

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, 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> to find your state's Bar Examiner in the drop-down box under "Jurisdiction Information" on the home page. The "Comprehensive Guide" on that web page has information on all the states in summary form. The law school also has a page of valuable information at <https://law.duke.edu/academics/barapplication/>.

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, 2018
Late Receipt Deadline	September 27, 2018
Examination Date	November 10, 2018 (Saturday)

The MPRE is also offered in late March 2019 and mid-August 2019 (shortly after the full bar exam).

In the past, students who have registered well-ahead of time for the MPRE have been able to take it in Durham, while later registrants often travel to Raleigh to take the test. Go to <http://www.ncbex.org/exams/mpre/> to get more information about the test and to learn how to register.

3. Live Program on Thursday, September 27, 2018 – Bar Exam: What 3L's Need to Know, about Character & Fitness, Pro Bono Requirement, Nuts & Bolts

Take advantage of the opportunity to speak with Lee Vlahos, the Executive Director of the NC Board of Law Examiners. Ms. Vlahos 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. Ms. Vlahos grades bar exams, reviews ethical and professionalism issues that arise each year, and is involved in national bar exam issues. In addition, Dean Hutchison will discuss how to address issues today that could complicate admission later. We will also highlight the pro bono requirements for admission to the bar in New York. We highly recommend that you attend, but for those who cannot, the presentation will be recorded.

This is the only formal presentation on the bar exam this year.

4. Look Now for State Specific Requirements

Again, it is critical to review your state’s specific requirements now, as they vary widely and may change periodically. In addition, you will likely need several weeks (or months) lead time to gather the necessary materials. *If you do not yet know which state’s bar you plan to take, then note the requirements of your leading 2-3 candidates* (see Section 5 for more details). Please feel free to speak with a Career Counselor 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 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 take and receive 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: Requires 50 hours of “qualifying pro bono” work prior to applying for admission. (This is New York – for details: <http://www.nycourts.gov/attorneys/probono/baradmissionreqs.shtml>)

State D: Participates in the Uniform Bar Exam, which means in addition to the main bar exam it may offer its state specific portion at other times of the year requiring a separate registration.

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. In the past, some students have chosen 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

Most students will use a commercial bar preparation company to study for the bar exam. All bar prep companies offer courses in the state of the bar, and 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 other products. While we are not endorsing any prep company, Bar-Bri, Kaplan, and Themis are the three largest bar prep companies. You should research all three to see which might be the best fit for you. States using the Uniform Bar Exam may have their own preparation materials for their states' portion – for example the New York Law Exam is offered four times per year and candidates must prepare by taking the New York Law Course online. For the MPRE, multiple 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 and Kaplan-PMBR, has been able to assist some students taking the bar in certain states with costs. More information on these programs is forthcoming later in the year.

Preparing for the Bar in Durham

When using a commercial provider, there are two approaches to bar preparation – self-study or in a classroom setting. Many summers, 60-70 Duke graduates prepare for the New York Bar Exam in Durham/Chapel Hill, watching Bar-Bri or Kaplan videos in a classroom setting; 20-30 students usually do the same for California. If enough students are interested in another state, Bar-Bri or Kaplan may agree to hold a program for that state in this area too – contact your state's Bar-Bri or Kaplan office directly and express your interest in a video classroom setting here. 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. Themis and the other Bar prep providers now offer self-study options, so you could prepare for the states noted above or any other state from basically any location.

6. Key Links

- www.ncbex.org – the National Conference on Bar Examiners gets you to *every state*.
- http://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/bar_admissions.html
This has a description in plain English of the bar process with links to related topics.
- www.barbri.com – BarBri's site with information about every state's courses.
- www.kaptest.com/Bar-Exam/Home/index.html - Kaplan-PMBR's site for prep courses.
- www.themisbar.com – Themis site for prep courses.
- <https://law.duke.edu/academics/barapplication/> - the Law School's current page.