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OCA Circular No. 160-2026

2026 Rules on Mandatory Continuing Legal Education (MCLE)

Summary for Practicing Lawyers

Key Dates

- Resolution date: April 22, 2026 (B.M. No. 850)
- Published: August 30, 2026 (Philippine Star & Manila Bulletin)
- Effective: September 15, 2026
- Repeals: The original 2000 MCLE Rules, as amended in 2001

Who Must Comply

All members of the Philippine Bar, unless exempt (see Exemptions section below).

Compliance Requirement

Lawyers must complete 36 credit units per 3-year compliance period, through either:

- General Program — varied subjects/activities, with at least 6 units in Legal Ethics; or
- Focused Program — subjects within a specific practice area, with at least 6 units in Legal Ethics

Bonus credit: Up to 15 credit units from Unified Legal Aid Service (ULAS) work may be credited toward compliance (applied in full to one compliance period only — may not be split between periods).

Compliance Period

- Every 3 years, following the existing cycle (originally started April 15, 2001).
- Credits must be earned before your compliance certificate expires.
- 1 credit unit = 1 hour of attendance (unless the Board sets otherwise).
- Excess units may carry over only to the next compliance period — not beyond.

Newly Admitted / Readmitted Lawyers

- Newly admitted: Deemed compliant automatically from the date of signing the Roll of Attorneys until the end of the current compliance period.
- Readmitted (after voluntary departure, suspension, or discipline): Must immediately comply with all applicable MCLE requirements.

Exemptions (Rule 2, Section 7)

A lawyer may be exempt on any of the following grounds:

- Law faculty members, bar reviewers, or supervising lawyers with 10 continuous academic years of teaching/supervisory experience (and law deans during incumbency)

- Persons exempt under other Supreme Court issuances
- Lawyers at least 70 years of age (subject to compliance in previous periods and an undertaking to stay updated)
- Lawyers holding specified high offices during incumbency — e.g., President, Vice President, Senators, Members of the House of Representatives, DOJ/OSG officials, Ombudsman, JBC/MCLE Board members, PHILJA officials, sitting Supreme Court/Court of Appeals/Sandiganbayan/CTA Justices, Governors and Mayors, among others
- Incumbent and retired members of the Judiciary, and the Court Administrator, Deputy Court Administrators, and Assistant Court Administrators
- Good cause — via a verified request setting forth the grounds

Duty when exemption ends: Notify the MCLEO within 15 calendar days of the cessation of the ground for exemption. Comply on a pro-rated basis (one MCLE credit unit per remaining month in the compliance period), beginning the first day of the following month.

Compliance Certificate & Compliance Number

- **No lawyer may engage in the practice of law without a valid compliance certificate.**
- Your compliance number and date of issue must appear below your name on all legal documents (pleadings, **contracts**, deeds, **letters** and all other documents that require your intervention).
- Include the compliance number and date in your signature block on entries of appearance and pleadings filed before courts and quasi-judicial bodies.
- File a manifestation with your new compliance number once your prior certificate lapses.
- Using a nonexistent or fraudulent compliance number is a ground for sanctions under this Rules and the Code of Professional Responsibility and Accountability (CPRA).

Reporting Deadlines

- Submit your compliance report no later than 10 calendar days after the compliance period ends.
- Exempt lawyers must submit a sworn attestation/application with supporting documents within the same 10-day window.

What Constitutes Noncompliance

- Failure to complete required credit units before certificate expiry
- Failure to submit compliance reports or supporting documents
- Failure to settle applicable fees or fines
- Any other act or omission intended to circumvent or evade compliance

Note: Noncompliance does not affect the accrual of IBP membership dues.

Curing a Period of Noncompliance

Noncompliant lawyers who later comply must submit:

- Compliance reports with supporting documents
- A sworn statement attesting that they refrained from practicing law during the noncompliance period, with an explanation of the circumstances
- Proof of payment of applicable fines/fees or proof of compliance with other Board-set requirements

A finding or report contrary to the lawyer's attestation is a ground for sanctions under this Rules and the CPRA.

Specialization Credentials (New Feature)

- Lawyers may now earn specialization credentials in specific fields of law through Board-approved credentialing bodies.
- A new Committee on Legal Specialization will set standards and frameworks, subject to Board and Supreme Court approval.

Accreditation for Providers, Lecturers & Resource Persons



- Providers: Classified as General, Limited, or Specialized, each with distinct eligibility requirements (years in operation, prior activities conducted, lecturer pool, etc.).
- Lecturers: Must be MCLE-compliant, members in good standing, with at least 5 years of law practice and proven subject-matter expertise.
- Resource persons: May be non-lawyers with demonstrated expertise, but must serve under the direct supervision of an accredited lecturer.
- Accreditation validity: 5 years, renewable subject to satisfactory performance evaluation.
- Activities require Board approval; providers must apply at least 45 calendar days before the scheduled activity date.

Sanctions

Subject	Possible Sanctions
Lawyers	Fine; other sanctions as may be approved by the Supreme Court
Providers / Lecturers	Warning, forfeiture of security, fine, suspension or revocation of accreditation, perpetual ban, or other Supreme Court-approved penalties

Note: Board decisions on accreditation and activity approval are final and unappealable.

Governing Body

The MCLE Governing Board (a Chairperson plus four members representing the IBP, PHILJA, PALS, and the UP Law Center) oversees implementation, approves accreditation and exemptions, manages the MCLE Fund, and may modify program requirements.

Bottom line for practicing lawyers: Track your 36-unit/3-year requirement (6 units must be Ethics), keep your compliance certificate current, place your compliance number on every pleading and legal document, and file your compliance report within 10 days of your period ending. If eligible for an exemption, file the required attestation on time.