

The American Bar Examination

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The American Bar Examination

Introduction:

The USA is a federal system, with no nationwide qualification for lawyers. Rather each state sets its own criteria for permission to sit the state Bar Examination. Additionally, nearly all states require candidates to pass the Multistate Bar Examination (MBE) and the Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination (MPRE). Some states also require the passing of the Multistate Essay Examination (MEE) and/or the Multistate Performance Test (MPT).

Most states insist on candidates holding an undergraduate degree (of any discipline) and completing a 3-year professional Juris Doctor (JD) degree in the USA. Many states require the JD degree to have been obtained at a law school approved by the American Bar Association. Non-ABA accredited law schools may only qualify attendees to practise in the state in which the school is situated.

Students who have completed an LLM *may* qualify to sit the bar exam in New Hampshire, New York, Virginia, North Carolina. The criteria for eligibility to take the bar examination or to otherwise qualify for bar admission are set by each state's bar association. Contact the bar association of the state in which you intend to practise law for information on test dates and sites.

A list of state bar associations can be found on the ABA website at:

<http://www.abanet.org/barserv/stlobar.html>

Course fees per academic year can range from \$20,000 to \$45,000. When considering funding for your degree, you should also consider living expenses, books and personal costs. Additional fees are payable for submitting an application, sitting the Bar Examination and following the preparatory review course.

N.B. neither having a JD degree or passing a state Bar Examination give the right to work in the U.S. (When applying for a student visa, a student must show they intend to return to their home country after completing the course).

Students who wish to gain experience of US law but practise in the UK are advised to undertake the one-year degree in law (LLM).

For further details, see the Fulbright Commission's website- www.fulbright.co.uk for the information sheet "Legal Education in the US".

The New York Bar does consider holders of qualifying UK University Law degrees as eligible to sit their Bar Examinations without first obtaining the JD or LLM. Whilst successful candidates are immediately eligible to practise as an associate attorney, there is no guarantee of employment – most US law firms would look for related legal experience.

The New York State Bar Examination:

The examination can only be taken in New York State – for non-US residents, the location is Albany. Applications should be requested from the State Board of Law Examiners, Corporate Plaza-Building 3, 254 Washington Avenue Extension, Albany NY 12203 – 5195 Tel: 001 518 453 5990 or downloadable at www.nybarexam.org. The examination takes 2 days comprising a New York State Law section: a mixture of essays and multiple choice questions and the Multistate Bar Exam: multiple choice questions. Applicants must also pass a Multistate Performance Test (MPT) question.

Costs

- Students should consider these carefully. The Examination fee is \$250 (in addition to the Bar Examination Course – see course providers below)
- Flights to the USA
- Accommodation for 2-3 weeks
- Attendance of the admission ceremony.

NB. New York State does not accept holders of the Graduate Diploma in Law as eligible for the Bar Examination. Such students, to qualify, would need to complete some further study at an ABA-approved law school in the US. The situation has been under discussion and GDL students should contact the New York Bar for further information.

California Bar Examination:

Contact: The State Bar of California, 180 Howard Street, San Francisco, CA 94105 Tel: 001 415 538 2000

www.calbar.ca.gov

California State allows holders of an LLB or Graduate Diploma in Law who successfully qualify as solicitors or barristers to sit their bar examination. This means that those individuals must successfully complete the LPC or BPTC and a training contract or pupillage. Students who possess an LLB may be allowed to sit their bar examination with completion of a US LLM.

Bar Examination Course Providers in the UK:

This providers run preparatory courses

Central Law Training

A 5-month evening and weekend lecture programme commences in London every February and September for the New York Bar examination. There is also a home study programme for both New York & California.

Further details from: -

Central Law Training, Wrens Court, 52-54 Victoria Road, Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham B72 1SX.

www.clt.co.uk

Tel: - 0121 355 0900

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