

State of New York

Court of Appeal

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Impact of the Uniform Bar Examination in New York

The Court of Appeals announced today the completion of a three-year study of the impact of the transition from the traditional New York bar examination to the Uniform Bar Examination conducted by the National Conference of Bar Examiners (NCBE). The study was intended to address the concern that adopting the UBE would exacerbate differences in bar passage rates for certain subgroups of the test-taker population.

Researchers at the NCBE compared bar passage rates by race, ethnicity and gender on the traditional examination with the bar passage rates on the UBE, including to the extent information was available, analysis of performance in comparison to other metrics.

The results of the study are presented in a comprehensive report which, along with its executive summary and appendices are available on the website of the State Board of Law examiners at: www.nybarexam.org/UBEReport.html. The ultimate conclusion of the report is that the impact of New York adopting the UBE on the performance of candidates taking the bar examination, overall and grouped by race, ethnicity, and gender, was small at most and generally positive. The increases seen in mean bar examination scores and passing rates, as well as differences in performance by gender and racial and ethnic groups were generally, but not exclusively attributed by the NCBE to differences in background information used in the study, including undergraduate grade point averages, Law School Admission Test scores, and law school grade point averages.

This study is an important contribution to the understanding of performance on the bar examination and its relationship to other measures. Significantly, it provides a great deal of data that will be of interest to law schools, to bar examiners and the courts they serve, and to the profession more broadly.

Chief Judge Janet DiFiore said, “I want to thank the National Conference of Bar examiners for conducting this careful and exhaustive study on our behalf. This is an important component in our examination of the impact of adoption of the UBE on candidates seeking admission to the bar in New York.”