

Duke Law Certification in Skills and Professional Values for Applicants for Admission to the New York Bar

Section 520.18 of the New York Rules of the Court of Appeals for Admission of Attorneys and Counselors at Law requires that applicants to the New York Bar demonstrate competence in skills and professional values. The requirement applies to all JDs who commenced their studies after August 1, 2016, and all LL.M.s who commenced their studies after August 1, 2018. Section 520.18 provides five “pathways” for certification. Duke Law expects all JD graduates will be certified under Pathway 1. The following memo describes Duke Law’s satisfaction of the Pathway 1 requirements.

Duke Law’s adopted [Learning Outcomes](#) ensure that all JD graduates acquire the skills and professional values required by Section 520.18. The Learning Outcomes include knowledge and understanding of substantive and procedural law; legal analysis and reasoning, legal research, problem-solving, and written and oral communication in the legal context; exercise of proper professional and ethical responsibilities to clients and the legal system; and other professional skills needed for competent and ethical participation as a member of the legal profession.

Duke Law requires all students to complete seven prescribed foundational courses (Civil Procedure, Criminal Law, Constitutional Law, Contract Law, Legal Analysis, Research and Writing (LARW), Property Law, and Tort Law). In addition, all students must complete a substantial research and writing project (SRWP); a course in ethics and professional responsibility; six credits in simulation courses, clinics and/or externships (the “Experiential Learning” requirement); and two non-academic Professional Development credits (for JDs entering law school in Fall 2018 or later). Through these requirements, Duke Law ensures that all graduates meet the adopted Learning Outcomes.

In the required foundational courses, Duke Law students develop knowledge and understanding of core substantive and procedural law. This includes developing an understanding of the interdisciplinary nature of the law and its role in society, as well as preparing to take and pass state bar examinations. Students also develop other skills necessary to their law school and legal careers, including the ability to identify facts and legal issues, understand and dissect legal arguments, and communicate complex legal concepts orally and in writing. Students build on these skills in their upper-level doctrinal courses.

Duke Law’s legal writing curriculum teaches the skills required for legal analysis and reasoning, legal research, problem-solving, and written and oral communication. In Duke’s first-year LARW course, assignments require students to gain competency in legal research, memo and brief drafting, and oral advocacy. The SRWP requirement builds on this foundation by requiring all upper-level students to produce—under faculty supervision—an original analytic paper based on thorough independent research.

Each JD student also completes a two-credit course in ethics and professionalism whereby they learn the exercise of proper professional and ethical responsibilities. Specifically,

students are required to demonstrate an understanding of (a) the laws, rules, and norms governing the legal profession, and a commitment to ethical practice; (b) the responsibility of the lawyer as a public citizen, through pro bono activities, public service, or other work intended to improve the law and legal institutions in service to society; (c) how to think, perform, and conduct themselves as professionals; and (d) the personal challenges that can affect legal professionals and an awareness of how to manage these challenges.

Duke Law students must also complete the Experiential Learning requirement—at least six credits in simulation courses, clinics and/or externships. Through these courses, students learn and practice skills integral to professional practice, including interviewing, counseling, negotiation, fact development and analysis, trial practice, document drafting, conflict resolution, collaboration, cultural competency, use of technology, public speaking in meetings and in court, time and project management, and attention to detail.

Finally, Duke Law's required professional development curriculum is designed to provide students with the additional tools necessary to succeed in the classroom and in their careers. Students attend several classroom sessions during their first year of law school devoted to topics including effective study techniques, outlining, exam-taking, networking, interviewing, professional communication, and wellness. In addition, students are required to connect their classroom studies with their summer work by engaging in goal setting and self-reflection before and after each summer, which is tied to Duke's Learning Outcomes and intended to inform individual course selection. Through this, students learn to prioritize tasks and manage their time between school, career, and other commitments. Students also learn to be open and responsive to constructive feedback and to engage in self-evaluation, self-critique, and improvement.

Duke Law will certify compliance with Pathway 1 for all students who satisfactorily complete all graduation requirements. Satisfactory completion is defined as earning a passing grade or credit.