

27 NCAC 01D .2505 STANDARDS FOR CERTIFICATION AS A SPECIALIST

Each applicant for certification as a specialist in criminal law or the subspecialty of state criminal law shall meet the minimum standards set forth in Rule .1720 of this subchapter. In addition, each applicant shall meet the following standards for certification:

(a) Licensure and Practice - An applicant shall be licensed and in good standing to practice law in North Carolina as of the date of the application. During the period of certification an applicant shall continue to be licensed and in good standing to practice law in North Carolina.

(b) Substantial Involvement - An applicant shall affirm to the board that the applicant has experience through substantial involvement in the practice of criminal law.

- (1) Substantial involvement shall mean during the five years immediately preceding the application, the applicant devoted an average of at least 500 hours a year to the practice of criminal law, but not less than 400 hours in any one year. "Practice" shall mean substantive legal work, specifically including representation in criminal jury trials, done primarily for the purpose of providing legal advice or representation, or a practice equivalent.
- (2) "Practice equivalent" shall mean:
 - (A) Service as a law professor concentrating in the teaching of criminal law for one year or more, which may be substituted for one year of experience to meet the five-year requirement set forth in Rule .2505(b)(1) above;
 - (B) Service as a federal, state or tribal court judge for one year or more, which may be substituted for one year of experience to meet the five-year requirement set forth in Rule .2505(b)(1) above;
- (3) For the specialty of criminal law and the subspecialty of state criminal law, the board shall require an applicant to show substantial involvement by providing information that demonstrates the applicant's significant criminal trial experience such as:
 - (A) representation during the applicant's entire legal career in criminal trials concluded by jury verdict;
 - (B) representation as principal counsel of record in federal felony cases or state felony cases (Class G or higher);
 - (C) court appearances in other substantive criminal proceedings in criminal courts of any jurisdiction; and
 - (D) representation in appeals of decisions to the North Carolina Court of Appeals, the North Carolina Supreme Court, or any federal appellate court.

(c) Continuing Legal Education

In the specialty of criminal law and the state criminal law subspecialty, an applicant must have earned no less than 40 hours of accredited continuing legal education credits in criminal law during the three years preceding the application, which 40 hours must include the following:

- (1) at least 34 hours in skills pertaining to criminal law, such as evidence, substantive criminal law, criminal procedure, criminal trial advocacy and criminal trial tactics;
- (2) at least 6 hours in the area of ethics and criminal law.

(d) Peer Review

- (1) Each applicant for certification as a specialist in criminal law and the subspecialty of state criminal law must make a satisfactory showing of qualification through peer review.
- (2) All references must be licensed and in good standing to practice in North Carolina and must be familiar with the competence and qualifications of the applicant in the specialty field. The applicant consents to the confidential inquiry by the board or the specialty committee of the submitted references and other persons concerning the applicant's competence and qualifications.
- (3) Written peer reference forms will be sent by the board or the specialty committee to the references. Completed peer reference forms must be received from at least five of the references. The board or the specialty committee may contact in person or by telephone any reference listed by an applicant.
- (4) Each applicant must provide for reference and independent inquiry the names and addresses of the following: (i) ten lawyers and judges who practice in the field of criminal law and who are familiar with the applicant's practice, and (ii) opposing counsel and the judge in eight recent cases tried by the applicant to verdict or entry of order.
- (5) A reference may not be related by blood or marriage to the applicant nor may the reference be a partner or associate of the applicant at the time of the application.

(e) Examination - The applicant must pass a written examination designed to test the applicant's knowledge and ability.

- (1) Terms - The examination(s) shall be in written form and shall be given at such times as the board deems appropriate. The examination(s) shall be administered and graded uniformly by the specialty committee.
- (2) Subject Matter - The examination shall cover the applicant's knowledge in the following topics in criminal law, and/or in the subspecialty of state criminal law, as the applicant has elected:
 - (A) the North Carolina and Federal Rules of Evidence;
 - (B) state and federal criminal procedure and state and federal laws affecting criminal procedure;
 - (C) constitutional law;
 - (D) appellate procedure and tactics;
 - (E) trial procedure and trial tactics;
 - (F) criminal substantive law;
- (3) Required Examination Components.
 - (A) Criminal Law Specialty.

An applicant for certification in the specialty of criminal law must pass part I of the examination on general topics in criminal law and part II of the examination (federal and state criminal law).
 - (B) State Criminal Law Subspecialty.

An applicant for certification in the subspecialty of state criminal law must pass part I of the examination on general topics in criminal law and part III of the examination on state criminal law.

*History Note: Authority G.S. 84-23;
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