	50	16 ^{b c}
Bar Result					
Pass	9,549	73	2,433	66	74 ^b
Fail	3,490	27	1,241	34	26 ^b

Note: National figures for race and gender values reflect bar taker counts from 2019-2023, as previous years of data were not reported. Regions are defined by the United States Census Bureau. National school rank percentiles do not sum to 100, as 5% of schools in the national population were unranked in 2023. ^a *Statistics*, AM. BAR ASS'N, https://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/accreditation/statistics/ (Bar Passage Data: Data by Race, Ethnicity, and Gender: 2020–2021, 2021–2022, 2022–2023 & 2023–2024). ^b *Bar Passage/Admission Report: Compilation – All Schools Data*, AM. BAR ASS'N STANDARD 509 DISCLOSURES, <https://www.abarequireddisclosures.org/barPassageOutcomes> (2015–2023). ^c *2023 Best Law Schools*, U.S. NEWS & WORLD REP., <https://web.archive.org/web/20220329020719/https://www.usnews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-law-schools/law-rankings> (2022).

4.1 | Key Variables

The outcome of interest is first-time bar passage, measured as a dichotomous indicator of whether a graduate passed the bar examination on their initial attempt. All analyses estimate the likelihood of first-time passage as a function of academic performance, coursework exposure, and relevant covariates.

Academic performance is operationalized using standardized measures of doctrinal GPA that reflect mastery of bar-relevant legal content. We examine overall doctrinal GPA across all doctrinal coursework and first-year cumulative GPA, the latter serving as a proxy for performance in 1L doctrinal courses. Data on grades earned specifically in 1L doctrinal courses are available for only a subset of schools in our sample; however, among those schools for which both measures are observed, first-year GPA and 1L doctrinal GPA are strongly correlated (Pearson's $r > 0.9$), which is consistent with the fact that first-year grades largely reflect performance in doctrinal coursework. Accordingly, to preserve sample size while maintaining construct validity, we treat first-year GPA as a proxy for 1L doctrinal performance.

All GPA measures are placed on the traditional four-point scale and standardized to have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one. Standardization facilitates effect size comparison across performance measures so that estimated effects reflect the change in bar-passage likelihood for a one-standard-deviation increase in GPA, holding other factors constant.

Coursework exposure is measured by total credit hours earned in doctrinal, skills-based, clinic-based, and externship courses. These credit-hour variables are rescaled to range from 0 to 1, where 0 represents the minimum observed number of credit hours completed in a given category, and 1 represents the maximum observed number of credit hours in the sample. This scaling facilitates comparison of effect sizes across coursework categories, and estimated effects can be interpreted as the association between moving from no exposure to the highest observed level of coursework, holding other factors constant.

For the analytic subsample, we examine seven upper-level doctrinal electives commonly offered across institutions: business associations, criminal procedure, conflict of laws, evidence, family law, secured transactions, and trusts and estates. For each course, we estimate two models. In the first, we examine the effect of course completion on bar passage. The second model estimates the effect of course grade on bar passage for students who completed each course. Since grades are highly correlated among these courses, course-level models are estimated separately.

All models include a set of control variables to reduce confounding between predictors and bar outcomes. Although the specific set of controls varies by model, these include race/ethnicity, gender, age at matriculation, transfer status, years to graduation, first-year GPA, the timing of bar exam administration (July or February), and whether the exam was taken in a UBE jurisdiction. These variables are included for adjustment purposes and are not interpreted as causal determinants of bar passage.

4.2 | Models

We estimate multivariate logistic regression models with random intercepts at the school level to account for student clustering within institutions. The models include cohort fixed effects to capture variation across time. Logistic regression is appropriate given the binary outcome and permits estimation of relative effect sizes while adjusting for multiple covariates.

Because course-taking decisions often reflect prior academic performance, institutional policies, and student characteristics, these relationships require careful attention to selection effects. Students' enrollment in doctrinal, skills-based, clinic, and externship courses is shaped by prior academic performance, institutional requirements, and advising practices, raising the risk that unadjusted comparisons would conflate course effects with pre-existing differences among students.

To address this issue, analyses of upper-level doctrinal course completion use a doubly robust strategy combining covariate balancing propensity score (CBPS) weighting with regression adjustment.¹³ In these analyses, CBPS is used to estimate each student's probability of course completion based on observed covariates, including demographic characteristics, pre-admission indicators, and early law school performance. Inverse probability weights derived from these estimates are applied to improve covariate balance between students who did and did not complete each course, while regression models simultaneously adjust for the same or additional covariates.

We apply a parallel approach when examining coursework exposure measured in credit hours, including doctrinal, skills-based, clinic-based, and externship coursework. In these analyses, CBPS is implemented through an extension that accommodates non-binary and continuous treatments by balancing covariates across levels of coursework intensity rather than across discrete exposure groups. The resulting weights improve comparability among students with differing levels of credit accumulation, and regression adjustment is used to model bar passage conditional on both coursework exposure and observed covariates. We show balance diagnostics in Figures A.1 – A.11.

Across both sets of analyses, this doubly robust approach improves robustness to model misspecification and reduces bias due to observed confounding.¹⁴ Since CBPS weighting relies on estimated quantities, conventional variance estimates can understate uncertainty. To address this limitation, we compute standard errors using nonparametric bootstrapping that re-estimates

¹³ Kosuke Imai & Marc Ratkovic, *Covariate Balancing Propensity Score*, 76 J. ROYAL STAT. SOC'Y. SERIES B: STAT. METHODOLOGY 243, 259–60 (2014).

¹⁴ Nick Huntington-Klein, *Combining Matching and Regression*, THE EFFECT (2021), <https://theeffectbook.net/ch-Matching.html#combining-matching-and-regression>; Michele Jonsson Funk, et al., *Doubly Robust Estimation of Causal Effects*, 173 AM. J. EPIDEMIOLOGY 761 (2011).

both the weighting and outcome models in each replication, consistent with prior methodological guidance.¹⁵ All reported confidence intervals and p-values therefore reflect uncertainty arising from both the weighting and regression components of the analysis.

To facilitate interpretation of the findings, we present results in two ways: odds ratios (ORs) and predicted probabilities. Odds ratios indicate the extent to which a student's likelihood of passing the bar is expected to increase or decrease given a change in a particular variable, e.g., doctrinal credit hours. Predicted probabilities estimate the chance of passing the bar for students at different levels of a variable (we use the 25th and 75th percentiles in our discussion of the findings), while holding all else constant. These differing levels form the basis of the predicted probability values displayed in the dumbbell plots in Figures 1 and 2.

Model specifications differ by research question to reflect differences in data availability and theoretical focus. Credit-hour models examine associations between coursework exposure and bar passage in the full sample. GPA models focus on the relationship between doctrinal performance and bar passage. Course-level models in the analytic subsample separately estimate the effects of course completion and course performance.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, these analyses rely on observational data and cannot fully account for unobserved confounding variables. Second, course-level analyses are limited to a subset of institutions, and results may not generalize to all law schools. Nonetheless, the size and diversity of the sample provide a strong basis for examining patterns of coursework, performance, and bar outcomes.

The analyses that follow operationalize the two pathways described in the Conceptual Framework through three complementary analytic components. First, we examine the relationship between academic performance and first-time bar passage using measures of first-year GPA and overall doctrinal GPA, capturing the performance-based pathway through which mastery of bar-relevant content is expected to influence outcomes. Second, we assess the exposure-based pathway by estimating associations between credit hours earned in doctrinal, skills-based, clinic-based, and externship coursework and bar passage, accounting for selection into course types. Third, using a subsample with detailed transcript data, we conduct course-level analyses of upper-level doctrinal electives, distinguishing between the effects of course completion and performance within courses. Together, these components allow us to assess whether coursework influences bar success primarily through accumulated exposure, through demonstrated academic performance, or through a combination of both.

¹⁵ See generally Alberto Abadie & Guido W. Imbens, *On the Failure of the Bootstrap for Matching Estimators*, 76 *ECONOMETRICA* 1537 (2008); Peter C. Austin & Elizabeth A. Stuart, *Moving Towards Best Practice When Using Inverse Probability of Treatment Weighting (IPTW) Using the Propensity Score to Estimate Causal Treatment Effects*, 34 *STAT. MED.* 3661 (2015).

5 | Results

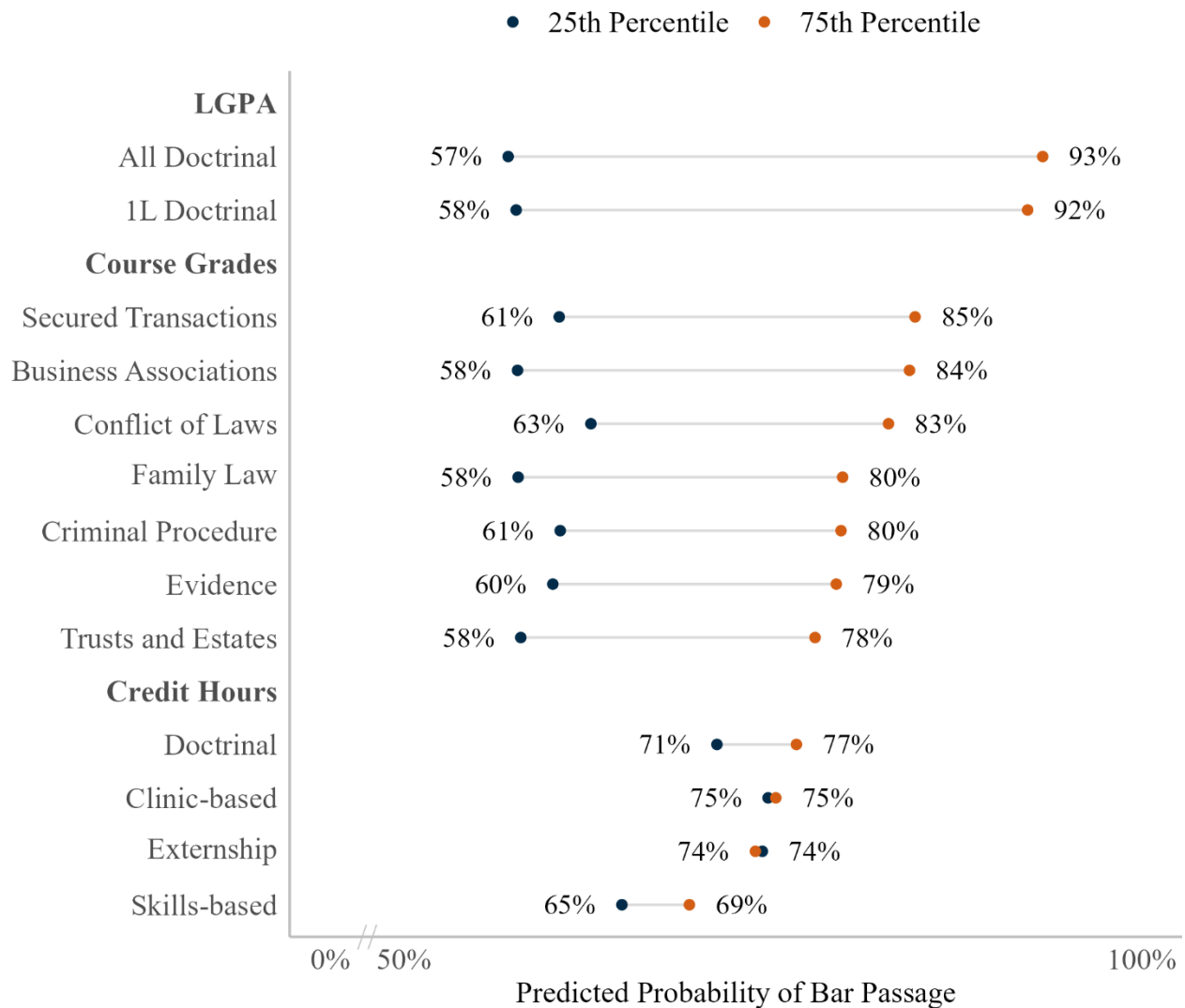
5.1 | Doctrinal Performance and First-Time Bar Passage

Academic performance in doctrinal coursework is strongly and positively associated with first-time bar passage. The effect of overall doctrinal GPA (OR = 5.8, $p < .01$) is modestly larger than that for first-year GPA (OR = 4.9, $p < 0.01$). We show these odds ratios and their corresponding 95% confidence intervals in Figure A.12. However, since odds ratios can exaggerate the substantive magnitude of effects for binary outcomes — particularly when predictors are standardized and the associations are strong — we emphasize predicted probabilities as the primary basis for interpretation.

As illustrated in Figure 1, a student whose overall doctrinal GPA is at the 75th percentile of the distribution has an average predicted probability of first-time bar passage that is 36 percentage points greater than that of a student at the 25th percentile (93% versus 57%). A nearly identical contrast is observed for first-year GPA, with about a 34-point difference between the 25th and 75th percentiles. These results show that doctrinal performance, whether measured early or cumulatively, is strongly associated with bar outcomes.

The similarity of these effects suggests that much of the relationship between law school academic performance and bar success is established during the first year, with later doctrinal performance reinforcing rather than substantially altering students' likelihoods of bar passage. Although overall doctrinal GPA exhibits a slightly larger association than first-year GPA, the practical difference between the two measures is modest.

Figure 1 | Academic Performance Has Greater Influence on Bar Success Than Earned Credit Hours



Note: 1L doctrinal LGPA is represented by its proxy, 1L LGPA. Predicted probabilities are estimated at the 25th (lower quartile) and 75th (upper quartile) of each variable's observed distribution, holding other covariates constant.

5.2 | Coursework Exposure and First-Time Bar Passage

In contrast to the strong associations observed for doctrinal performance, relationships between coursework exposure and bar passage are more modest. Greater exposure to doctrinal and skills-based coursework is positively associated with bar passage (OR = 7.5, $p < 0.01$; OR = 3.9, $p < 0.01$, respectively). On the other hand, credit hours earned in clinic and externship

coursework show little direct relationship to bar outcomes ($OR = 1.2, p = 0.02$; $OR = 0.9, p < 0.01$, respectively). These findings, however, should not be interpreted as evidence that experiential coursework lacks educational value. Rather, they suggest that experiential credit accumulation does not translate directly into higher probabilities of bar passage under the current structure of the UBE or jurisdiction-specific exam.

Figure A.12 displays estimated odds ratios and confidence intervals for coursework exposure measured across the observed ranges of earned credit hours. These odds ratios reflect the expected change in bar passage likelihood associated with moving from the minimum to the maximum observed number of credit hours in each category.

To aid interpretation, Figure 1 displays corresponding predicted-probability contrasts evaluated at the 25th and 75th percentiles of each credit-hour distribution. Although all estimated effects are statistically distinguishable from zero, the associated changes in predicted probability are small, underscoring the important distinction between statistical significance and practical importance.

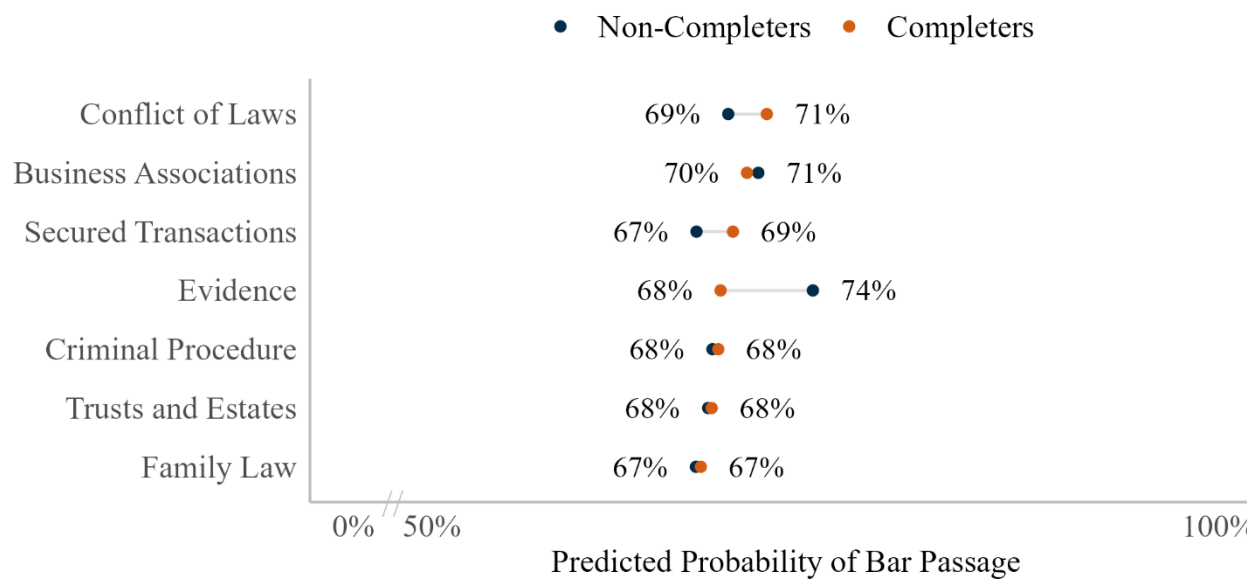
5.3 | Upper-Level Doctrinal Courses – Completion and Performance

Completion of individual upper-level doctrinal courses is generally not meaningfully associated with first-time bar passage. For six of the seven courses examined, estimated odds ratios cluster near one, indicating similar bar passage likelihoods for students who did and did not complete a given course.

The course Evidence stands out both for its negative association with bar passage ($OR = 0.7, p < 0.01$) and for the strength of its performance effect among completers ($OR = 2.8, p < 0.01$). This pattern likely reflects differences between students who completed Evidence and those who did not. These differences may not be fully captured by observed covariates, even after applying covariate balancing and regression adjustment. Accordingly, the negative association should not be interpreted as evidence that completing the Evidence course reduces the likelihood of bar passage. Instead, it could be that students most at risk of failing the bar are encouraged to enroll in Evidence, while strong performance within the course reflects consolidation of bar-relevant reasoning skills.

Figures 2 and A.12 illustrate our course completion results. The forest plot in Figure A.12 shows the odds ratios and their corresponding 95% confidence intervals. Figure 2 presents predicted probabilities of bar passage associated with course completion for each of the seven courses. The relatively short distances between points indicate that differences in predicted probabilities between completers and non-completers are generally modest, with the exception of Evidence.

Figure 2 | Completing Individual Upper-Level Doctrinal Courses Has Relatively Small Effect on Predicted Probability of First-Time Bar Passage



Note: Predicted probabilities are estimated for students who did and did not complete each course, holding other covariates constant.

Among those who completed these courses, grades earned in each are positively and statistically significantly associated with first-time bar passage. As shown in Figure A.12, performance in Evidence exhibits the strongest association with bar passage ($OR = 2.7, p < 0.01$), whereas performance in Conflict of Laws exhibits the smallest association ($OR = 2.1, p < 0.01$).¹⁶ Figure 1 illustrates that increases in course grades are associated with substantively meaningful gains in predicted probability, substantially exceeding those associated with course completion alone.

Overall, these findings indicate that associations between course completion and bar passage are generally small, whereas associations between course performance and bar passage are consistently larger.

¹⁶ The relatively smaller effect for Conflict of Laws might reflect that it is only ever tested on the UBE as a sub-topic of an essay on the Multistate Essay Exam (MEE).

5.4 | Relative Magnitudes of Academic Performance and Coursework Exposure Effects

Figure 1 illustrates that academic performance in doctrinal courses has the strongest relative association with first-time bar passage. Although increased exposure to doctrinal and skills-based coursework is associated with higher bar passage probabilities, these effects are consistently outweighed by those associated with improvements in academic performance. The contrast between the large doctrinal GPA effects and the comparatively small effects of credit-hour and course-completion further underscores the relative importance of course performance over credit-hour accumulation.

The analyses reported here estimate average associations across students. Examining whether these relationships vary systematically by early academic performance represents an important direction for future research and would require analytic designs explicitly focused on differences in effects based on key student characteristics.

6 | Discussion

This study examined relationships among law school coursework, academic performance, and first-time bar passage using a large multi-institutional dataset and bias-reducing analytic strategies. Across all analyses, the results tell a consistent and theoretically coherent story: academic performance in doctrinal coursework — rather than completion of particular courses or the accumulation of credits — is the strongest and most consistent correlate of bar success. Coursework exposure is associated with first-time bar passage, but its effects remain comparatively modest.

6.1 | Doctrinal Performance as the Primary Pathway to Bar Success

The most robust finding concerns the magnitude and consistency of the association between doctrinal GPA and first-time bar passage. Both first-year GPA and overall doctrinal GPA exhibit large positive associations with bar passage, far exceeding the associations observed for any coursework-exposure measure. These results reinforce prior work emphasizing that grades function as indicators of mastery of bar-relevant knowledge and analytic reasoning, rather than serving solely as mechanisms of sorting or credentialing.

The slightly larger association observed for overall doctrinal GPA, relative to first-year GPA, is consistent with the possibility that continued doctrinal success reinforces bar-relevant learning over time. However, the modest practical difference between these measures suggests that upper-level doctrinal coursework primarily reinforces, rather than substantially redirects, the academic trajectory established during the first year.

These findings align closely with prior research emphasizing the mediating role of law school GPA in bar outcomes and extend that work by demonstrating that later doctrinal performance adds only limited incremental explanatory power beyond early academic performance.

6.2 | Coursework Exposure and Bar Passage: Modest Associations

In contrast to the relationships between doctrinal coursework performance and bar passage, associations between coursework exposure, measured by earned credit hours, and first-time bar passage are more modest. Greater exposure to doctrinal and skills-based coursework is positively associated with bar passage, whereas clinic-based and externship credits show little to no meaningful relationship. Importantly, these exposure effects are small in magnitude relative to those associated with GPA. Taken together, the results suggest that coursework exposure captures opportunity structures and curricular pathways, rather than serving as a direct lever for improving bar outcomes.

The limited associations observed for experiential coursework should not be read as evidence that such courses lack educational value. Rather, they indicate that experiential credits do not translate directly into higher bar passage probabilities in the same way that doctrinal mastery does. This pattern is consistent with the current structure of the legacy UBE, where 50% of a bar taker's score is derived from performance on the MBE. As jurisdictions transition to the NextGen UBE, these relationships may evolve to the extent that the new exam format places greater emphasis on skills and applied competencies.

6.3 | Upper-Level Doctrinal Course: Mastery Over Completion

The course-level analyses further reinforce the primacy of mastery over exposure. Except for Evidence, completion of specific upper-level doctrinal courses is generally unrelated to first-time bar passage. Differences in predicted probabilities between students who complete a given course and those who do not are small, indicating that no single course meaningfully “moves the needle” on its own.

By contrast, performance within these courses is strongly and consistently associated with bar success. Among students who complete a course, higher grades are associated with substantial increases in the likelihood of first-time bar passage across all subjects examined. These effects are uniform in direction and similar in magnitude, underscoring that mere completion of upper-level doctrinal courses is not, on average, a direct lever for increasing likelihood of bar passage.

This pattern parallels prior research, which consistently finds that academic performance outperforms additional bar-tested coursework as a predictor of bar passage.¹⁷ Some authors also highlight equity concerns associated with targeted coursework requirements, noting that rigid curricular mandates can restrict electives and unintentionally stigmatize students who are already academically vulnerable.¹⁸ Other research points to alternative approaches — such as embedding bar-related skills within doctrinal instruction and providing targeted, individualized support — that show greater promise for addressing underlying competencies linked to bar success.¹⁹ These conclusions align with our results, which indicate that mastery, rather than mere exposure, is the central determinant of first-time bar passage.

These findings also raise questions about how institutions respond to early signals of academic difficulty. Students who perform poorly during the first year may be directed toward interventions that emphasize bar exam content, test formats, or course selection designed to mirror the structure of the exam. Although this may be a helpful strategy to prepare students for the bar exam, the patterns observed in our findings suggest that the primary pathway to improved bar outcomes operates through academic performance, particularly in doctrinal coursework. From this perspective, ongoing academic support that develops core competencies — such as reading comprehension, legal analysis, and writing — may be more closely aligned with the mechanisms linking coursework to bar success. Strengthening these underlying skills could support improved performance across doctrinal courses and, in turn, enhance bar preparedness, particularly given the NextGen UBE’s testing focus on foundational lawyering skills. While our results cannot directly evaluate specific intervention strategies, they point to the importance of sustained development of foundational competencies rather than early shifts toward bar-focused content alone. Both ongoing academic support and bar preparation are integral to student success, but the point we emphasize is these are two distinct interventions with two distinct intended outcomes. Academic support, if tuned appropriately, should improve content mastery, and therefore improve bar readiness.

This interpretation is consistent with patterns observed in the course-level analyses. As discussed above, the course Evidence stands out both for its negative association with course completion and for the strength of its positive performance effect among completers. Taken together, this pattern is most consistent with course selection processes rather than a penalty for course completion. Students may be disproportionately encouraged to enroll in Evidence in response to early academic signals or institutional advising aimed at bar preparation, while strong

¹⁷ See, e.g., Amy N. Farley, et al., *supra* note 8, at 622–23.

¹⁸ See Mario W. Mainero, *supra* note 5, at 545–56; Russell A. McClain, *Helping Our Students Reach Their Full Potential: The Insidious Consequences of Ignoring Stereotype Threat*, 17 RUTGERS RACE & L. REV. 1, 15–18 (2016); Catherine Martin Christopher, *Eye of the Beholder: How Perception Management Can Counter Stereotype Threat Among Struggling Law Students*, 53 DUQ. L. REV. 163, 171 (2015).

¹⁹ See Berman, *supra* note 11, at 152–53; Catherine Martin Christopher, *Normalizing Struggle*, 73 ARK. L. REV. 27, 53–63 (2020).

performance within the course reflects consolidation of bar-relevant reasoning skills. This combination highlights the limits of interpreting course-completion effects in isolation and reinforces the importance of performance-based measures.

Collectively, these findings underscore that upper-level doctrinal courses primarily function to deepen students' grasp of substantive bar-tested material, rather than serve as remedial resources for bar exam preparation.

6.4 | Limitations

Several limitations warrant consideration. First, despite the use of regression adjustment and doubly robust methods, the analyses rely on observational data and cannot fully eliminate the possibility of unobserved confounding variables. Factors such as motivation, study strategies, or access to informal academic support may influence both academic performance and bar outcomes. Although the consistency and magnitude of the GPA effects make it unlikely that the results are driven entirely by omitted variables, interpretations should remain cautious.

Second, course-level analyses are limited to a subset of institutions with detailed transcript data. Although the analytic subsample resembles national patterns on key characteristics, results may not generalize uniformly across all law schools, particularly those with different curricular structures or grading regimes. That said, the convergence of findings across multiple analytic approaches strengthens confidence in the core conclusions.

Finally, GPA is an imperfect measure of learning. Grades reflect not only mastery but also assessment design, grading norms, and institutional context. Standardization mitigates some of these concerns, but future research would benefit from more direct measures of learning and bar-relevant competencies.

6.5 | Implications for Practice and Future Research

For legal educators, these findings suggest that efforts to improve bar passage may be best realized by supporting students' ability to succeed academically in the courses they take rather than mandating particular courses. Academic support strategies that enhance doctrinal understanding and analytic skills — particularly in required and upper-level doctrinal courses — might yield greater bar success returns than curricular reallocation alone. Furthermore, to the extent that early academic difficulty reflects gaps in foundational competencies, strategies that emphasize continued development of core analytic and writing skills may be more aligned with the drivers of bar success than those focused primarily on bar-style content or course selection. Advising practices might therefore be enhanced by emphasizing learning quality and performance, rather than credit accumulation, as pathways to bar success.

For researchers, the results point to the need for more nuanced inquiry into the mechanisms underlying academic performance gains, including pedagogical practices, formative assessment,

and feedback. Longitudinal designs and mixed-methods approaches could further illuminate how learning accumulates over time and how institutions can best support students along that trajectory. Future research should also examine heterogeneity in these associations, exploring whether coursework and performance effects vary across students with different academic trajectories or institutional contexts. Such an exploration could offer insight into whether some students benefit more or less from completing a particular course or additional exposure to doctrinal, experiential, or skills-based coursework.

In sum, the results reinforce a central conclusion of this study: bar success is driven primarily by learning, not exposure. Coursework matters most when it deepens understanding and strengthens analytic reasoning, highlighting the importance of instructional quality and academic support throughout the law school curriculum.

7 | Conclusion

This study offers new empirical evidence on how law school coursework and academic performance relate to first-time bar passage. It finds that first-time bar passage is primarily driven by academic performance in doctrinal coursework, rather than the accumulation or completion of specific courses. Across institutions and analytic approaches, doctrinal GPA exhibits the largest and most consistent association with bar success, while measures of coursework exposure — such as credit hours earned or completion of individual courses — are comparatively weak predictors.

While exposure to doctrinal and skills-based coursework is positively related to bar passage, these associations are modest in magnitude and substantially weaker than those associated with GPA. At the course level, completion of individual upper-level doctrinal courses generally has little relationship to bar outcomes, whereas performance within those courses is strongly and consistently associated with first-time passage. Taken together, the findings suggest that coursework matters most insofar as it supports the development and demonstration of doctrinal mastery and analytic reasoning.

For researchers, these results point to the need for deeper inquiry into the mechanisms underlying academic performance gains, including pedagogy, formative assessment, and feedback. Longitudinal designs and mixed-methods approaches could further illuminate how learning accumulates over time and how institutions can best support students along that trajectory. Future research should also examine heterogeneity in these associations across students with different academic histories or institutional contexts. As jurisdictions transition to the NextGen UBE, which emphasizes applied skills and integrated assessment, these relationships may shift, requiring renewed empirical attention to whether performance and coursework play similar roles under the new exam format.

For legal educators, the results underscore the importance of prioritizing instructional quality, academic support, and assessment practices that promote deep learning within doctrinal courses. Efforts focused solely on expanding course offerings, or mandating additional content coverage

or credits, are unlikely to yield the same returns as strategies that help students succeed academically in the courses they take. Overall, this study reinforces a central insight: bar success is driven by learning, not exposure. Curricular strategies matter most when they deepen students' mastery of bar-relevant legal knowledge and skills.

Appendix

Table A.1 | Summary Statistics

	Obs.	Mean	Median	St. Dev.	Min.	Max.
<i>Full Sample (N = 13,039)</i>						
Doctrinal GPA	12,894	3.09	3.11	0.45	1.00	4.33
1L GPA	12,659	3.06	3.09	0.48	1.45	4.24
Upper-Level Doctrinal GPA	4,812	3.13	3.16	0.48	1.44	4.21
Business Associations GPA	3,497	3.14	3.30	0.63	0.67	4.33
Conflict of Laws GPA	772	3.11	3.00	0.67	0.67	4.33
Criminal Procedure GPA	4,285	3.00	3.00	0.60	0.84	4.33
Evidence GPA	4,502	3.01	3.00	0.68	0.67	4.33
Family Law GPA	2,566	3.15	3.33	0.66	0.67	4.33
Secured Transactions GPA	1,903	3.07	3.00	0.68	1.00	4.33
Trusts and Estates GPA	3,971	3.00	3.00	0.64	0.00	4.33
Doctrinal Credits	13,039	46.99	48	9.41	25	94
Skills-based Credits	8,443	3.04	3	2.78	0	17
Clinic-based Credits	10,795	3.60	3	4.02	0	26
Externship Credits	11,800	3.93	3	4.00	0	25
<i>Sub-Sample (N = 3,674)</i>						
Doctrinal GPA	3,674	2.95	2.95	0.46	1.73	4.13
1L GPA	3,551	2.89	2.89	0.49	1.51	4.21
Upper-Level Doctrinal GPA	3,668	3.11	3.13	0.48	1.50	4.21
Business Associations GPA	2,565	3.13	3.17	0.64	0.67	4.33
Conflict of Laws GPA	664	3.10	3.00	0.67	0.67	4.33
Criminal Procedure GPA	3,196	3.00	3.00	0.61	0.84	4.33
Evidence GPA	3,369	2.99	3.00	0.68	0.67	4.33
Family Law GPA	1,938	3.13	3.30	0.67	0.67	4.33
Secured Transactions GPA	1,645	3.08	3.00	0.69	1.00	4.33
Trusts and Estates GPA	2,909	3.01	3.00	0.63	0.00	4.33
Doctrinal Credits	3,674	50.14	51	6.87	25	86
Skills-based Credits	2,906	3.75	3	2.48	0	10
Clinic-based Credits	2,647	3.58	3	3.53	0	18
Externship Credits	3,229	3.78	3	3.70	0	20

Table A.2 | Full Table of Effects of Coursework Exposure on First-Time Bar Passage Likelihood

	<i>Primary Predictor:</i>			
	Doctrinal Credit Hours (n = 9,448)	Skills-based Credit Hours (n = 6,171)	Clinic-based Credit Hours (n = 7,912)	Externship Credit Hours (n = 9,138)
Doctrinal Credit Hours	2.009*** (1.570, 2.771)			
Skills-based Credit Hours		1.360*** (1.208, 1.648)		
Clinic-based Credit Hours			0.177* (0.033, 0.538)	
Externship Credit Hours				-0.139*** (-0.200, -0.082)
1L GPA	9.284*** (8.785, 9.783)	8.879*** (8.341, 9.418)	8.946*** (8.408, 9.483)	8.928*** (8.441, 9.415)
Race: Black	-0.226 (-0.466, 0.014)	-0.424** (-0.702, -0.146)	-0.265* (-0.514, -0.016)	-0.343** (-0.578, -0.108)
Race: Hispanic	0.149 (-0.079, 0.377)	0.230 (-0.027, 0.488)	0.191 (-0.046, 0.428)	0.113 (-0.111, 0.337)
Race: White	0.521*** (0.339, 0.704)	0.415*** (0.206, 0.624)	0.512*** (0.321, 0.703)	0.439*** (0.258, 0.620)
Age at Matriculation	-1.431*** (-1.944, -0.917)	-1.601*** (-2.228, -0.973)	-1.496*** (-2.076, -0.917)	-1.219*** (-1.754, -0.683)
Gender: Male	0.153* (0.036, 0.269)	0.149* (0.013, 0.285)	0.153* (0.026, 0.280)	0.154* (0.037, 0.271)
UBE Jurisdiction: Yes	0.578*** (0.399, 0.757)	0.429*** (0.187, 0.671)	0.689*** (0.491, 0.886)	0.619*** (0.435, 0.803)
Bar Year: 2016	0.316* (0.013, 0.619)	0.398 (-0.069, 0.865)	0.245 (-0.080, 0.571)	0.247 (-0.073, 0.568)
Bar Year: 2017	0.098 (-0.195, 0.390)	0.163 (-0.287, 0.613)	0.039 (-0.276, 0.353)	0.101 (-0.212, 0.414)
Bar Year: 2018	0.184 (-0.103, 0.470)	0.172 (-0.257, 0.600)	0.055 (-0.259, 0.369)	0.161 (-0.145, 0.467)
Bar Year: 2019	0.003 (-0.287, 0.294)	-0.029 (-0.483, 0.426)	-0.132 (-0.450, 0.187)	-0.015 (-0.328, 0.299)
Bar Year: 2020	0.131 (-0.226, 0.489)	0.221 (-0.280, 0.722)	-0.149 (-0.533, 0.235)	0.178 (-0.189, 0.546)
Bar Year: 2021	-0.466** (-0.811, -0.122)	-0.213 (-0.691, 0.266)	-0.480* (-0.851, -0.109)	-0.316 (-0.669, 0.037)
Bar Year: 2022	-0.573** (-0.928, -0.217)	-0.760** (-1.246, -0.275)	-0.765*** (-1.147, -0.383)	-0.621*** (-0.981, -0.261)
Bar Year: 2023	-1.151 (-2.473, 0.172)	-0.260 (-0.872, 0.353)	-0.213 (-2.142, 1.716)	-0.080 (-0.684, 0.524)
Bar Month: July	0.316*** (0.013, 0.619)	0.528*** (0.266, 0.789)	0.410*** (0.190, 0.630)	0.410*** (0.207, 0.614)
Log Likelihood	-3,769.519	-2,725.899	-3,201.675	-3,742.705
Akaike Inf. Crit.	7,577.038	5,489.798	6,441.349	7,523.410
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	7,712.956	5,617.623	6,573.896	7,658.694

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001. Coefficients represent log odds.

Table A.3 | Full Table of Effects of Doctrinal Performance on First-Time Bar Passage Likelihood

	<i>Primary Predictor:</i>	
	Doctrinal GPA (n = 11,537)	1L Doctrinal GPA (n = 11,670)
Doctrinal GPA	1.761*** (1.682, 1.841)	
1L Doctrinal GPA		1.591*** (1.517, 1.666)
Race: Black	-0.193 (-0.412, 0.025)	-0.244* (-0.455, -0.033)
Race: Hispanic	0.109 (-0.094, 0.313)	0.105 (-0.094, 0.304)
Race: White	0.414*** (0.249, 0.579)	0.402*** (0.240, 0.563)
Gender: Male	0.146** (0.041, 0.251)	0.156* (0.054, 0.258)
Bar Year: 2015	0.782 (-0.811, 2.374)	1.197 (-0.323, 2.717)
Bar Year: 2016	1.094 (-0.497, 2.686)	1.507 (-0.012, 3.027)
Bar Year: 2017	1.005 (-0.583, 2.593)	1.411 (-0.104, 2.926)
Bar Year: 2018	1.006 (-0.578, 2.590)	1.394 (-0.118, 2.905)
Bar Year: 2019	1.048 (-0.536, 2.633)	1.498 (-0.014, 3.010)
Bar Year: 2020	1.206 (-0.391, 2.802)	1.618* (0.094, 3.141)
Bar Year: 2021	0.841 (-0.753, 2.436)	1.193 (-0.329, 2.714)
Bar Year: 2022	0.171 (-1.425, 1.766)	0.889 (-0.634, 2.412)
Bar Year: 2023	0.729 (-0.910, 2.369)	1.197 (-0.369, 2.764)
Bar Month: July	0.372*** (0.185, 0.560)	0.431*** (0.247, 0.614)
Log Likelihood	-4,616.989	-4,851.252
Akaike Inf. Crit.	9,267.977	9,736.504
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	9,392.984	9,861.705

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001. Coefficients represent log odds.

Table A.4 | Full Table of Effects of Upper-Level Doctrinal Course Completion on First-Time Bar Passage Likelihood

	<i>Primary Predictor:</i>						
	Business Associations Completion (n = 2,655)	Conflict of Laws Completion (n = 2,695)	Criminal Procedure Completion (n = 2,655)	Evidence Completion (n = 2,655)	Family Law Completion (n = 2,655)	Secured Transactions Completion (n = 2,655)	Trusts and Estates Completion (n = 2,655)
Business Associations	-0.052*** (-0.067, -0.037)						
Conflict of Laws		0.157* (0.012, 0.441)					
Criminal Procedure			0.024 (-0.031, 0.093)				
Evidence				-0.409*** (-0.668, -0.356)			
Family Law					0.020* (0.001, 0.087)		
Secured Transactions						0.150*** (0.123, 0.216)	
Trusts and Estates							0.015 (-0.052, 0.098)
1L GPA	1.508*** (1.382, 1.635)	1.389*** (1.000, 1.778)	1.547*** (1.437, 1.656)	1.561*** (1.455, 1.667)	1.476*** (1.341, 1.612)	1.425*** (1.275, 1.575)	1.492*** (1.381, 1.603)
Race: Black	0.049 (-0.311, 0.410)	-0.599 (-1.643, 0.445)	-0.543*** (-0.857, -0.229)	-0.403* (-0.710, -0.095)	-0.500* (-0.918, -0.082)	-0.617* (-1.137, -0.097)	-0.528** (-0.849, -0.206)
Race: Hispanic	0.532** (0.191, 0.873)	0.191 (-0.715, 1.098)	-0.520*** (-0.804, -0.236)	0.172 (-0.103, 0.447)	-0.011 (-0.399, 0.377)	-0.031 (-0.474, 0.412)	-0.201 (-0.493, 0.092)
Race: White	1.338*** (1.067, 1.608)	0.336 (-0.439, 1.111)	0.199 (-0.056, 0.455)	0.330** (0.088, 0.571)	0.404* (0.081, 0.727)	0.328 (-0.044, 0.701)	0.362** (0.114, 0.609)
Gender: Male	0.127 (-0.053, 0.307)	0.304 (-0.190, 0.798)	0.078 (-0.074, 0.230)	0.184* (0.038, 0.331)	0.148 (-0.046, 0.343)	0.184 (-0.035, 0.402)	-0.022 (-0.178, 0.135)
Age at Matriculation	-0.202*** (-0.287, -0.117)	-0.243* (-0.483, -0.003)	-0.089* (-0.163, -0.014)	-0.239*** (-0.313, -0.164)	-0.181*** (-0.277, -0.085)	-0.134* (-0.240, -0.028)	-0.187*** (-0.268, -0.106)
Bar Year: 2019	-0.268 (-0.617, 0.082)		-0.053 (-0.332, 0.227)	-0.304 (-0.643, 0.035)	0.010 (-0.318, 0.339)	-0.085 (-0.466, 0.297)	-0.061 (-0.361, 0.240)
Bar Year: 2020	-0.312		0.109	-0.283	0.139	0.009	-0.016

	(-0.674, 0.049)		(-0.166, 0.385)	(-0.639, 0.073)	(-0.207, 0.486)	(-0.388, 0.405)	(-0.314, 0.282)
Bar Year: 2021	-0.837***		-0.363**	-0.942***	-0.481**	-0.566**	-0.804***
	(-1.171, -0.504)		(-0.623, -0.104)	(-1.272, -0.613)	(-0.801, -0.160)	(-0.937, -0.195)	(-1.086, -0.521)
Bar Year: 2022	-0.984***		-0.521***	-0.908***	-0.602***	-0.765***	-0.798***
	(-1.314, -0.654)		(-0.783, -0.259)	(-1.234, -0.582)	(-0.931, -0.274)	(-1.140, -0.389)	(-1.088, -0.507)
Bar Month: July	0.650***	-0.087	0.496***	0.098	0.396**	0.489**	0.097
	(0.365, 0.935)	(-0.850, 0.676)	(0.261, 0.731)	(-0.129, 0.324)	(0.108, 0.684)	(0.153, 0.825)	(-0.152, 0.346)
UBE Jurisdiction:	0.599**		0.190	0.916***	0.240	0.193	0.522***
Yes	(0.233, 0.965)		(-0.093, 0.472)	(0.613, 1.219)	(-0.094, 0.575)	(-0.194, 0.580)	(0.213, 0.831)
Log Likelihood	-1,571.823	-214.659	-2,169.981	-2,258.510	-1,345.098	-1,023.426	-2,017.040
Akaike Inf. Crit.	3,173.645	449.319	4,369.962	4,547.019	2,720.197	2,076.853	4,064.080
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	3,261.908	508.311	4,458.225	4,635.282	2,808.460	2,165.116	4,152.343

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001. Coefficients represent log odds.

Table A.5 | Full Table of Effects of Upper-Level Doctrinal Course Performance on First-Time Bar Passage Likelihood

	<i>Primary Predictor:</i>						
	Business Associations (n = 1,766)	Conflict of Laws (n = 452)	Criminal Procedure (n = 2,335)	Evidence (n = 2,390)	Family Law (n = 1,428)	Secured Transactions (n = 1,141)	Trusts and Estates (n = 2,168)
Business Associations	0.983*** (0.850, 1.116)						
Conflict of Laws		0.734*** (0.493, 0.974)					
Criminal Procedure			0.784*** (0.680, 0.888)				
Evidence				1.015*** (0.901, 1.130)			
Family Law					0.777*** (0.643, 0.912)		
Secured Transactions						0.925*** (0.771, 1.079)	
Trusts and Estates							0.860*** (0.745, 0.975)
Race: Black	-0.361 (-0.833, 0.111)	-0.935 (-1.907, 0.037)	-0.363 (-0.760, 0.033)	-0.609** (-1.030, -0.189)	-0.247 (-0.776, 0.281)	0.028 (-0.611, 0.667)	-0.362 (-0.770, 0.046)
Race: Hispanic	0.072 (-0.375, 0.519)	0.064 (-0.798, 0.925)	0.213 (-0.159, 0.584)	0.015 (-0.374, 0.405)	0.100 (-0.395, 0.595)	0.058 (-0.505, 0.621)	0.129 (-0.256, 0.514)
Race: White	0.746*** (0.386, 1.107)	0.137 (-0.588, 0.861)	0.609*** (0.299, 0.920)	0.447** (0.116, 0.778)	0.594** (0.184, 1.004)	0.654** (0.189, 1.119)	0.454** (0.133, 0.776)
Gender: Male	0.026 (-0.206, 0.258)	0.108 (-0.344, 0.560)	0.011 (-0.184, 0.206)	0.051 (-0.148, 0.251)	0.143 (-0.107, 0.394)	0.117 (-0.169, 0.402)	0.068 (-0.134, 0.270)
Bar Year: 2019	-0.088 (-0.484, 0.309)	-0.776 (-1.591, 0.040)	-0.303 (-0.653, 0.047)	-0.193 (-0.552, 0.165)	-0.117 (-0.571, 0.337)	0.017 (-0.503, 0.538)	-0.168 (-0.527, 0.190)
Bar Year: 2020	-0.023 (-0.436, 0.390)	-0.828 (-1.770, 0.114)	-0.146 (-0.514, 0.223)	-0.154 (-0.533, 0.224)	0.164 (-0.313, 0.642)	-0.155 (-0.666, 0.356)	-0.101 (-0.493, 0.291)
Bar Year: 2021	-0.245 (-0.648, 0.158)	-0.730 (-1.695, 0.236)	-0.742*** (-1.093, -0.390)	-0.868*** (-1.253, -0.482)	-0.752*** (-1.195, -0.310)	-0.845*** (-1.342, -0.347)	-0.569** (-0.940, -0.199)
Bar Year: 2022	-0.893*** (-1.290, -0.496)	-1.087* (-2.045, -0.128)	-0.913*** (-1.266, -0.560)	-0.845*** (-1.222, -0.468)	-0.647** (-1.065, -0.228)	-0.793** (-1.287, -0.299)	-0.853*** (-1.220, -0.486)

Bar Month: July	0.680*** (0.323, 1.037)	0.029 (-0.705, 0.763)	0.543*** (0.248, 0.838)	0.543*** (0.232, 0.853)	0.439* (0.055, 0.824)	0.491 (-0.003, 0.986)	0.628*** (0.322, 0.933)
UBE Jurisdiction: Yes	0.493** (0.123, 0.863)	-0.024 (-0.666, 0.617)	0.630** (0.230, 1.030)	0.242 (-0.291, 0.776)	0.111 (-0.254, 0.477)	-0.152 (-0.471, 0.166)	0.226 (-0.248, 0.701)
Log Likelihood	-892.318	-243.606	-1,263.633	-1,222.039	-792.733	-592.009	-1,171.116
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,810.637	513.211	2,553.267	2,470.078	1,611.466	1,210.019	2,368.233
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	1,881.831	566.689	2,628.092	2,545.206	1,679.898	1,275.534	1,442.093

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001. Coefficients represent log odds.

Figure A.1 | Covariate Balance for Doctrinal Credit Hours

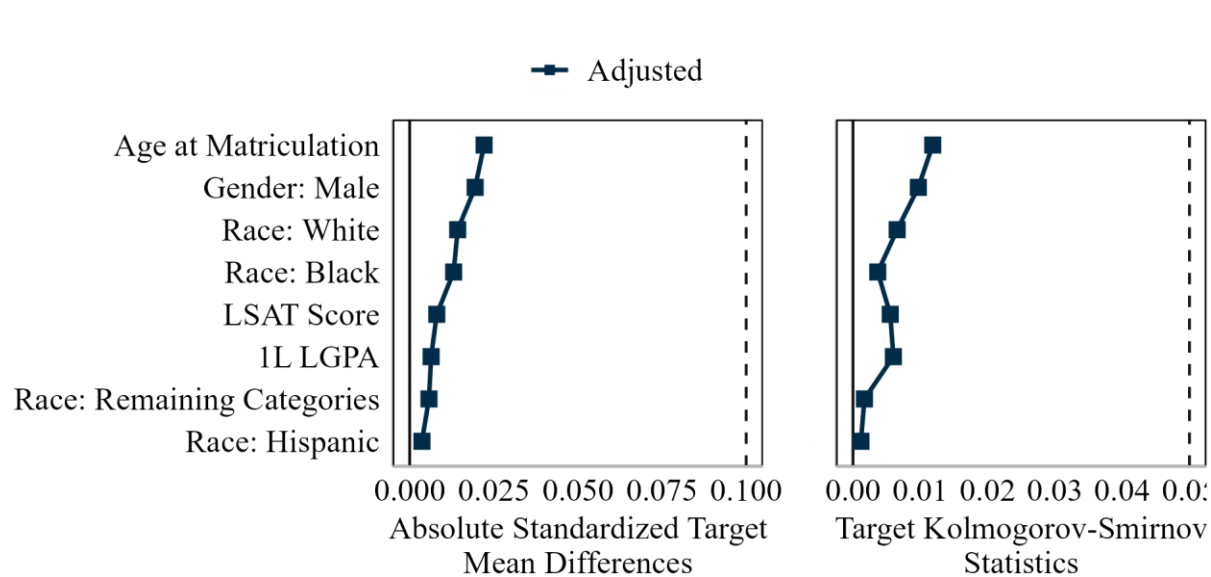


Figure A.2 | Covariate Balance for Clinic Credit Hours

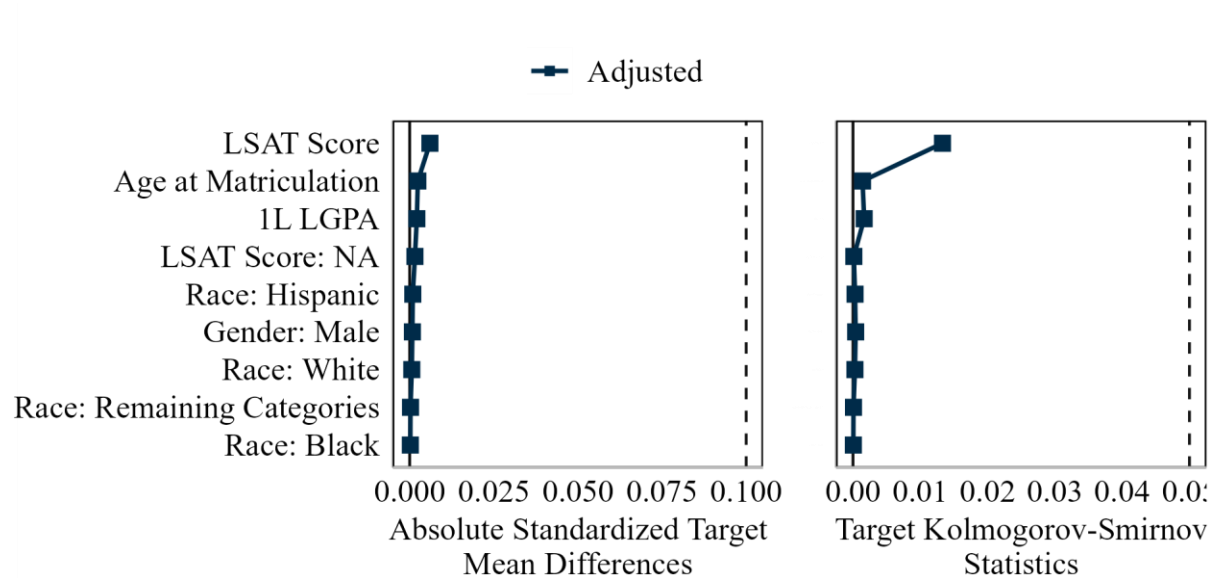


Figure A.3 | Covariate Balance for Externship Credit Hours

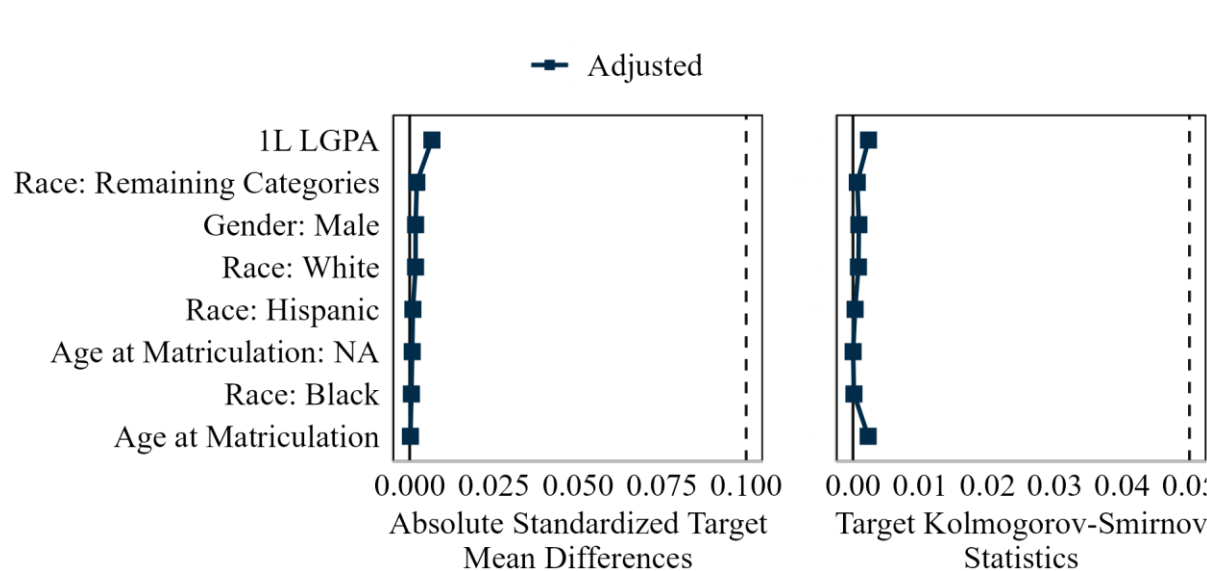


Figure A.4 | Covariate Balance for Skills-Based Credit Hours

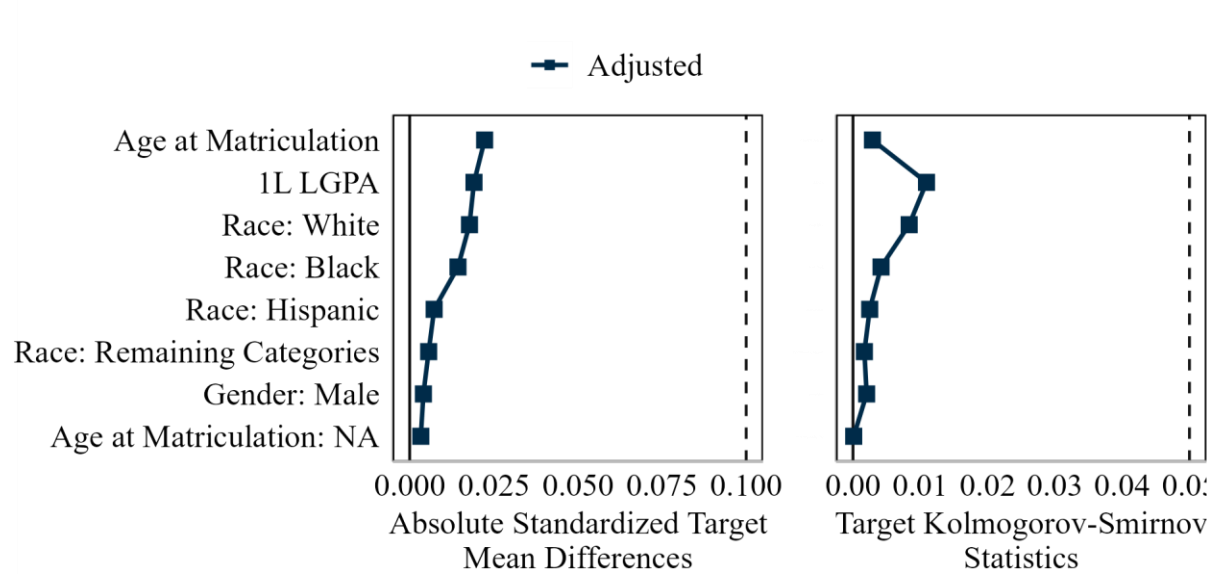


Figure A.5 | Covariate Balance for Completing Business Associations

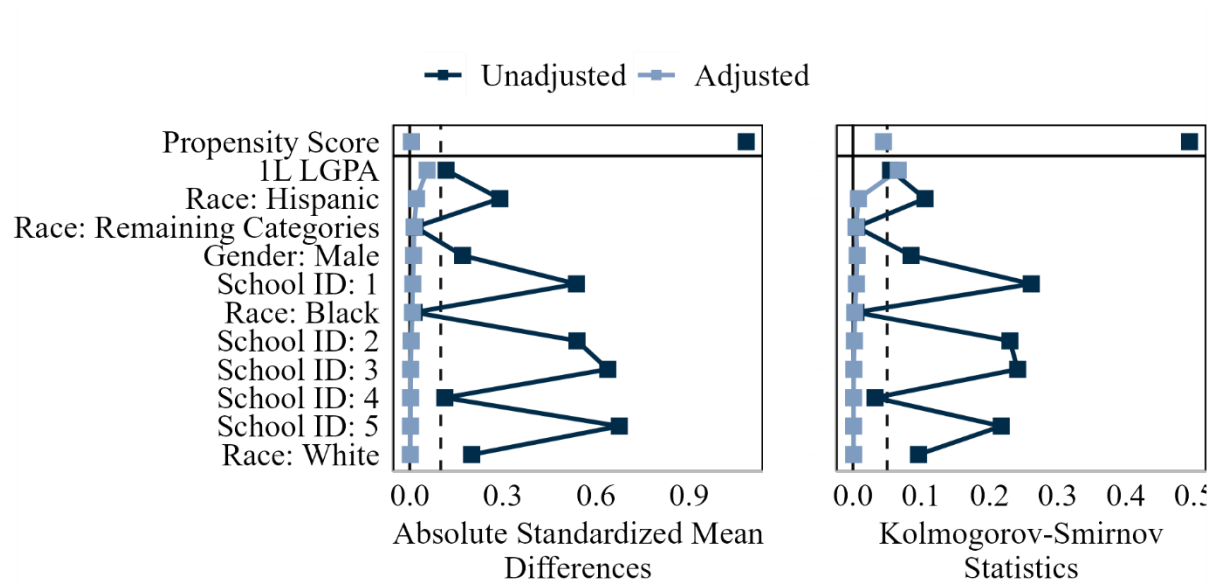


Figure A.6 | Covariate Balance for Completing Conflict of Laws

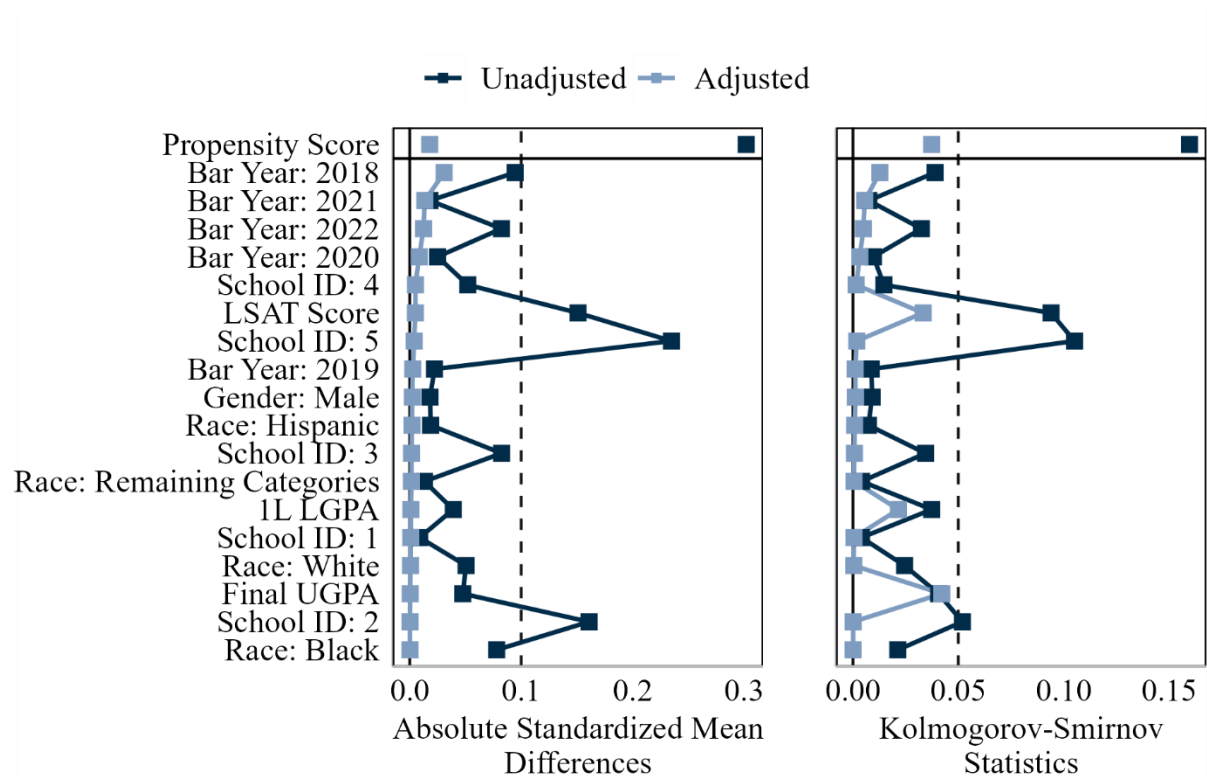


Figure A.7 | Covariate Balance for Completing Criminal Procedure

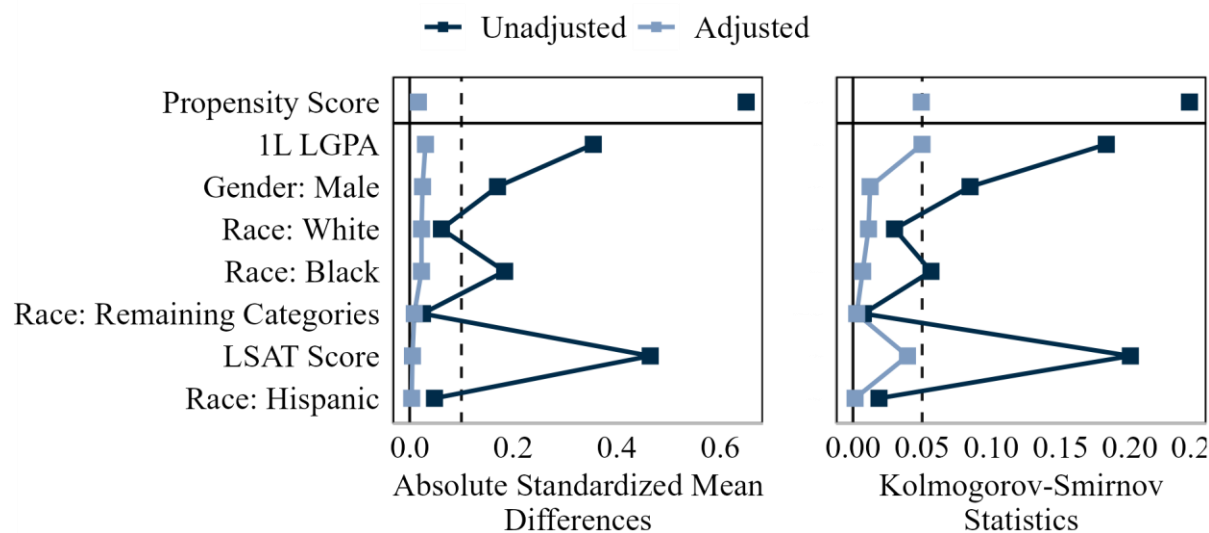


Figure A.8 | Covariate Balance for Completing Evidence

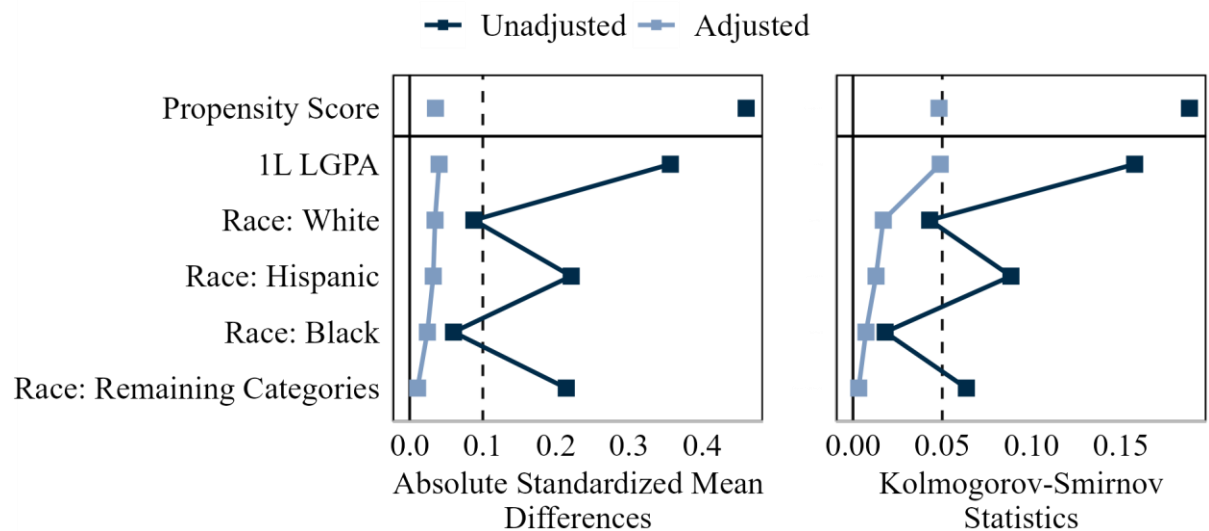


Figure A.9 | Covariate Balance for Completing Family Law

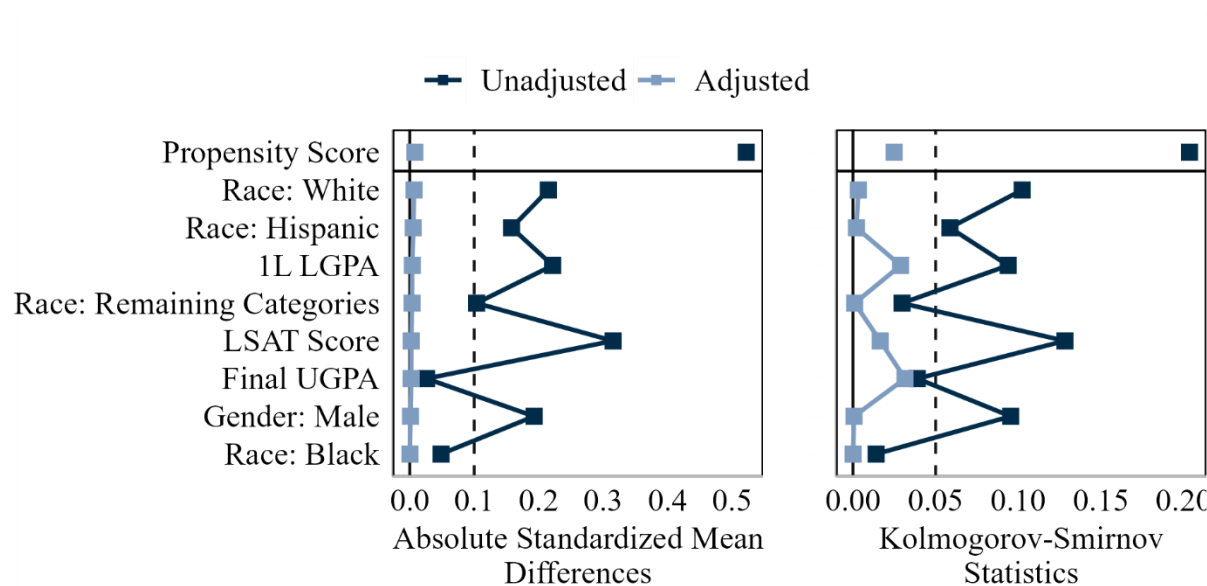


Figure A.10 | Covariate Balance for Completing Secured Transactions

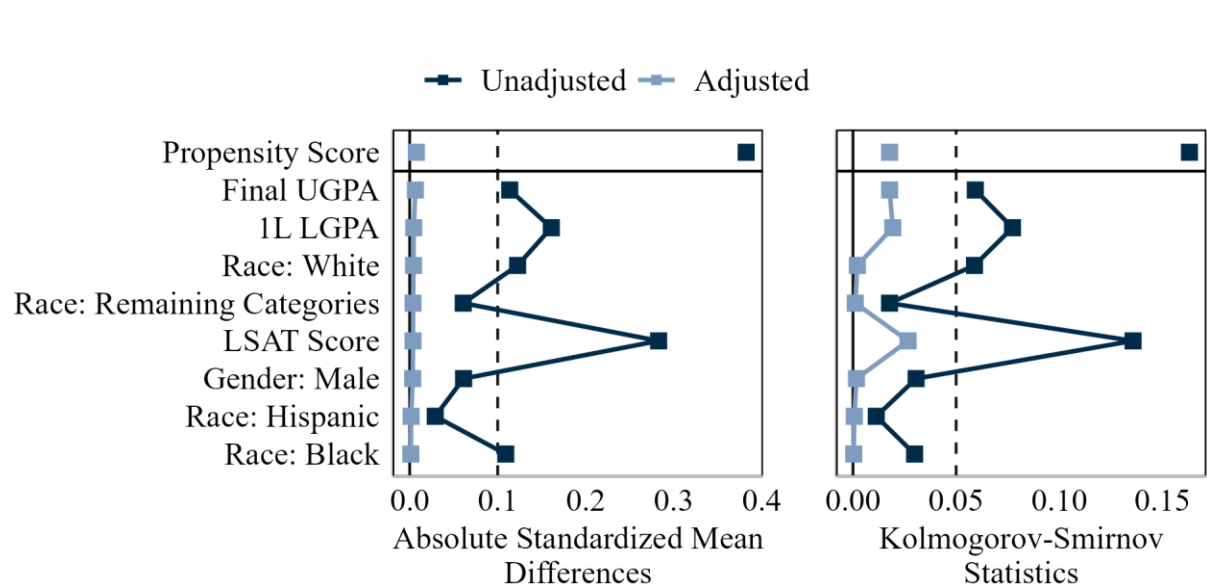


Figure A.11 | Covariate Balance for Completing Trusts and Estates

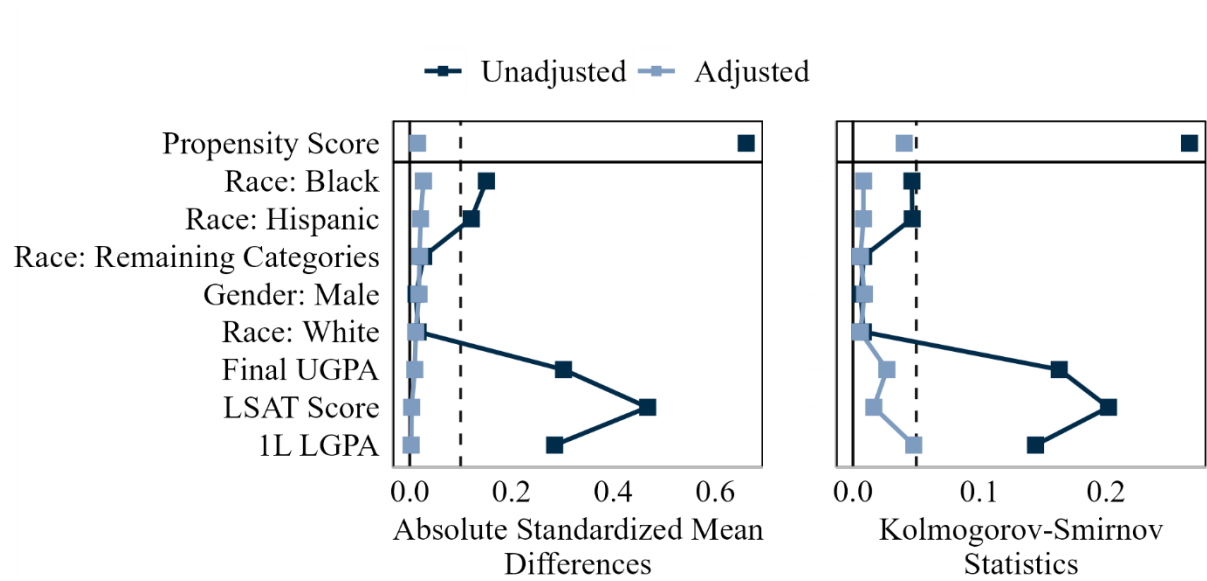
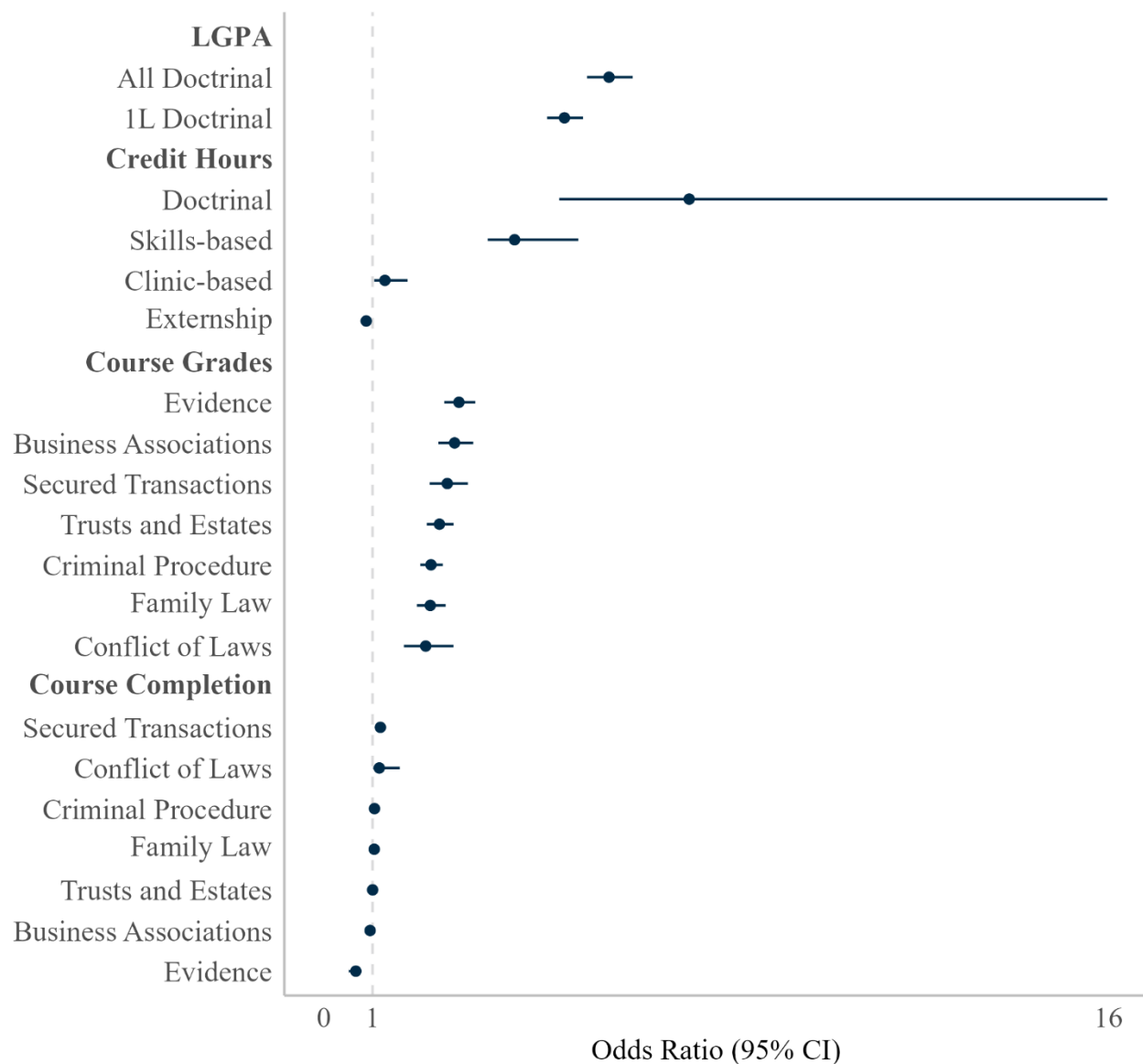


Figure A.12 | Odds Ratios and Confidence Intervals for GPA, Credit Hours, Course Grades, and Course Completion Measures



Note: Odds ratios represent the predicted change in bar passage probability associated with a one-standard-deviation increase in the predictor variable (GPA and course grades) an increase from the observed minimum to the observed maximum (credit hours), and completing a course (course completion). The dashed line at OR = 1 represents the line of no effect, or the odds ratio associated with no change in the outcome variable. Confidence intervals for credit hour and course completion measures are bootstrapped.