

## GUIDELINES FOR DEAN'S LETTER

The educational eligibility requirements to sit for the Georgia bar examination are: (1) an undergraduate degree from an accredited institution and (2) the first degree in law from a school approved by the American Bar Association. These requirements are found at Part B, Section 4 of the Rules Governing Admission to the Practice of Law in Georgia (the Rules). The Rules contain a provision that allows the Board of Bar Examiners “for good cause shown by clear and convincing evidence” to waive these requirements. (Part B, Section 4 of the Rules) In evaluating a petition for a waiver of the educational requirements, the Board considers the following criteria:

- (a) The educational background of the applicant;
- (b) The quality of the applicant's educational achievements;
- (c) The applicant's substantive employment history;
- (d) The career goals of the applicant.

The attached Waiver Process and Policy contains a list of the kinds of information that the Board has found helpful in reviewing petitions for waivers of the educational eligibility requirements of the Rules. The list includes the following at number 6:

A “Dean’s” letter, which is a statement from a Dean or the Dean’s designee on the faculty at an ABA-approved law school analyzing the legal education received and stating whether or not it is the equivalent of an ABA-approved legal education (Guidelines for Dean’s Letter is attached. The Guidelines for Dean’s Letter provides direction on the purpose and scope of the Dean’s Letter.).

In response to inquires about the scope of the Dean’s letter, the Board of Bar Examiners has developed the following guidelines:

1. The Dean’s letter is one of the eight kinds of information that the Board uses in considering the criteria set forth above. The Dean’s letter is particularly relevant to criteria (a) and (b). Therefore, the focus of the dean’s letter should be an analysis of the law school education received by the applicant as compared to an ABA-approved legal education pursuant to the ABA Standards for Approval of Law Schools, particularly the Standards on the Program of Legal Education (Standards 301-306).
2. If the letter is from the designee of a dean, the letter should state the fact of the designation.

3. The dean or professor should include a statement of his or her academic, teaching, and administrative experience;
4. The analysis of the legal education received should include:
  - (a) Information about the non-ABA-approved law school, its history, mission, size, admission and Bar passage data (if applicable);
  - (b) Composition, number, and qualifications of the faculty;
  - (c) Course Materials used;
  - (d) Areas where the non-ABA-approved school does not meet the ABA Standards (e.g., library resources, physical facilities, non-common law curriculum);
  - (e) Courses taken by the applicant;
  - (f) Grades earned by the applicant;
  - (g) Whether the school offered the applicant the opportunity to participate in such activities as Moot Court, law journal, legal practice clinics, externships, pro bono activities, other skills training; whether the applicant in fact participated in such activities; if so, the achievements earned by the applicant.
5. The Board of Bar Examiners expects that all applicants who petition for an educational waiver are exceptional individuals. The charge to the Board of Bar Examiners from the Supreme Court of Georgia is to assess the competence of each applicant for admission to practice in Georgia, not to inquire into the character and fitness of the applicant. That is the province of the Board to Determine Fitness of Bar Applicants. The Dean's letter, therefore, should not focus on the personal character and qualities of the applicant.
6. At the conclusion of the analysis of the law school education received by the applicant as compared to an ABA-approved legal education, the dean or professor should state whether or not the education received was equivalent to an ABA-approved legal education.