My Journey to Passing the Washington State NextGen UBE

with a focus on the Integrated Question Sets

1. Background and Exam History

I am 46 years old and a non-native English speaker with a Japanese law degree (J.D. equivalent). In December 2018, I earned an LL.M. degree through an online program offered by Florida Coastal School of Law, which subsequently closed in 2021. Together, these degrees made me eligible to sit for the Washington State Bar Exam.

Since 2012, while working for Japanese multinational manufacturing companies, I have provided paralegal-like support to in-house counsel based overseas. My work regularly involves reviewing contracts and internal corporate policies and regulations. This practical experience proved particularly useful in handling the document-review, revision, and drafting tasks in the Integrated Question Sets (IQS) of NextGen UBE. I pursued admission to the Washington State Bar while balancing full-time employment and family responsibilities in Japan.

My journey began with my first UBE attempt in July 2021, amid the Covid-19 pandemic. After three unsuccessful attempts and an unexpected exam cancellation, I finally passed the NextGen UBE in September 2026. Throughout this journey, I prepared for both the Legacy UBE and the NextGen UBE entirely on my own while living and working in Japan.

Bar Exam Attempts (excluding withdrawals)	**Exam Format**	**Result**
July 2021	Legacy UBE	218
February 2024	Legacy UBE	203
February 2026	Legacy UBE	254 (6 points below the passing score)
July 2026	NextGen UBE	Canceled due to on-site technical issues; rescheduled
September 2026	NextGen UBE	612 — Passed

2. My Approach to the NextGen UBE

(1) Narrowing the Scope of Memorization

I believe my most important strategic decision was to narrow the scope of memorization and focus on mastering a carefully organized set of core materials, rather than trying to memorize every rule in every available outline.

Using the NCBE Content Scope as my framework, I organized each topic around a concise definition or core rule and approximately five associated Trigger Facts. Trigger Facts are factual cues or patterns in a question that signal a particular legal issue and prompt me to recall the relevant rule. The aim was to connect recognition of facts with retrieval of the applicable legal principle.

I used ChatGPT as an organizational and drafting aid when compiling and refining my notes, drawing on resources such as Brian's Magicsheets and Studicata's outlines. I named the resulting document "NextGen Recognition Playbook" (see a sample page in Appendix A). It was tailored to my own study needs and became my primary memorization resource.

(2) My Approach to the IQS

The IQS was the least familiar component because it required more than selecting an answer or writing a conventional essay. I found it useful to classify questions by the task they asked me to perform:

Task pattern	What the task requires	Practical approach
Issue Identification & Legal Analysis	Recognize legal issues and apply relevant rules to the facts and materials provided.	Identify Trigger Facts, retrieve applicable rules, and connect them to the facts.
Document Review	Identify legal and practical deficiencies in existing documents or provisions.	Examine the wording against the client's objectives and applicable legal standards.
Document Revision and Drafting	Revise existing provisions or draft new language to advance the client's objectives within legal limits.	Identify the necessary changes and translate the legal analysis into precise contractual language.

Example: Document Revision – Ghastly Manor Waiver Revisions (NCBE Practice Set 1, Integrated Question Set 2)

This question required me to read the transcript of a client interview, identify the risks associated with a commercial haunted house, analyze a binding judicial opinion, and draft a revised liability waiver. The key challenge was translating the legal standards established in the opinion into specific contractual language.

The revised waiver needed to:

- Clearly and conspicuously release claims based on ordinary negligence;
- Specifically identify the risks patrons might encounter, including tripping, collisions and cardiac events; and
- Exclude intentional misconduct and gross negligence from the scope of the waiver.

In the actual exam, I felt comfortable handling this type of task as it was similar to my daily work experience reviewing contracts and internal corporate policies.

Overall, the rules tested in the IQS generally came from fundamental principles covered by the NCBE Content Scope. I did not need to memorize obscure or highly specialized doctrines.

(3) Allocating My Preparation Time

I believed that much of the preparation for the MCQ and PT could build on the knowledge and skills I had developed through my previous Legacy UBE attempts. I therefore concentrated on mastering the core rules in my Playbook and becoming comfortable with the different task formats in the IQS. I used the NCBE NextGen UBE Complete Bundle for practice across the MCQ, IQS, and PT. I worked through all six Practice Sets, repeating Sets 1 through 3. I also completed the 50-question MCQ Bank twice (100 questions in total), IQS Bank 1 twice (10 sets), and IQS Bank 2 once (5 sets), for a total of 15 IQS sets.

3. Work, Family, and Acknowledgments

I prepared while working full-time and meeting family responsibilities. I also went through a divorce in November 2024. The process leading up to the divorce was difficult, but afterward I had more time to study on my own. During the final preparation period before the July 2026 exam, I was also able to make full use of remote work and paid leave with my supervisor's understanding. These circumstances gave me valuable time and flexibility to focus on my preparation. More generally, my study schedule was not always consistent, which made prioritization especially important. Narrowing the memorization scope helped me make better use of the limited time available.

I am especially grateful to Brian for supporting me throughout this long and often lonely journey. I first purchased his Playbook in 2020 and continued to turn to his materials and guidance over the years. More importantly, he provided encouragement and guidance through periodic emails, serving as a remote mentor. I truly appreciate his support.

"It's about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward...that's how winning is done."

— Rocky Balboa

After all these years and attempts, I finally made it.

Appendix A. Sample Page from My NextGen Recognition Playbook

The image below illustrates the format I used:
NCBE Content Scope topics, a concise definition or core rule, and a corresponding list of Trigger Facts.

NextGen Recognition Playbook

July 2026 NextGen UBE | Editable Word Version with NCBE Category Headings

CIVIL PROCEDURE

I. Jurisdiction and Venue	
Federal Question Federal question jurisdiction exists when the plaintiff's well-pleaded complaint shows a claim arising under federal law.	Trigger Facts • federal statute invoked • constitutional violation • §1983 claim • federal right essential • defense based on federal law only
Diversity Diversity jurisdiction requires complete diversity between parties and amount in controversy exceeding $75,000 at filing.	Trigger Facts • citizens of different states • corporation = incorporation + PPB • multiple plaintiffs • change of domicile • borderline amount claimed
Supplemental Federal courts may hear additional claims forming the same case or controversy but cannot use supplemental jurisdiction to defeat diversity rules.	Trigger Facts • extra state-law claim • same transaction • additional parties • federal + state claims • jurisdiction gap
Removal Defendant may remove to federal court if original jurisdiction exists; diversity removal is barred if any defendant is a citizen of the forum state.	Trigger Facts • case filed in state court • defendant removes • in-state defendant • 30-day deadline • multiple defendants
Personal Jurisdiction Personal jurisdiction requires statutory authorization and minimum contacts showing purposeful availment and fairness.	Trigger Facts • out-of-state defendant • online business • product sent to forum • continuous contacts • claim related vs unrelated

Appendix B. Study Materials and How I Used Them

The following is a concise summary of the resources I used over the course of my preparation.

Material	How I Used It
Themis	Initially used for Legacy UBE preparation. I did not complete all lectures and ultimately relied mainly on the printed materials.
Emanuel's Strategies & Tactics, 7th Edition	Completed all questions and reviewed incorrect answers as part of my Legacy UBE preparation.
Emanuel's Strategies & Tactics 2, 4th Edition	Also completed all questions and reviewed incorrect answers. I believe the two books contributed to my Legacy UBE score of 254.
Adaptibar / UWorld	Used for additional MBE practice after moving away from Themis. Mainly, I used smartphone apps to do practice questions during my commute (by train).
Crushendo Audio	Listened to MPRE and UBE outlines during my bicycle commute; retention was limited.
Brian's Playbook (May 10, 2020)	Referred to periodically over the years, particularly for study scheduling and choosing preparation materials.
Brian's Magicsheets (December 29, 2020)	Used for a comprehensive knowledge check shortly before the exam; I supplemented areas I did not fully understand with Studicata's Full Sentence Outline.
Brian's Approsheets (December 29, 2020)	Found its frameworks for organizing essay analysis particularly useful; they inspired the approach I used to develop my own Playbook.
Studicata Attack Outline (Full Sentence Outline)	Used to review and reinforce legal rules, especially where my understanding was insufficient
NCBE Everything Value Pack	Purchased but made very limited practical use of it.
NCBE NextGen UBE Complete Bundle	Used as the official NextGen practice resource, including MCQ, IQS, and PT materials.
My Original NextGen Playbook	Built around the NCBE Content Scope, with topic definitions or core rules and associated Trigger Facts; became my primary memorization resource.