

DUKE LAW

1. Bar Exam Registration Deadlines

It is not too early to plan for the bar exam. If you plan on practicing as a lawyer, you will need to take and pass a bar exam – offered in every state in February and July each year. All states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. territories require passage of a bar exam before a lawyer is admitted to practice law in that jurisdiction or state. Most Duke graduates take the bar in July after graduation.

All jurisdictions require law students or graduates to register for the bar exam and to submit an application before taking the exam. Most state bar applications require letters of recommendation, references, and other personal information and charge an application fee. Additional supporting documents may be required in the applicant's interview.

Registration deadlines vary by state and change periodically, so it is important that you look at your state's bar exam deadlines soon. Fortunately, this is very easy to do. The National Conference of Bar Examiner's website has all the information you need, plus links to every state's own website. Start at <http://www.ncbex.org>, or go directly to <http://www.ncbex.org/bar-admissions/offices/>. The "Comprehensive Guide" on that website has information on all the states in summary form. Our website at <http://www.law.duke.edu/career/students/bar> also has an overview and additional links.

2. Model Professional Responsibility Examination ("MPRE")

Most states require students to pass the MPRE in order to be admitted to practice law. Students may take the MPRE before the end of their third year, and Duke 3Ls often take it in November. Please note: some states require you to take the MPRE *before* taking the rest of the bar, so be sure to check your state's requirements. For the upcoming MPRE, important dates are:

Regular Receipt Deadline	September 20, 2011
Late Receipt Deadline	October 6, 2011
Examination Date	November 5, 2011 (Saturday)

The MPRE is also offered in March (usually during Spring Break) and August (ten days after the full bar exam).

In the past, students who wait until the deadlines to register travel to Raleigh to take the test, while others are often able to take it in Durham. Go to <http://www.ncbex.org/multistate-tests/mpre/> to get more information about the test and to learn how to register.

3. Character & Fitness, Nuts & Bolts Program on September 20, 2011

Take advantage of the opportunity to speak with Fred P. Parker, Executive Director, NC Board of Law Examiners, and Lee Vlahos, the Assistant Executive Director. They will review key “nuts & bolts” about the bar exam common to most states, address how to respond to the critical “Character and Fitness” portion of your state’s bar application, and answer your questions from the insiders’ perspective. In addition, Assistant Dean Jason Belk will discuss how to address issues now that could implicate admission later. Fred and Lee grade bar exams, review ethical and professionalism issues that arise each year, and are involved in national bar exam issues. *This is the only formal presentation on the bar exam this year.*

4. Look Now

Again, it is critical to review your state’s requirements now, as they vary widely, may need lead time, and change periodically. If you do not have a specific state, then note the requirements of your leading 2-3 candidates. Please feel free to speak with us to discuss your specific situation if you are uncertain how to proceed. To give you a brief idea of how widely requirements vary by state, note the three examples and time involved below:

State A: In order to apply, you must hold a “*valid certification of fitness*”. Part of getting the certification involves *completing 2 fingerprint cards* that you get from the state. Thus, in order to apply by the deadline, you need to have started well in advance to have these cards completed.

State B: February 1 is the “regular filing deadline” for the July bar exam. However, State B requires that you need to have taken and received a certain score on *the MPRE “prior to sitting for” the bar examination*. Thus, *you must take the MPRE before the Bar in State B.*

State C: State C only offers a window of 30 days in which applications are accepted – not before, and not after.

5. If You are Uncertain about Which Bar Exam to Take

If you do not know in which state you will be working or are uncertain about which bar exam to take, identify the two or three most likely states. Compile those deadlines and application procedures in a single document; as the deadlines draw nearer, you will be able to decide whether to apply. Some students have chosen in the past to register for more than one bar exam (though it means paying two fees) to keep their options open as long as possible. Other students register for a bar exam, take it in July, and take another in February in the state where they end up working. Please set up a time to speak with a career counselor to discuss your possible states.

6. Preparing for the Bar

You do not need to pull out hornbooks and class outlines to prepare for the bar exam. Most people around the country prepare for the bar in the state in which they will be taking the bar, and many use commercial bar preparation companies in that state. However, there are options for taking a course and preparing for the bar outside of your state. Some companies sell everything including books, audio, mobile app products and online courses, and possibly other

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video products that you can purchase. While we are not endorsing Bar-Bri, they are one of the biggest and most national providers and often make it relatively easy to prepare in a class room setting outside of your state. Kaplan-PMBR has also developed comprehensive bar review courses. For the MPRE, both providers have short review courses, too. Private law firms typically will pay for or provide support for the bar preparation and registration fees of their graduating law students. Most employers other than private law firms will expect graduates to pay their own fees and study costs, however. PILF endeavors to support eligible students, and the law school through Bar-Bri has been able to assist some students taking the bar in certain states. More information is forthcoming later in the year.

Preparing for the Bar in Durham

For those using a preparation provider, there are two approaches to bar preparation – self-study or in a class-room setting. Many summers, 60-70 students prepare for the New York Bar Exam in Durham/Chapel Hill, watching Bar-Bri videos in a classroom setting; 20-30 students usually do the same for California. If enough students are interested in another state, Bar-Bri may agree to hold a program for that state in this area too – contact your state’s Bar-Bri office directly and express your interest in a video classroom setting at Duke, if interested. Of course, North Carolina is also held locally, usually at UNC and other locations throughout the state.

A video or live class setting typically does not matter for most students – there are no questions asked in the live sessions, in any case. One difference that students have noted in the past is that live sessions may start and end up to a week earlier than the video sessions, meaning there is less time after graduation to move to where you will be studying but more time after bar review classes end to finish up your preparation. Bar providers now offer self-study options, so you could prepare for the states noted above or any other state from basically any location.

Bar-Bri of New York and Bar-Bri of California are expected to offer their review courses for the Summer 2012 bar exams in the Duke Law School building, though this has not yet been confirmed.

6. Key Links

If you have further questions about the bar exam, please go to:

- www.ncbex.org – the National Conference on Bar Examiners gets you to *every state*.
- <http://www.abanet.org/legaled/baradmissions/basicoverview.html> This has a description in plain English of the *bar process*, as well as links to all the states.
- www.barbri.com – BarBri’s site with information about every state’s bar and prep courses.
- www.kaptest.com/Bar-Exam/Home/index.html - Kaplan-PMBR’s site for bar prep courses.