

FREE GUIDE · CRIMINOLOGIST LICENSURE EXAM

The 10 most-failed topics on the **CLE**.

Where examinees lose the most points across all six subjects — and exactly what to nail to stop the bleed.

The rule that fails more people than any subject.

Most examinees who don't make it aren't lacking in effort or intelligence. They get caught by one rule.

75% average — and nothing below 60%.

To pass the CLE you need a weighted average of at least 75%, with no single subject scoring below 60%. You can do well in five subjects and still fail because one was left to drown.

So the smartest preparation isn't studying everything equally. It's **protecting your weak subjects** and hunting down the specific topics inside them that quietly drain points. Below are the ten that do the most damage, grouped by subject. For each one: why it trips people, the single thing to get right, and a quick win you can use today.

The six subjects and their weight

Criminal Jurisprudence & Procedure	20%
Crime Detection & Investigation	20%
Criminology (Criminal Sociology & Ethics)	20%
Law Enforcement Administration	15%
Criminalistics / Forensic Science	15%
Correctional Administration	10%

01 Justifying vs exempting circumstances

REVISED PENAL CODE · BOOK I

WHY IT'S FAILED

Four similar-sounding categories tested through tricky scenarios. People memorize the lists but freeze when asked to classify an actual situation.

NAIL THIS

A **justifying** circumstance means no crime happened at all (e.g. lawful self-defense) — generally no criminal and no civil liability. An **exempting** circumstance means a crime did happen, but the actor isn't punished because something (insanity, minority) removed intent or free will — civil liability usually remains. Mitigating only lowers the penalty; aggravating raises it.

✓ **Quick win:** For any scenario, ask in order — "Was there even a crime?" (justifying) then "Is the actor blameworthy?" (exempting) then "How much penalty?" (mitigating / aggravating).

02 Attempted vs frustrated vs consummated

REVISED PENAL CODE · BOOK I

WHY IT'S FAILED

The line between attempted and frustrated is conceptual, not obvious from the facts.

NAIL THIS

Frustrated: the offender performed all the acts that would produce the felony, but it didn't happen for reasons independent of their will (the victim survived because a doctor intervened). **Attempted:** the offender began the acts of execution but did not complete all of them, because they were stopped or prevented.

✓ **Quick win:** Ask "Did the offender finish everything on their part?" Finished but no result = frustrated. Interrupted midway = attempted.

03 Conspiracy and proposal

REVISED PENAL CODE · BOOK I

WHY IT'S FAILED

The two get swapped, and the "punishable only when the law specially provides" rule gets forgotten.

NAIL THIS

Conspiracy: two or more persons agree and decide to commit a felony. **Proposal:** a person who has decided invites another to commit it. On their own, both are generally not punishable — only when a specific law says so (as in treason or rebellion). But where conspiracy exists in the crime actually committed, the act of one is the act of all.

✓ **Quick win:** Memorize the short list of crimes where conspiracy or proposal is punishable by itself — that's where the exam sets its traps.

04 Complex crimes (Article 48)

REVISED PENAL CODE · BOOK I

WHY IT'S FAILED

Two things at once: the compound-vs-complex distinction and the penalty rule.

NAIL THIS

A **compound** crime is a single act producing two or more grave or less-grave felonies. A **complex crime proper** is when one offense is the necessary means to commit another. In both, the penalty for the most serious crime is imposed, in its maximum period.

✓ **Quick win:** Don't add the penalties together. It's one penalty — the gravest, at maximum. Stacking penalties is the classic wrong answer.

05 The Indeterminate Sentence Law

ACT NO. 4103 · PENALTIES

WHY IT'S FAILED

It's a computation wrapped in exceptions, and the exceptions are where points vanish.

NAIL THIS

For offenses under the Penal Code, the **maximum** term is the penalty properly imposed under the Code, and the **minimum** is taken from the range of the penalty one degree lower. It does not apply to several cases — among them death, life imprisonment or reclusion perpetua, treason, habitual delinquents, and those who escaped confinement.

✓ **Quick win:** Before computing anything, ask "Does the ISLAW even apply here?" Half of all errors come from applying it where it's barred.

06 Theories of crime causation

SCHOOLS & THEORISTS

WHY IT'S FAILED

Many schools, many names — and under time pressure the theorists get swapped.

NAIL THIS

The **Classical school** (Beccaria, Bentham) rests on free will and deterrence. The **Positivist school** (Lombroso, Ferri, Garofalo) treats behaviour as determined and studies the criminal, not the crime. Then the sociological theories: strain (Merton), differential association (Sutherland), social control (Hirschi), and labeling.

✓ **Quick win:** Anchor each theory to one name and one keyword — Lombroso = "born criminal," Sutherland = "crime is learned," Merton = "strain / anomie."

07 Fingerprint patterns & classification

DACTYLOSCOPY

WHY IT'S FAILED

Heavy memorization with little logic to fall back on — easy to go blank.

NAIL THIS

Three basic pattern types — **arches, loops, and whorls** — each with subtypes (plain and tented arch; radial and ulnar loop; plain, central-pocket, double, and accidental whorl). Loops are the most common. The **core** and **delta** are the reference points; ridge counting (for loops) and ridge tracing (for whorls) feed the classification.

✓ **Quick win:** Learn the patterns by drawing each one once. Your hand will remember what your eyes forget on exam day.

08 The branches of ballistics

FIREARMS IDENTIFICATION

WHY IT'S FAILED

Four similar terms that students scramble: internal, external, terminal, and forensic.

NAIL THIS

Internal: what happens inside the firearm until the bullet exits. **External:** the bullet's flight through the air. **Terminal:** its effect on the target. **Forensic / legal:** matching a fired bullet or shell to one specific firearm using class and individual characteristics — striations, breech-face and firing-pin marks.

✓ **Quick win:** Follow the bullet's journey — in the gun, in the air, in the target, in court. That order is the four branches.

Crime Detection & Investigation

09 Chain of custody in drug cases

RA 9165 · SECTION 21 (AS AMENDED)

WHY IT'S FAILED

Highly procedural and heavily litigated — one missed step breaks the whole chain.

NAIL THIS

After seizure, the team must immediately **mark, inventory, and photograph** the items in the presence of the accused (or representative) and the witnesses the law requires, then turn them over to the forensic laboratory within the prescribed time. A gap anywhere in this chain is why real cases — and exam items — collapse.

✓ **Quick win:** Lock in the sequence "mark → inventory → photo → witnesses → lab," and confirm the current required witnesses, since Section 21 was amended.

10 Warrantless arrests & searches

CRIMINAL PROCEDURE

WHY IT'S FAILED

A long list of exceptions — and the default rule (a warrant is required) gets forgotten.

NAIL THIS

Lawful **warrantless arrests**: in flagrante delicto, hot pursuit (offense just committed, with personal knowledge of the facts), and a prisoner who escaped. Valid **warrantless searches**: incident to a lawful arrest, plain view, consented, stop-and-frisk, moving vehicle, customs, and exigent circumstances.

✓ **Quick win:** A search incident to arrest needs a lawful arrest first. Examiners love reversing the order — search, then arrest — to bait the wrong answer.

WHAT TO DO WITH THIS

Pick your two weakest subjects. Drill these first.

You don't have time to study everything to the same depth — and you don't need to. Protect the 60% floor in your weak subjects, master the topics above, and you've already removed the most common reasons people fall short.

This guide shows you where points are lost. It won't pass the exam for you, and no one can honestly promise that. The work is yours — my job is to make it lighter and clearer.

Want a plan built around your weak subjects? Let's talk for 15 minutes — no pressure, no sales pitch.

Book a free call with Coach Danica →

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