



MBLEx

# Massage & Bodywork Licensing Examination

Candidate Handbook

**Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards**

fsmtb.org • *Effective July 2018*



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**Candidate Handbook | Effective July 2018**

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**Federation of State Massage  
Therapy Boards**

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# Introduction

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## About this Handbook

This Handbook serves as the principal source of information for those applying to take the Massage & Bodywork Licensing Examination (MBLEx). Since every situation and every applicable rule cannot be cited in a document like this, other Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards (FSMTB) policies, practices and instructions may also apply.

This Handbook provides the information you will need about eligibility requirements, application procedures, fees, examination scheduling, examination content and scoring. You are advised to periodically check our website, [fsmtb.org](http://fsmtb.org), for any changes to FSMTB policies, requirements or forms that may be made after this Handbook is published. Although FSMTB gives applicants and candidates as much advance notice as possible when policies and procedures change, it is always your responsibility to make sure that you are fully informed about the current requirements and policies.

You should also consult [fsmtb.org](http://fsmtb.org) to learn about any updates that may be introduced regarding eligibility, exam administrations, exam content or other policies.

The policies and procedures in this Handbook may be modified, amended or cancelled by FSMTB at any time, with or without notice.

This edition of the Handbook supersedes all prior policies or procedures as to the subjects addressed in it and all representations, oral or written.

**The FSMTB requires all MBLEx candidates to carefully read, understand and abide by all policies presented in this handbook prior to application submission.**

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## About the MBLEx

As part of fulfilling our mission, the FSMTB maintains the Massage & Bodywork Licensing Examination (MBLEx), the profession's sole licensing examination. The MBLEx provides unified, nationally-verified, entry-level standards for safe and competent practice of massage/bodywork.

The first MBLEx was administered in July 2007 during the Pilot Testing phase of development. The examination was developed with the help of leading massage/bodywork professionals throughout the nation. During this development period, the FSMTB followed national guidelines for testing in order to ensure a fair, valid and reliable examination. The first administration of the MBLEx was a milestone event in the massage/bodywork profession in the United States.

To ensure the examination continues to reflect current practice, a [Job Task Analysis \(JTA\) Survey](#) is conducted every five to seven years under the guidance of testing and psychometric experts. The JTA is further validated by input from massage, bodywork and somatic professionals representing every state in the U.S.

The MBLEx is administered by Pearson VUE, the global leader in electronic testing services, at authorized high-security test centers located throughout all 50 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. territories.

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## About FSMTB

The FSMTB is a fully autonomous, non-profit organization established in 2005. It operates under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. All revenue collected by the organization is used to enhance FSMTB programs, improve the quality of its examinations and services and provide support to its Member Boards in fulfilling their responsibility of protecting the public.

FSMTB is governed by a seven-member Board of Directors, who are voted into office by general election at the FSMTB Annual Meeting. Board of Directors nominees are selected by the Nominating Committee. In making nominations, the committee considers diversity in ethnicity, gender, geographic distribution and professional experience.

Our mission is to support our Member Boards in their work to ensure that the practice of massage therapy is provided to the public in a safe and effective manner. In carrying out this mission, FSMTB:

- Facilitates communication among Member Boards and provides a forum for the exchange of information and experience.
- Provides education, services and guidance to Member Boards that help them fulfill their statutory, professional, public, and ethical obligations.
- Supports efforts among Member Boards to establish compatible requirements and cooperative procedures for the legal regulation of massage therapists, in order to facilitate professional mobility and to simplify and standardize the licensing process.
- Ensures the provision of a valid and reliable licensing examination to determine entry-level competence.
- Improves the standards of massage therapy education, licensure, and practice through cooperation with entities that share this objective, including other massage therapy organizations, accrediting agencies, governmental bodies and groups whose areas of interest may coincide with those of Member Boards.
- Represents the interests of its Member Boards in matters consistent with the scope of the Bylaws.

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## Contact Us

If you are unsure about an examination policy or procedure, please contact FSMTB at [mblex@fsmtb.org](mailto:mblex@fsmtb.org) or call the dedicated MBLEx toll-free number 1.866.9MB.EXAM (1.866.962.3926).

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## Contacting You

FSMTB's primary mechanism of communication with you will be via email. If you do not have an email address, FSMTB will communicate with you via U.S. mail, which may result in delays in communication. In the interest of expediency, FSMTB recommends that you utilize an email address in the examination process. Such delays will not extend timeframes or deadlines. It is your responsibility to keep FSMTB apprised of your current email address and mailing address.

If your name changes, please submit the [Change of Contact Information Form](#) available on [fsmtb.org](http://fsmtb.org) along with the appropriate supporting documentation, such as a marriage certificate, divorce decree or court documents that demonstrate a legal name change.

Once completed, you may email the Change of Contact Information Form to [mblex@fsmtb.org](mailto:mblex@fsmtb.org).

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## Privacy

For security reasons, before any information is released over the phone, the caller will be asked for identifying information. You may be asked to provide, for example, your date of birth or your address. This security

feature helps FSMTB protect your personal information from being inappropriately released. Examination results are never released over the phone.

For more information, please read our [Privacy Policy](#), which can be found on fsmtb.org.

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## Confidentiality Policy

The FSMTB respects the privacy of all examination applicants and candidates. All materials submitted or received in connection with applications and all examination results are held in confidence and are not disclosed except upon written permission from the applicant or candidate, upon appropriate request from governmental licensing bodies or as required by law. FSMTB will not communicate with a third-party such as your school, parent, spouse or friend regarding your examination result or examination experience without your express consent.

If you would like to designate a third party to discuss your confidential file and related details with FSMTB, please complete the Agent Designation Form available on fsmtb.org.

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## Non-Discrimination Policy

The FSMTB does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, gender, sexual orientation, political or religious beliefs, disability, marital or familial status, ancestry, national origin nor any other category that is protected by federal law or applicable laws and regulations.

# The MBLEx Process

## 1 Application

Applicant may apply online or by mail. Applicant must request that her/his school provide education records to FSMTB.

## 2 Processing

FSMTB receives application, payment and education record. FSMTB processes the completed application within five business days.

## 3 Authorization to Test

FSMTB sends ATT via email. Candidate must test within 90 days.

## 4 Schedule MBLEx

Candidate may schedule online or call toll-free, selecting date, time and location.

## 5 Confirmation

Appointment confirmation is sent to the candidate via email.

## 6 Take MBLEx

Candidate receives unofficial result at test center. FSMTB sends result to designated state board or agency within 24 hours.

**Apply**

# Application Process

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## Regulation of Massage/Bodywork Therapy in the United States

Currently, 49 states and territories in the United States regulate the practice of massage therapy. State law dictates the scope of practice and requirements for licensure. Laws and regulations vary widely between states, so be sure that you understand your state's requirements for practice and licensure prior to applying for the MBLEx. To find information about contacting your state's regulatory board or agency, [please visit fsmtb.org](https://www.fsmtb.org).

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## MBLEx Eligibility

Before you submit an application to take the MBLEx, you must make sure that you meet the criteria for eligibility.

To be deemed eligible to take the MBLEx by FSMTB, you must meet all of the following requirements:

- Submit a complete MBLEx Application;
- Request and ensure your approved massage therapy education program submits education records directly to FSMTB;
- Acknowledge and agree in writing to abide by FSMTB policies;
- Verify that you have reviewed the [MBLEx Content Outline](#) and have education and training in the content areas; and
- Pay the required fee.

For applicants who are unable to meet the requirements for eligibility as outlined above, please contact FSMTB at [mblex@fsmtb.org](mailto:mblex@fsmtb.org).

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## Education Records

In addition to submitting a completed MBLEx application and examination fee, an MBLEx applicant must request that their school send their education record, e.g., transcript, to FSMTB via the Education Record Center (ERC). Education records sent by applicants will not be accepted.

If your school is closed, please contact FSMTB for guidance about your education record.

**Please note that MBLEx applicants do not need to graduate from a massage therapy education program prior to applying for the MBLEx.**

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## Massage Education Policy

Applicants seeking access to the MBLEx will be required to substantiate either:

- a. enrollment in and having received education and training in all subject areas of the MBLEx Content Outline from an approved massage therapy education program; or
- b. graduation from an approved massage therapy education program.

Substantiation documentation must be submitted to FSMTB directly from the education program.

An approved massage therapy education program is one that is approved or recognized by the state board or agency authorized to regulate massage therapy in the state in which the school is located.

In the event the massage therapy board/agency does not approve or recognize education programs, approval or recognition from the relevant state department of education or like agency, in the state in which the school is located, shall apply. In the event of a conflict between the state board/agency and department of education, the approval or recognition of the massage therapy board/agency shall prevail.

In the event the massage therapy board/agency does not approve or recognize education programs, and there is no approval or recognition from the relevant state department of education or like agency, in the state in which the school is located, the massage therapy education program must obtain approval from FSMTB.

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## Apprenticeship

If you received your massage education by completing an apprenticeship, check with the state licensing board or agency to verify that it will consider your education acceptable for licensing BEFORE you apply to take the MBLEx.

In addition to submitting an MBLEx application, MBLEx applicants who apprenticed will be required to have their mentor submit education records, verifying that the applicant has met the FSMTB education requirements for taking the MBLEx.

The MBLEx applicant who apprenticed must apply for licensure through their state licensing board or agency BEFORE being approved to take the MBLEx.

In such cases, FSMTB will verify with the state licensing board or agency that the state is in possession of the individual's licensing application before the applicant will be approved to take the MBLEx.

Remember that passing the MBLEx does NOT guarantee that your state licensing board or agency will issue you a license. Passing the MBLEx is only one component of licensure requirements.

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## International Education

If you received your massage education outside of the United States, an independent equivalency evaluation of your massage therapy education and training is required. Please check with [your state's individual requirements](#), as some states require a particular agency to conduct the evaluation. Further information about education review procedures can be found on [fsmtb.org](http://fsmtb.org).

Please note that FSMTB requires all evaluation documents to be in English.

The MBLEx applicant who was educated internationally must apply for licensure through their state licensing board or agency BEFORE being approved to take the MBLEx.

Remember that passing the MBLEx does NOT guarantee that your state licensing board or agency will issue you a license. Passing the MBLEx is only one component of licensure requirements.

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## Fees

The MBLEx fee is \$195. All fees must be paid in U.S. (\$) funds by credit card, certified check or money order. Checks should be made payable to FSMTB. Personal checks are not accepted. Fees are due at the time of application submission. MBLEx application fees are not refundable; in part or in full.

Candidates who apply to retake the MBLEx must apply as a new applicant, inclusive of fees in effect at that time.

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## Exam Language

The FSMTB offers the MBLEx in English and Spanish. Examination language is chosen by the candidate when completing the application.

Please note that the language you use on the MBLEx will be included in the exam result report that is sent to your state licensing board upon completion of the exam. Some states have requirements regarding the language of examinations. To view your state's requirements, please select your state from the [Regulated States](#) page on fsmtb.org.

**The [MBLEx Testing Accommodations Handbook](#) and request form are available on fsmtb.org. Please review these items for details about how to request testing accommodations.**

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## Testing Accommodations

The FSMTB complies with federal laws regarding the Americans with Disabilities Acts. FSMTB will accept requests, from qualified candidates with a diagnosed disability, for accommodations to take the MBLEx if the request is reasonable, properly documented and does not fundamentally alter the examination or jeopardize exam security.

Individuals who wish to request testing accommodations must also notify the FSMTB at the time of MBLEx application submission by selecting the accommodations box on the application. In conjunction with the MBLEx application, the applicant must submit an ADA Accommodations Request Form and documentation of any applicable diagnosis. For more information, please read the [MBLEx Testing Accommodations Handbook](#) on fsmtb.org.

If you require accommodations in the application process itself, please contact FSMTB for assistance.

There are no additional fees assessed to the exam candidate for testing accommodations. Candidates may request the same or different accommodations if retaking the examination.

Candidates who have been granted testing accommodations will receive an approval letter. You must sign and return the approval letter to FSMTB, accepting the accommodations granted, in order to receive your Authorization to Test (ATT). You must bring the accommodations approval letter to the test center and present it at check-in. Accommodations cannot be requested at the test center.

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## How to Apply for the MBLEx

Applicants can apply for the MBLEx either online or by mail. [Printable applications](#) can be accessed on fsmtb.org.

To complete the online application, please click the MBLEx tab on fsmtb.org and click [Apply for the MBLEx](#).

A complete MBLEx application consists of a completed application form, the MBLEx fee and the applicant's education record, which the applicant's school must send to FSMTB.

### Clocks and Calendars

**2 hours**

the time you will have to complete the MBLEx



**5 business days**

how long your completed application will take to process

**6 months**

amount of time your incomplete MBLEx application will remain valid



**90 days**

how many days you have to test once your ATT is issued

Be sure that the name that you submit on your MBLEx application matches the name on the two pieces of identification that you will bring to the test center. Further details about identification requirements can be found in the [Required Identification](#) section of this handbook.

Upon submission of your MBLEx application, you will receive a confirmation email from FSMTB. Completed applications are processed within five business days.

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## Signature and Acknowledgement

Your signature on your MBLEx application or submission of your electronic application means that you understand and agree to certain conditions as part of your application. Specifically:

1. You acknowledge and agree to abide by all FSMTB examination policies and procedures, including the consequences of noncompliance.
2. You attest that you personally completed the application and the information contained in the application or in connection with your application is true and accurate. If it is determined by FSMTB that any information provided to FSMTB regarding your application is not true, falsified or inaccurate, your application may be denied or your exam result may be invalidated.
3. You authorize FSMTB to obtain additional information about your qualifications and application for testing.
4. You acknowledge and agree that you are prohibited from transmitting information about FSMTB examination questions or content by any means (oral, written, electronic or otherwise)

in whole or in part. You understand that failure to comply with this prohibition or failure to report any information about suspected violations of such prohibitions, or otherwise, about any possible cheating by yourself or others, can result not only in a denial to release examination results, invalidations of examination results, suspension from access to the MBLEx and other FSMTB programs and services, but also in possible legal action against you, including criminal prosecution.

FSMTB provides a [video explaining examination security](#) which can be viewed on fsmtb.org. All candidates are advised to access the video prior to taking the examination.

# Application Review

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## Application Approval

Submission of an application does not guarantee your eligibility to take the MBLEx. Once your application and all required documentation is received, please allow five business days for FSMTB to process your payment and review your application. The FSMTB will retain incomplete applications for six months. After that time, the application will expire without further notice to the applicant.

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## Insufficient Documentation Notification

It is solely your responsibility to ensure FSMTB receives all required information and documentation. If your application is incomplete, FSMTB will, as a courtesy, notify you via email, telephone or U.S. mail to inform you of any documentation or information that is needed to complete your application.

The FSMTB will retain incomplete applications for six months. If requested documentation for an incomplete application is not received after six months' time, the application expires without further notice to the applicant, and reapplication is required, inclusive of all examination fees in effect at that time.

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## Authenticity and Adequacy of Documentation

The FSMTB may verify the authenticity of all documents before determining your eligibility to test. Submission of an application does not automatically guarantee your eligibility to take the exam on any particular test date.

The following guidelines apply to all information submitted as part of the MBLEx application:

### **Accuracy is essential**

Falsification, misrepresentation or omission of any required information on the application or in supporting documentation are grounds for denial of your application, invalidation of your MBLEx result, suspension of future access to the MBLEx or other FSMTB programs and services and notification of state licensing boards.

Please be advised that all relevant factors, including any of these decisions, may be taken into consideration on any future application to sit for the MBLEx. Additionally, FSMTB reserves the right to notify all states of an MBLEx result invalidation.

### **Consistency is key**

All documentation must contain your name exactly as it appears on your application and a numeric identifier. Examples of numeric identifiers include date of birth or social security number.

Applicants are solely responsible for ensuring that FSMTB receives all necessary documentation. The FSMTB is not responsible for lost, undelivered or misdelivered documents; therefore, we recommend that you apply online. If you wish to submit written materials, use a traceable form of delivery such as return receipt, USPS Express Mail, First-Class Mail or Priority Mail with delivery signature confirmation; or a private overnight delivery service such as FedEx or UPS.

Education records must be provided electronically directly from the school to FSMTB.

## Approved Applications

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### Authorization to Test

After your application is approved, the FSMTB will issue you an Authorization to Test (ATT) via email. Applicants who did not provide an email address will receive the ATT via U.S. mail. In the interest of expediency, FSMTB recommends that you utilize an email address in the examination process.

The ATT will include information that you will need to register for the exam date and authorized Pearson test center of your choice. You must complete the exam within the 90-day period indicated on your ATT.

Be certain to review your ATT for accuracy. The name listed on the ATT should match the name on the two pieces of identification that you will bring to the test center. If you detect an error on your ATT, FSMTB will require documentation of the correct information before your ATT will be reissued.

**Do not delay in contacting FSMTB if you have not received electronic communication from us within five business days of submitting a completed application.**

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## ATT Expiration

If you do not test within 90 days of the date listed on your ATT, you will be required to reapply as a new applicant subject to all application and fee requirements in effect at that time. It is best to plan your time carefully and be prepared to test at the time you submit your application. FSMTB will not extend the expiration date of an ATT.

# Consequences of Exam Misconduct

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## Fraud and Exam Irregularities

In the event of a fraudulent application, submission of fraudulent documents, inaccuracies, misrepresentations or discrepancies, the introduction of fraud at any point in the application process, advance access to exam content prior to your exam administration (exam irregularities), sharing exam content after your exam administration, or violation of any FSMTB and test center rules, policies or procedures, FSMTB reserves the right to impose fees to offset any administrative or legal costs associated with the investigation and/or adjudication of the case.

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## MBLEx Result Invalidations

Violation of any FSMTB examination policy or Pearson VUE test center rule may be grounds for a candidate's MBLEx result to be invalidated by the FSMTB. In the event of an examination policy violation or other application or exam irregularity, FSMTB will request that you submit correspondence responding to the policy violation and any documentation supporting your position. FSMTB will then review all information received and available to determine the necessary action(s), which includes, but is not limited to, the invalidation of your MBLEx result and/or suspension of future access to the MBLEx or other FSMTB programs and services. FSMTB will notify all state licensing boards of all MBLEx result invalidations.

## Scheduling your MBLEx Appointment

FSMTB examinations are administered on a daily basis, year-round at authorized Pearson test centers across the United States. For current test center information, please visit [pearsonvue.com/fsmtb](https://pearsonvue.com/fsmtb).

Once you receive an Authorization to Test (ATT), you will use the information in the ATT to register for the exam date and test center location of your choice.

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## Before You Schedule

### **1. Review the spelling of your name on the ATT**

If it does not match the identification you will take to the test center, be sure to contact FSMTB immediately via [mblex@fsmtb.org](mailto:mblex@fsmtb.org) and provide the correct information, spelling, etc.

## 2. Check for content accuracy

If you detect an error on your ATT, FSMTB will require documentation of the correct information before your ATT will be reissued.

## 3. Be prepared to sit for the exam

The ATT includes the beginning and end dates of the 90-day period in which you are eligible to schedule and take your exam. We recommend that you schedule your examination as soon as you receive your ATT so that you have the best opportunity to get the date and location that you want. Same day appointments and walk-ins are not permitted.

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## How to Schedule

To schedule your examination appointment, you may use the online scheduler at [pearsonvue.com/fsmtb](https://pearsonvue.com/fsmtb) or call the Customer Service Call Center at 888.790.4892 toll-free Monday through Friday, 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM U.S. Central Time. You will select the available date, time and test center location that work best for you.

# Confirmation

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## Registration Confirmation Notice

After you schedule your examination, you will receive a registration confirmation notice with specific information from Pearson VUE via email (or postal mail if you did not include an email address on your application). It will contain the date, time and location of the exam you are registered to take.

The information will include directions to the test center and a reporting time. It may be helpful, although it is not necessary, to bring your registration confirmation notice with you to the test center.

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## Changing Your Exam Appointment

Within your 90-day eligibility window you may change your test date and/or test center online or via the Customer Service Call Center.

Candidates who reschedule an exam appointment will be charged a fee of \$20 per appointment change. You may not make changes less than three business days prior to your appointment. Changes to your exam appointment cannot be made by leaving a phone message; you must speak with a Pearson VUE scheduling representative. If you change your appointment online, be sure that you click Submit to complete the process.

Upon successfully changing your exam appointment either by phone or online, you will receive an email within 24 hours that confirms both the cancellation of your prior appointment, and the date of your new appointment.

If you do not receive an email confirmation, please contact [Pearson VUE](#), as you may not have successfully completed the process.

**Prepare**

# Examination Development

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## Scope of the Examination

Examination questions are designed to allow candidates to demonstrate their knowledge of facts and use of judgment. There are no trick or ambiguous questions.

Given the diversity of the massage/bodywork field, there may be a small number of questions outside the training of every individual. This will vary from person to person depending on one's training. The number of these questions, however, is not enough to pose a barrier to passing the MBLEx. Qualified candidates with the requisite education and training should pass the examination.

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## What to Expect at the Test Center

[\*\*An informational video that explains the testing experience\*\*](#) is available on [fsmtb.org](http://fsmtb.org). It is in your best interest to view the video prior to taking the examination.

For more information on what to expect on your examination day, please refer to the [\*\*Take the MBLEx\*\*](#) section of this handbook.

# MBLEx Content Outline

## **ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY (11%)**

### A. System structure

- Circulation
- Digestive
- Endocrine
- Integumentary
- Lymphatic
- Muscular
- Nervous
- Reproduction
- Respiratory
- Skeletal
- Special Senses
- Urinary

### B. System function

- Circulation
- Digestive
- Endocrine
- Integumentary
- Lymphatic
- Muscular
- Nervous
- Reproduction
- Respiratory
- Skeletal
- Special Senses
- Urinary

### C. Tissue injury and repair

### D. Concepts of energetic anatomy

## **KINESIOLOGY (12%)**

### A. Components and characteristics of muscles

### B. Concepts of muscle contractions

### C. Proprioceptors

### D. Locations, attachments (origins, insertions), actions and fiber directions of muscles

### E. Joint structure and function

### F. Range of motion

- Active
- Passive
- Resistant

## **PATHOLOGY, CONTRAINDICATIONS, AREAS OF CAUTION, SPECIAL POPULATIONS (14%)**

### A. Overview of pathologies

### B. Contraindications

- Site specific
- Pathology related
- Special populations
- Tools
- Special applications

### C. Areas of caution

### D. Special populations

### E. Classes of medications

## **BENEFITS AND PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF TECHNIQUES THAT MANIPULATE SOFT TISSUE (15%)**

### A. Identification of the physiological effects of soft tissue manipulation

### B. Psychological aspects and benefits of touch

### C. Benefits of soft tissue manipulation for specific client populations

### D. Soft tissue techniques

- Types of strokes
- Sequence of application

### E. Hot/cold applications

### F. Overview of massage/bodywork modalities

## **CLIENT ASSESSMENT, REASSESSMENT & TREATMENT PLANNING (17%)**

### A. Organization of a massage/bodywork session

### B. Client consultation and evaluation

- Verbal intake
- Health history form

### C. Written data collection

### D. Visual assessment

- General
- Postural

### E. Palpation assessment

### F. Range of motion assessment

### G. Clinical reasoning

- Ability to rule out contraindications

### • Client treatment goal setting

### • Evaluation of response to previous treatment

### • Formulation of treatment strategy

## **ETHICS, BOUNDARIES, LAWS, REGULATIONS (16%)**

### A. Ethical behavior

### B. Professional boundaries

### C. Code of ethics violations

### D. The therapeutic relationship

### E. Dual relationships

### F. Sexual misconduct

### G. Massage/bodywork-related laws and regulations

### H. Scope of practice

### I. Professional communication

### J. Confidentiality

### K. Principles

## **GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE (15%)**

### A. Proper and safe use of equipment and supplies

### B. Therapist hygiene

### C. Sanitation and cleanliness

### D. Safety practices

- Facilities
- Therapist personal safety
- Client safety

### E. Therapist care

- Body mechanics
- Protective gear (masks, gowns, gloves, etc)
- Self-care
- Injury prevention

### F. Draping

- Safe and appropriate
- Communication

### G. Business Practices

- Business planning
- Strategic planning
- Office management
- Marketing
- Hiring/Interviewing
- Documentation and Records
  - Client records
  - Business records

### H. Healthcare and business terminology

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## Computer Adaptive Testing

The MBLEx has a fixed length of 100 questions and is a computer adaptive test (CAT). Candidates must answer every question in the order presented. With CAT, when a candidate answers a question correctly, the next question has a slightly higher level of difficulty. The difficulty level of questions presented to the candidate continues to increase until a question is answered incorrectly. Then a slightly easier question is presented. In this way, the exam is customized to the candidate's ability level.

FSMTB offers [a video explaining Computer Adaptive Testing](#) which is available on [fsmtb.org](https://www.fsmtb.org). We advise all candidates to make time to view the video prior to taking the examination.

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## FSMTB Study Resources

FSMTB encourages MBLEx candidates to utilize supporting materials from their core education (e.g., textbooks, class notes) to prepare for the MBLEx. In addition, the Federation provides several study resources to facilitate exam preparation.

These resources include the *MBLEx Study Guide* and several informational videos created to prepare MBLEx candidates for the examination experience.

Available videos include:

- [What to Expect During Your Exam](#)
- [Understanding Exam Security](#)
- [Identification Requirements](#)
- [Computer Adaptive Testing](#)

These videos are all available at no cost on [fsmtb.org](https://www.fsmtb.org).

FSMTB offers the [MBLEx Study Guide](#), the only MBLEx preparatory material that is created by the experts who develop the exam.

The Study Guide provides MBLEx study tips, breaks down each of the exam's content areas, and includes a 100-question practice test.

For more [information about the MBLEx Study Guide](#), please refer to the last page of this handbook.

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## Development of the Examination

The MBLEx is developed in stages. In the first stage, a job analysis is outlined by a panel of expert practitioners from many traditions and schools of thought in the field of massage/bodywork.

These outlines describe the functions of a practitioner and the knowledge needed to perform those functions. Since massage/bodywork is such a diverse field and is practiced in a variety of ways, FSMTB takes great care to involve groups of educators and practitioners who are broadly representative of the field as it is practiced in the United States.

The job analysis is then validated by surveying practitioners throughout the United States. Several thousand practitioners typically participate in each [Job Task Analysis \(JTA\) Survey](#), which is conducted every five to seven years. The MBLEx Content Outline is created from the survey results.

The second, on-going stage of development involves other representative groups of practitioners across the country who work with FSMTB to write questions based on the MBLEx Content Outline. These new questions are reviewed by a committee of subject matter experts and are edited to ensure that they are clearly written and that there is only one correct answer to each question.

In developing the examination, every effort is made to respect and include the various forms of massage/bodywork practiced in the United States. Reviews of the field are undertaken periodically to ensure that the examination remains relevant to current practice standards.

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## Commitment to a Fair, Valid and Reliable Examination

The FSMTB contracts with an independent professional examination agency for the ongoing development and psychometric analyses of the MBLEx.

Pearson VUE, the global leader in electronic testing for regulatory and other credentialing boards, is the professional testing agency contracted by FSMTB to assist in the administration, scoring and reporting of the MBLEx. With the world's largest network of test centers, innovative technology and a commitment to excellent customer service, Pearson VUE provides a superior testing experience to candidates.

**Take the  
MBLEx**

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## Confidentiality and Exam Security

The FSMTB requires you to maintain the confidentiality and security of the test questions on its examinations. By applying for and/or taking the MBLEx, you are agreeing to maintain the confidentiality and security of the test questions, answer choices and content of the exam. All those who take the MBLEx are required to acknowledge that they understand and agree to the following:

- The examination is the exclusive property of the Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards (FSMTB).
- The FSMTB's examinations and the items contained therein are protected by United States copyright law.
- No part of an examination may be copied, reproduced or transmitted to any other person in part or in whole by any means whatsoever, including memorization.
- The theft or attempted theft of an examination, in part or in whole, is punishable as a felony.
- Copying, reproducing, memorizing or otherwise transmitting by any means (oral, written, electronic or otherwise) any exam content in whole or in part, is forbidden.

Your participation in any irregularity occurring before, during or after the examination, such as giving or obtaining unauthorized information or aid, as evidenced by observation or subsequent statistical analysis, or any other examination irregularity, including but not limited to the failure to report any information about any irregularity or any suspected irregularity, may be sufficient cause for FSMTB, at its sole discretion, to terminate your participation, invalidate the results of your examination, seek monetary compensation or take other appropriate action.

The MBLEx is protected by U.S. copyright law. FSMTB reserves the right to enforce consequences applicable when violations and infractions of such laws are discovered. FSMTB will provide candidates with due process in all such cases.

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## Report Time and Check-In

Allow yourself sufficient time to find the test center. The FSMTB does not provide information on nearby lodging or parking for the test centers. You are advised to gather this information before your exam date to avoid unnecessary delays.

**Please arrive at the test center at least 30 minutes before your appointment.**

It may be helpful to travel to the test center on the same day of the week and same time of your appointment, prior to your actual exam date, to ascertain traffic patterns and travel time to the location.

All candidates must sign in at the test center before the exam can begin. A digital photograph and biometric security procedures such as palm vein recognition will be employed as part of the check-in procedures. Test center staff are prohibited from acting as translators at any point in the check-in and exam experience. Failure to complete the check-in procedure may result in being refused access to the examination.

Candidates are not permitted to leave the building during the examination.

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## Lateness on the Day of the Exam

You must arrive by the report time on your registration confirmation notice or you will not be admitted to the exam. You will be considered absent if you arrive late.

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## Absences on the Day of the Exam

The FSMTB is liable for all associated exam delivery costs for an applicant, whether the applicant tests or not. If you do not appear for the exam date for which you have registered, your Authorization to Test (ATT) will no longer be valid. If you choose to reapply to take the MBLEx, you will be subject to application and fee requirements in effect at that time.

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## Required Identification

You must bring **TWO** forms of identification (ID) to the test center on your exam date.

The **primary form** of identification must include a photograph and signature and must not be temporary or expired.

The **secondary form** of identification may include a photograph but a photograph is not necessary; however, it must include a signature and must not be expired.

<b>PRIMARY (PHOTO, SIGNATURE, NOT EXPIRED)</b>	<b>SECONDARY (SIGNATURE, NOT EXPIRED)</b>
Government issued U.S. State/Territory driver's license*	U.S. Social Security Card
Government issued U.S. State/Territory ID	School ID
Government issued Passport or U.S. Certificate of Naturalization	Employee ID/work badge
Military ID	Bank issued credit card, ATM or debit card
Alien registration card (green card or permanent resident visa)	Any ID on the Primary list

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\* NOTE: a temporary driver's license, a learner's license, a learner's permit or driver's license renewal paperwork is NOT acceptable.

The same version of your name must appear on your MBLEx application, the Authorization to Test (ATT), and on the identification you present at the test center. The accuracy of your first and last names on your ID is critical.

Your middle name or initial is less critical and is not a required field on the MBLEx application. You will not be prevented from testing if your middle name or initial appears on your MBLEx application but not your ID, or vice versa.

**You will not be admitted to the examination without proper identification.**

If the test center staff question the identification presented, you may be asked for additional proof of identity. You will be refused access to the examination if you have not proven

your identity. Note that MBLEx application fees are not refundable; in part, or in full.

Admission to the test center and access to the examination does not imply that your identification is authentic and does not preclude subsequent invalidation of your MBLEx results due to misrepresentation, impersonation, forgery or fraud.

An informational [video that illustrates identification requirements](#) is available on fsmtb.org. All candidates are advised to view the video prior to their exam dates.

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## Weather

In the event of inclement weather or unforeseen emergencies, Pearson VUE will determine whether circumstances warrant the closure of a particular test center.

Your examination will not be rescheduled if the supervisor is able to open the test center. You may contact the Customer Service Call Center at 888.790.4892 to determine if your test center is closed.

If an examination is cancelled by Pearson VUE, candidates scheduled for that center will be contacted by Pearson VUE to schedule a different exam date. You will not incur any additional exam fees if your test is cancelled by Pearson VUE.

The FSMTB is not responsible for any personal expenses (e.g., travel, food, and lodging) incurred for an exam administration that is cancelled for any reason, including inclement weather and unforeseen emergencies.

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## Test Center Staff

Test center staff will assist you with the check-in process at the test center and will observe examinations in progress. Staff can review test center protocol and procedures but are prohibited from answering questions about exam content or from providing support for any computer screen prompts. Staff monitor breaks and require you to provide biometric verification if you need to leave and reenter the exam room during the examination.

Translators or interpreters are not permitted at any test center, including print, electronic or in person. Test center staff are prohibited from acting as translators at any point in the check-in and testing experience. In addition, candidates may not bring a translator to translate for them during any part of the examination appointment, including check-in.

## Prohibited Items

Cell phone access is prohibited at any time while at the test center.

Items that can NOT be taken into the testing room include but are not limited to:

Backpack or bag	Computers of any kind	Large jewelry of any kind	Radio transmitter or receiver
Beverage of any kind	Cup or container of any kind	Magazine	Recording device or player
Bluetooth devices of any kind	Digital scanning or imaging device, stick or pen	Notebook	Ruler or slide rule
Books or textbooks	Earplugs	Notes in any form	Study materials of any kind
Briefcase or other luggage	E-cigarettes or gum	Outline	Sunglasses
Calculator	Electronic device of any kind	Pager or beeper	Umbrella
Calendar, day planner, or other organizer	Electronic, printed or live translators	Paper of any kind	USB storage device
Camera of any kind	Eyeglasses case	Paper or electronic dictionary	Wallet or clutch
Car or house keys	Food or snacks of any kind	Pens, pencils, erasers	Watch of any kind
Cellphone or smart phone	Good luck charms	Pencil sharpener	Weapon of any kind, including pocket knife
Cigarettes or tobacco products	Hat, cap, visor or head covering	Plastic bag	
Coat, jacket, gloves	Headphones or earphones	Purse or handbag	

Lockers are provided at the test center to store a small number of personal belongings. It is the candidate's responsibility to surrender all items voluntarily prior to testing. FSMTB is not responsible for any items that are lost or stolen at the test center. Any person possessing prohibited items or accessing lockers during the examination, whether inside or outside of the testing room, will not be allowed to continue their examination and will receive a failing result due to an incomplete examination. FSMTB reserves the right to confiscate any prohibited item.

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## Clothing

Candidates are advised to wear clothing that will be comfortable for various temperature conditions at the test center. Note that eye glasses, layered clothing and accessories will be inspected prior to granting access to the testing room and examination.

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## Test Length and Time Allowed

The MBLEx is a computer-based test that requires candidates to complete a 100-item multiple choice examination.

**Candidates who do not complete all 100 items will fail the exam.**

Candidates have two (2) hours to complete the examination process. Of this time, a maximum of five (5) minutes is allotted to the security and confidentiality agreement and five (5) minutes to a brief survey.

EXAMINATION	NUMBER OF ITEMS	TIME ALLOWED
Security Agreement	N/A	5 minutes
MBLEx Survey	N/A	5 minutes
Massage & Bodywork Licensing Examination (MBLEx)	100	110 minutes

Be aware that you have limited time to read and respond to the introductory screens. While there is adequate time to read and respond, there is not enough time to leave the testing room or do anything other than proceed to the exam. Proctors at the test center will instruct you on what to do if you finish the exam before the allotted time has passed.

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## Pre-Exam Module Policy

Candidates have limited time to complete the Security and Confidentiality Agreement and the MBLEx Survey. Writing on the erasable noteboard during this time is not permitted. Candidates who attempt to write on the erasable noteboard before the exam begins shall have their noteboard confiscated and the proctor will immediately escort the candidate out of the testing room. At that time, the candidate's exam appointment will end and they will not gain access to the MBLEx. The candidate will then have to reapply for the exam, inclusive of all fees in effect at that time.

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## Examination Breaks

There are no scheduled breaks during the examination unless approved for specific testing accommodations during the MBLEx application process.

Unscheduled breaks during the examination are taken on your own time. The clock does not stop if you take a break during the examination to eat or use the restroom. Plan your exam time carefully. Security protocols will be in effect as you exit and reenter the testing room; there is no time adjustment for security checks.

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## Exam Administration Conditions

If you experience any concerns, challenges or difficulties during the administration of the examination (too hot, too cold, too noisy, testing issues, technology issues, etc.), it is your responsibility to notify a proctor about your concern at the time of your examination and before you leave the test center.

Candidates should also notify FSMTB in writing about concerns that were reported at the test center so that FSMTB can take appropriate action. FSMTB, in consultation with the test administrator, will investigate and verify the incident. Concerns not resolved at the test center should also be submitted in writing to FSMTB.

Any concerns that need to be reported to FSMTB must be submitted within two days of your examination date. Please send your written report to FSMTB via email to [info@fsmtb.org](mailto:info@fsmtb.org).

**We hope you have a positive and successful experience taking the MBLEx as you move towards becoming a licensed professional.**

# Results

# Examination Results

Examination results are reported as PASS or FAIL to indicate whether or not a candidate has demonstrated the knowledge required to meet entry-level standards of competence as defined by the profession.

Candidates will receive their unofficial examination result at the test center immediately upon completing the examination.

The state board indicated on a candidate's MBLEx application will receive an official examination result within 24 hours. Candidates who are successful on the exam can then apply for licensure in that jurisdiction.

If a candidate fails, they will be given diagnostic information indicating their performance in each content area. The indicators on the diagnostic summary are provided to assist in future study efforts. For information on how to retake the MBLEx, please refer to the [Retaking the MBLEx](#) section of this handbook.

FSMTB never releases copies of examinations or individual examination items.

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## Criterion-Referenced Scoring

The passing standard for the Massage & Bodywork Licensing Examination (MBLEx) is adopted by the FSMTB Board of Directors using a recommendation from subject matter experts under the direction of professionals in testing and psychometrics. The criteria define the minimum acceptable level of competence required for the safe and effective practice of massage/bodywork. The passing standard is determined by a criterion-referenced method, which is commonly used in licensing examinations. A criterion-referenced passing score applies minimum standards for competent practice to all candidates.

Criterion-referenced standard setting begins with the establishment of a minimum acceptable level of competence for safe practice that candidates must possess in order to pass the examination. The standard setting is achieved by a group comprised of licensed practitioners who represent various aspects of the practice, geographic areas and levels of expertise. To ensure that the description of the profession represents the job tasks of practitioners entering the profession, input from entry-level practitioners is always included.

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## Result Transfers

With the written permission of an MBLEx candidate, FSMTB can transfer an exam result to support practitioners when they are moving to a new state and applying for a license to practice, or support a practitioner during an employment interview process.

To request an additional copy of your exam result to be reported to a state licensing board, employer, or request a copy for personal records, please complete the [MBLEx Result Transfer Form](#) (RTF) available on [fsmtb.org](https://fsmtb.org). After receipt of the form and the appropriate fee, the request will be processed within five business days. FSMTB retains sole discretion as to fulfillment of the request, dependent upon a review of the candidate's file.

Candidates are wholly responsible for submitting requests in a timely manner. When applying for licensure, be sure to check with the state in which you are applying for licensure-related deadlines.

# Retaking the MBLEx

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## Reapplying for the Exam

To reapply to take the MBLEx, candidates must submit a new application online or by mail, inclusive of all fees in effect at that time.

Once FSMTB is in receipt of the completed application and associated fees, upon review and approval a new Authorization to Test (ATT) will be issued. Please note that your 90-day authorization period will not begin until 30 days has elapsed since your previous exam appointment.

If FSMTB is in receipt of your education record, it is not necessary to resubmit the same documentation.

If directed by a state licensing board or agency to retake the MBLEx after previously passing it, the applicant is required to be approved by the state licensing board to retest before an ATT may be issued.

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## How Many Times Can I Take the MBLEx?

FSMTB does not limit the number of times a candidate may take the MBLEx; however, a state may impose a limit. Check to see if your state licensing board or agency has a limit on the number of times a candidate may attempt to pass the MBLEx.

FSMTB allows candidates who have failed the MBLEx to retake the examination after 30 days has elapsed from the previous examination appointment. Candidates must reapply as a new applicant.

In cases where FSMTB discovers fraud in the application, testing or licensure processes, the FSMTB Board of Directors will review all applicable information and discern the reapplication timeline. This may include banning an individual from retaking the MBLEx.

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## Candidate Care

FSMTB cares about MBLEx candidates, and understands the desire to work as a massage professional. The FSMTB Candidate Care Team personally contacts candidates who have struggled to pass the MBLEx, to discuss exam preparation, study resources and study strategies.

FSMTB also welcomes feedback about the examination process or the exam itself. All candidates can have a bad day and may not perform their best. Because of this, we discuss performance patterns, how to prepare differently for the next exam, and how to adjust your approach to test taking. It is our hope, as it is yours, that you will experience success on the MBLEx and move toward your goal of professional practice.

If you would like to speak with a member of the Candidate Care Team, please do so by emailing [info@fsmtb.org](mailto:info@fsmtb.org). One of our team members will reach out to you.

**Get Licensed**

The MBLEx is used by state licensing boards as part of their licensing requirements. The FSMTB provides the Massage & Bodywork Licensing Examination (MBLEx), which is only one component of licensure requirements. It is the candidate's responsibility to meet state licensure requirements. [Contact information for state licensing boards](#) is available on fsmtb.org.

**Please note that the license to legally practice is issued by state licensing boards, not the FSMTB.**

Even though you may receive a passing result on the MBLEx, this does NOT mean that you are licensed. You may not represent or advertise that you are licensed until you receive official notification of licensure from the state licensing board in the state in which you wish to practice.

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## Reporting MBLEx Results to State Licensing Boards

Candidates must indicate on their MBLEx application the state to which they want their official exam result sent. The first result report request is fulfilled at no additional cost to the candidate. A second state may be chosen on the application for an additional fee.

Subsequent requests for exam results to be reported to a state licensing board or agency may be requested by completing the [MBLEx Result Transfer Form](#) (RTF) available on fsmtb.org. Candidates are solely responsible for submitting result transfer requests in a timely manner.

Please check with the state in which you are applying for licensure-related deadlines.

When FSMTB reports your official MBLEx result to the state that you have designated, it is reported along with the identification and educational information that you provided to FSMTB on your application. This ensures

that your exam result is matched correctly to the licensing application you submit to the state. State licensing boards and agencies will contact FSMTB if there are any discrepancies in the information when comparing your MBLEx result file to your application for licensure.

In the event of a discrepancy or inaccuracy that calls into question your eligibility to take the MBLEx, FSMTB may request that you submit documentation to verify or otherwise substantiate the information that you provided on your MBLEx application. If any of the information on your MBLEx application is determined to be inaccurate, misrepresented or falsified, FSMTB reserves the right to invalidate your MBLEx result, suspend future access to the MBLEx or other FMSTB programs and services or impose other conditions for accessing the MBLEx.

FSMTB reserves the right to impose fees to offset any administrative or legal costs associated with the investigation and/or adjudication of the case.

# Notice to MBLEx Applicants Regarding Exam Irregularities, Misconduct and Fraud

## **Fraudulent documents**

In the event of a fraudulent application, submission of fraudulent documents, inaccuracies, misrepresentations or discrepancies, the introduction of fraud at any point in the application process, sharing exam content after your exam administration, advance access to exam content prior to your exam administration (exam irregularities), or violation of any FSMTB and test site rules, policies or procedures, FSMTB reserves the right to impose fees to offset any administrative or legal costs associated with the investigation and/or adjudication of the case.

## **MBLEx result invalidations**

Violation of any FSMTB examination policy or Pearson VUE test center rule may be grounds for a candidate's MBLEx result being invalidated by the FSMTB.

In the event of an examination policy violation or other application or exam irregularity, FSMTB will request that you submit correspondence responding to the policy violation and any documentation supporting your position. FSMTB will then review all information received and available to determine the necessary

action(s), which includes, but is not limited to, the invalidation of your MBLEx result and/or suspension of future access to the MBLEx or other FSMTB programs and services. FSMTB will notify all State Licensing Boards of all MBLEx result invalidations.

## **Cheating**

Your participation in any irregularity occurring before, during or after the examination, such as giving or obtaining unauthorized information or aid, as evidenced by observation or subsequent statistical analysis, or any other examination irregularity, including but not limited to the failure to report any information about any irregularity or any suspected irregularity, may be sufficient cause for FSMTB, at its sole discretion, to terminate your participation, invalidate the results of your examination, seek monetary compensation, or take other appropriate action.

The MBLEx is protected by U.S. copyright law. FSMTB reserves the right to enforce consequences applicable when violations and infractions of such laws are discovered. FSMTB will provide candidates with due process in all such cases.





# MBLEx

MASSAGE & BODYWORK  
LICENSING EXAMINATION

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## **Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards**

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Overland Park, KS 66210

### **MBLEx Office**

1.866.962.3926 | [mblex@fsmtb.org](mailto:mblex@fsmtb.org)

### **FSMTB Executive Office**

913.681.0380 | [info@fsmtb.org](mailto:info@fsmtb.org)

[fsmtb.org](http://fsmtb.org)