



# PRESS RELEASE

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**New York State  
Unified Court System**

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## **Rules for New York Bar Admission Amended to Include New Experiential Training Component**

**NEW YORK** — In an effort to ensure that prospective attorneys possess the requisite skills and professional values for effective, ethical and responsible practice, Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman today announced changes to New York’s admission rules that will require bar applicants to complete a skills competency component.

The new measures, which have been designed to accommodate New York’s diverse bar applicant pool, are outlined in a report to Judge Lippman and the Court of Appeals issued by the Task Force on Experiential Learning and Admission to the Bar. Led by Court of Appeals Associate Judge Jenny Rivera and made up of an accomplished group of legal educators and practitioners, the task force was formed in June 2015 at the suggestion of the Advisory Committee on the Uniform Bar Examination (UBE). Along with its recommendation that New York adopt the UBE, the advisory committee, in a report released this past spring, proposed exploring whether New York’s admission requirements should be amended to include, among other things, an experiential learning component.

Under the new rules, applicants for admission in New York State must complete a skills competency component, choosing one of the following five pathways to meet this new requirement:

- Pathway 1 allows an applicant to satisfy the requirement by submitting a certification from the applicant's law school confirming that the school's curriculum incorporates the teaching of skills and professional values required for participation in the legal profession, and that the applicant has acquired sufficient competency in those skills and sufficient familiarity with those values. This pathway recognizes that law schools should be permitted the freedom to identify and articulate the necessary skills and professional values, as well as the ways in which the schools will measure their students' attainment of these skills and understanding of these values.
- Pathway 2 permits an applicant to meet the requirement by submitting proof from the law school that the student completed 15 credits of practice-based experiential coursework designed to foster professional competency training. Students may earn as many as six of the 15 credits for law school certified non-credit bearing summer employment programs, provided those programs meet certain criteria. At least 50 hours of full-time employment is required for each substituted credit.
- Pathway 3 provides that any applicant who has successfully completed the Pro Bono Scholars program will be deemed to have satisfied the skills competency requirement. The Pro Bono Scholars Program, implemented in New York in 2014, gives law students the option to take the bar exam early and spend their final semester of study performing pro bono work.
- Pathway 4 allows applicants to complete a post-graduation six-month apprenticeship in the United States, or in a commonwealth, territory or country outside the United States, under the supervision of an attorney authorized to practice and in good standing in the jurisdiction where the work is performed. The apprenticeship can be paid or unpaid.
- Pathway 5 allows an applicant who has been authorized to practice law in another state, or in a commonwealth, territory or country outside the United States, to meet the skills competency requirement by establishing that the applicant has been in good standing and practiced law full-time for one year or part-time for two years.

The skills competency requirement will apply to all new applicants for admission, whether educated in the United States or abroad. To give applicants and law schools enough time to adapt to the new requirement, it will first apply to domestically trained J.D. students who begin their program of study after August 1, 2016. This same implementation date applies to foreign applicants who qualify for the bar exam based solely on their foreign legal education. For foreign-educated applicants who qualify for the bar examination after the completion of a qualifying LL.M. program, the skills competency requirement will first

apply to those commencing their program after August 1, 2018. The requirement will not apply to applicants for admission on motion (22 NYCRR 520.10), those who qualify for the bar exam under the law office study program (22 NYCRR 520.4), or individuals who sit for the bar exam based on graduation from an unapproved law school and five years of practice (22 NYCRR 520.5).

“The new skills competency requirement for bar admission in New York will go a long way toward ensuring that newly minted attorneys are practice-ready and prepared to meet the myriad — and emerging — demands of the legal profession in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I commend Judge Rivera and the esteemed members of the Task Force on Experiential Learning and Admission to the Bar for their comprehensive, thoughtful study of this important issue and their vital role in bringing these important reforms to fruition,” said Judge Lippman.

“I want to thank Judge Lippman for giving me the opportunity to lead the efforts of this highly talented, dedicated task force whose outstanding work has resulted in a new system that incorporates both flexibility and creativity, offering five different pathways by which bar applicants may demonstrate their readiness for real-world practice,” said Judge Rivera.

The amended rules are available at:

[www.nycourts.gov/rules/Part520-Rule-Change-Final-121015.pdf](http://www.nycourts.gov/rules/Part520-Rule-Change-Final-121015.pdf)

For a copy of the report issued by the Task Force on Experiential Learning and Admission to the Bar, go to:

[www.nycourts.gov/publications/pdfs/Experiential-Learning-Admiss2Bar-Report122015.pdf](http://www.nycourts.gov/publications/pdfs/Experiential-Learning-Admiss2Bar-Report122015.pdf)

The proposed rule changes were released for public comment in October 2015. Submissions received during the comment period may be viewed at:

[www.nycourts.gov/rules/Part520-Public-Comments-Received-FINAL.pdf](http://www.nycourts.gov/rules/Part520-Public-Comments-Received-FINAL.pdf)

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