MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the LL.M. Class

From: Aimée Houghton
Assistant Dean for Graduate Legal Studies

Re: Law Student Registration with State Bar Authorities and Bar Admission Questions and Answers - Resources

Date: April 4, 2017

This memo is intended as a reminder for those of you that attended the NY Bar Program session in August or for those of you interested in registering for the bar exam in another state. As of July 2016, New York moved to the Uniform Bar Exam (UBE). In addition to taking and passing the UBE, applicants must also take and complete an online course in New York-specific law, the New York Law Course (NYLC), and must take and pass an online examination, the New York Law Exam (NYLE). http://www.nybarexam.org/UBE/UBE.html

Bar admission rules and examinations will continue to vary state to state (though virtually all have common elements such as the MBE, MPRE and MPT, and state-specific sections with essays and/or multiple choice questions). You should consult the rules for the particular state(s) in which you plan to practice. Resources for doing so are listed at the end of this memorandum.

The most common states LL.M. graduates select for bar admission are California and New York. Therefore answers to the questions set out below are specifically geared to New York; however, as most states have similar components and rules, they should provide general information applicable to most states in the U.S. If you plan to take the bar exam in a state other than New York, be sure to familiarize yourself with the rules for that jurisdiction.

Foreign-educated lawyers should request an evaluation of academic credentials 9 months prior to the NY exam date (https://www.nybarevaluation.org/Intro.aspx). Applicants qualifying to sit for the bar examination must file with the Board a completed Certificate of Law School Attendance Form, together with the completed Specimen of Applicant’s Handwriting Form, no later than February 1st for the February exam and no later than June 15th for the July exam. The Registrar’s office helps coordinate completion of both forms in the spring.

http://www.nybarexam.org/Docs/LLMCertificateofAttendanceForm.pdf
You should also be aware that all state bar authorities will request the Dean of the Law School or the Dean of Students to certify that an applicant is of good moral character and fit to be a member of the bar. **Bar authorities often ask us for a copy of your law school admissions application, so please be sure that you have responded with 100% accuracy on all admissions questions, including Character and Fitness:**

“Have you ever been the subject of disciplinary proceedings; warned, placed on probation, or suspended for academic, nonacademic, or any other reason by any of the colleges, universities, graduate schools, or professional schools you have attended; or are any such proceedings pending?”

**AND**

“Have you ever been charged with or convicted of a crime, including expunged offenses, other than a minor traffic violation, or are charges pending?”

You are under a continuing obligation to update all answers on your application once you have matriculated at Cornell Law School and during law school.

Any student matriculating at Cornell Law School consents to the mutual exchange of information, for educational and bar admission purposes, between the school and the bar examiners or other authorities of any jurisdiction to which that student seeks admission.

If you have additional questions regarding the bar examination and admission process, please do not hesitate to speak with Dean Houghton. You must also pay attention to notices distributed by the Registrar’s Office in Scoops and via e-mail regarding bar exam information and registration. Many of these notices require a response from you and are often time sensitive. More bar exam registration information is available at the Registrar’s Office website: [http://www.lawschool.cornell.edu/registrar/index.cfm](http://www.lawschool.cornell.edu/registrar/index.cfm) (select the “Bar Exam Information” link on the left navigation pane)

Below are questions submitted by members of the CLSA in the past along with short answers. In most cases additional information is available from either official or unofficial sources on the internet and you should consult those resources for the most up to date information on the bar exam. For starters, you should consult the official website of the New York State Board of Law Examiners. The Board’s website includes detailed information about the examination and answers to the most common questions regarding the bar examination: [http://www.nybarexam.org/](http://www.nybarexam.org/). We recommend strongly that you use the Board’s website and their resources.

**Questions and Answers:**

- **What subjects are covered on the bar exam?**
  
  Course materials for the NY Law Examination are available here: [https://www.newyorklawcourse.org/CourseMaterials/NewYorkCourseMaterials.pdf](https://www.newyorklawcourse.org/CourseMaterials/NewYorkCourseMaterials.pdf)
Applicants taking the California bar exam should review the list of covered topics on the State Bar of CA website: http://admissions.calbar.ca.gov/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=VQF73Jr-8iE%3D&tabid=250.

- **When do graduates usually take the bar exam?**
In New York the bar exam is given twice per year on the last Tuesday and Wednesday of February and July. Virtually all states follow a similar pattern. Most law students take the bar exam in July following graduation; however, some students may wait and take the bar exam in February following graduation. The *Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination* (MPRE) may be taken prior to graduation from law school and many applicants take the exam following completion of a professional responsibility course while in law school. The MPRE is given 3 times per year in March, August and November. The exam is often given in Ithaca in both November and March. In August it is given in other large cities, such as Syracuse. You must have a qualifying score of 85 on the MPRE before you may be sworn in to practice.

- **When and how do I register for the New York State Bar Examination?**
Under current rules, you must register for the July examination between April 1 and April 30 of the year in which you plan to take the bar examination. The registration period for the February bar examination is between November 1 and November 30 of the year prior to the February examination. You register on-line at the Board of Law Examiners’ website: https://www.nybarapply.org/.

To apply for the bar examination you must register with the *National Council of Bar Examiners* (the organization that administers the UBE, MBE, and the MPRE). The entry page for the New York Online Bar Exam Application (at the above link) includes an explanation about the NCBE Number requirement along with a link to the NCBE website. On the New York application there is a field where you need to insert your NCBE Number. Obtaining a NCBE number is required and is a very simple process.

- **Who may take the bar exam?**
In New York, J.D. graduates of any ABA accredited law school may take the bar exam provided their course of study meets the New York-specific educational requirements. Foreign-trained lawyers must meet specific educational requirements, usually including completing an LL.M. degree at an ABA-approved law school with at least 24 credits of law study including specific coursework. Foreign-trained lawyers should consult the Board’s website for a description of the rules: http://www.nybarexam.org/Foreign/ForeignLegalEducation.htm.

- **How do applicants study for the bar exam?**
  - **Are there preparation courses?**
    Yes. Most applicants study for the bar exam by taking one or more bar exam preparation courses immediately following graduation from law school, though several offer specific modules for law students while in law school prior to graduation. Currently, programs are offered in Ithaca by *BarBri* and *Kaplan*. There are also on-line bar review courses offered by *Themis Bar Review* and others. The law school does not specifically endorse or recommend any particular
bar review course provider. Occasionally, claims of false or misleading advertising by bar review course providers circulate around the law school; therefore, we encourage you to carefully compare the promotional materials provided by the review course providers.

- **What do the courses offer?**
  Most of the bar review courses offer several options, usually including a full course that covers the *Multistate Bar Exam* (MBE), the *Multistate Professional Responsibility Exam* (MPRE), the *Multistate Performance Test* (MPT) and the New York State and Local Section, as well as courses covering one or more of the components of the bar exam (MBE, MPRE, MPT, NY portion).

- **Do I need to take several courses?**
  That is up to you. Most Cornell graduates take only one course.

- **How much do they cost?**
  The cost varies depending on how many components of the exam the course is covering. You should consult with the representatives of the various providers for specific cost information and pricing options, discounts (most providers offer various discounts throughout the year) and tuition assistance; however, you can expect to pay up to $4,000 for the review courses. In addition to the review course, the bar exam registration fee for foreign trained lawyers in New York is $750.00. Some private employers provide reimbursement or a stipend to cover these costs.

- **Should I take certain courses in law school to prepare for the bar exam?**
  Not necessarily. Note that there is a high correlation between academic performance in law school and bar passage on the first attempt. If your grades are weak, you are encouraged to seek academic advice from Dean Houghton.

- **How long is the bar examination?**
  The New York bar examination is taken over 2 consecutive days. The Board of Law Examiners provides the following description and schedule on its website ([http://www.nybarexam.org/TheBar/TheBar.htm](http://www.nybarexam.org/TheBar/TheBar.htm)).

- **Where is the bar exam given?**
  In New York State, the bar exam is administered in **Buffalo**, the **Albany** area, **New York City** and **Brooklyn**. Information on test sites is available at: [http://www.nybarexam.org/TheBar/TheBar.htm#LOCATIONS](http://www.nybarexam.org/TheBar/TheBar.htm#LOCATIONS). If you are taking the bar exam in another state, be sure to check with that state’s bar examination authorities.

- **May I use my laptop computer?**
  In New York the answer is “yes,” provided space is available. In recent administrations of the NY bar exam all applicants who requested using a laptop were able to do so. Please be aware that not all states allow applicants to use laptops; check with the bar admissions authorities in the state(s) where you plan to take the bar exam. Information on laptop use in New York is available on the BOLE website: [http://www.nybarexam.org/TheBar/TheBar.htm#laptop](http://www.nybarexam.org/TheBar/TheBar.htm#laptop).
• **How do applicants pay for the bar exam and bar review courses?**
  Many private employers either advance or reimburse for bar admission costs, including the bar review courses and registration fees. If your employer does not cover the cost, you must pay for it yourself.

  - **Are loans available?**
    Yes, for some LL.M. students. Bar study loans may be available from private lenders for bar exam and review course expenses if you meet specified qualifications (e.g., citizenship, financial guarantor, job offer, etc.).

  - **Other options?**
    Some review courses will agree to payment plans, scholarships, or part-time work for the program to allow applicants to pay for the bar review course. You should speak directly with your bar review course administrator if you are unable to afford the review course.

• **What if I want to take the bar exam in more than one state?**
  Several states (often in close proximity) schedule their examinations so it is possible to take 2 bar examinations concurrently. Since the MBE is given on the same day in every jurisdiction, it is possible for applicants to take a concurrent bar examination in a state that gives their essay or local section on Thursday. It is the responsibility of the applicant to determine the requirements of the other jurisdiction and whether or not it is feasible to take a concurrent examination. You may choose to take the MBE portion of the examination in another jurisdiction, as part of the latter’s bar examination and your MBE scaled score in the other jurisdiction will be combined with the your scores on the New York portion of the examination taken on the previous day as if you had taken the entire examination in New York. You must notify the Board of Law Examiners in writing of your intention to take the MBE in another jurisdiction and it must be noted in the appropriate area on your application form for New York. If you elect to take the MBE concurrently in another jurisdiction and wish to transfer that score to New York, or you wish to transfer the MBE score taken in New York to another jurisdiction, it is the your responsibility to timely request a transfer of the MBE score. You must arrange for the transfer of the MBE score ([http://www.ncbex.org/about-ncbe-exams/mba/mba-faq/](http://www.ncbex.org/about-ncbe-exams/mba/mba-faq/)). Failure to timely transfer your MBE score to New York (by April 1st for Feb exam; Oct 1st for July exam) shall result in the nullification of your bar examination scores.

  Note that an increasing number of states now use the Uniform Bar Exam, which features varying degrees of “portability.”

• **How long does it take to receive the results of my examination?**
  In New York the bar exam results for the July examination are usually available between late-October and mid-November; the results from the February examination are usually available mid-May. The results of the bar examination, in the form of written pass/fail notices, are emailed to all applicants on the same day. The day the results are released, a results lookup page is available at the Board’s website for all applicants to view their results. The next day, a list of all successful applicants is posted on the Board’s website and on the website of the New York Law Journal. Some states are able to complete the grading of bar exams earlier than New York given the smaller number of test takers.
• **What are the next steps if I pass the examination?**

  **Application for Admission/Character and Fitness Investigation:** Shortly after the bar examination, the New York Board of Law Examiners sends to the Supreme Court, Appellate Division in each of the state’s four judicial departments, a list containing the names and addresses of the applicants from that department who took the examination. Each department then sends admission application forms to each applicant on its list in order to expedite the admission process by permitting the applicants to complete and file the forms prior to receipt of the results of the examination. The forms must be filed within **three years** of the date of the Board’s initial letter notifying the applicant of successful completion of the bar examination. The admission forms, which are the same for all four departments, serve as the basis for inquiry by the Committees on Character and Fitness into the applicant’s character and fitness to be members of the Bar. If an applicant has a change of address resulting in a change in Department between the time of receiving the application forms and the results of the bar examination, the applicant should immediately notify the Board in writing of such change. The Board, in turn, will acknowledge receipt of the change to such applicant and notify each Department involved of the change. The procedures for admission following successfully passing the bar exam vary in every state and you should be sure to research the rules in every jurisdiction where you are seeking admission.

• **What happens if I fail?**

  You may retake the bar exam. In New York there is no limit on the number of times you may retake the bar exam. Some states restrict the number of times the bar exam may be taken.

• **Does the new 50-hour Pro Bono Requirement for admission as an attorney in New York apply to me?**

  On September 14, 2012, the New York State Court of Appeals adopted a new rule requiring applicants for admission to the New York State bar to perform 50 hours of pro bono services ([http://www.nycourts.gov/attorneys/probono/baradmissionreqs.shtml](http://www.nycourts.gov/attorneys/probono/baradmissionreqs.shtml)). Any applicant for admission to practice in New York after January 1, 2015 must satisfy the 50-hour requirement. The requirement need not be fulfilled before you apply to take the New York bar examination; however, the 50 hours must be completed before filing your application for admission.

  *Frequently Asked Questions* about the *Pro Bono Requirement* prepared by the Office of Court Administration are available at the following website: [http://www.nycourts.gov/attorneys/probono/FAQsBarAdmission.pdf](http://www.nycourts.gov/attorneys/probono/FAQsBarAdmission.pdf).
Bar Examination Resources

National Bar Exam and Admission Resources:

Office of the Consultant on Legal Education /
Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar
American Bar Association
321 N. Clark Street, 21st Floor
Chicago, IL 60610
Phone: (312) 988-6738
Fax: (312) 988-5681
http://www.abanet.org/legaled/baradmissions/bar.html

National Council of Bar Examiners
402 West Wilson Street
Madison, WI 53703-3614
Phone: 608-280-8550
Fax: 608-280-8552
TDD: 608-661-1275
Email MBE: contact_mbe@ncbex.org
http://www.ncbex.org/

State Bar Exam Resources:

New York State Board of Law Examiners
Corporate Plaza - Building 3
254 Washington Avenue Extension
Albany, NY 12203-5195
Phone: (518) 452-8700
Toll Free: (800) 342-3335
Fax: (518) 452-5729
http://www.nybarexam.org/

California Bar Examiners
San Francisco (Main Office)
180 Howard Street
San Francisco, CA 94105
415-538-2000
213-765-1500
415-538-2300
http://www.calbar.ca.gov/state/calbar/calbar_generic.jsp?cid=10115

Massachusetts Board of Law Examiners
Suffolk County Courthouse
3 Pemberton Square
7th Floor - Room 707
Boston, MA 02108 Phone: (617) 482-4466
Fax: (617) 542-5943
http://www.mass.gov/bbe
Bar Exam Review Course Providers (not an exhaustive list):

BarBri
http://www.barbri.com

KAPLAN
http://www.kaplan.com/Bar_Review

Pieper Bar Review
http://www.pieperbar.com

Themis Bar Review
http://www.ThemisBarReview.com

Information on additional bar exam review course providers can be found by doing an Internet search (e.g., “NY bar exam review course” will bring up a number of other course providers and preparation services). As noted in our memorandum, the law school does not specifically endorse or recommend any particular bar review course providers.