

**27 NCAC 01D .3105      STANDARDS FOR CERTIFICATION AS A SPECIALIST IN TRADEMARK LAW**

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

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

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

- (1) Substantial involvement shall mean that during the five years immediately preceding the application, the applicant devoted an average of at least 500 hours a year to the practice of trademark law, but not less than 400 hours in any one year.
- (2) Practice shall mean substantive legal work in trademark law done primarily for the purpose of legal advice or representation or a practice equivalent.
- (3) "Practice equivalent" shall mean:
  - (A) Service as a law professor concentrating in the teaching of trademark law which may be substituted for up to two years of experience to meet the five-year requirement set forth in Rule .3105(b)(1).
  - (B) Service as a trademark examiner at the USPTO or a functionally equivalent trademark office for any state or foreign government which may be substituted for up to two years of experience to meet the five-year requirement set forth in Rule .3105(b)(1).
  - (C) Service as an administrative law judge for the TTAB which may be substituted for up to three years of experience to meet the five-year requirement set forth in Rule .3105(b)(1).
- (4) The board may, in its discretion, require an applicant to provide additional information as evidence of substantial involvement in trademark law, including information regarding the applicant's participation, during his or her legal career, in the following: portfolio management, prosecution of trademark applications, search and clearance of trademarks, licensing, due diligence, domain name selection and dispute resolution, TTAB litigation, state court trademark litigation, federal court trademark litigation, trademark dispute resolution, and international trademark law.

(c) Continuing Legal Education - To be certified as a specialist in trademark law, an applicant must have earned no less than 36 hours of accredited continuing legal education credits in trademark law during the three years preceding application. The 36 hours must include at least 20 hours in trademark law and the remaining 16 hours in related courses including: business transactions, copyright, franchise law, internet law, sports and entertainment law, trade secrets, and unfair competition.

(d) Peer Review - An applicant must make a satisfactory showing of qualification through peer review. An applicant must provide the names of ten lawyers or judges who are familiar with the competence and qualification of the applicant in the specialty field. Written peer reference forms will be sent by the board or the specialty committee to each of the references. Completed peer reference forms must be received from at least five of the references. All references must be licensed and in good standing to practice law and must have significant legal or judicial experience in trademark law. An applicant consents to confidential inquiry by the board or the specialty committee to the submitted references and other persons concerning the applicant's competence and qualification.

- (1) A reference may not be related by blood or marriage to the applicant nor may the reference be a colleague at the applicant's place of employment at the time of the application.
- (2) The references shall be given on standardized forms provided by the board to each reference. These forms shall be returned to the board and forwarded by the board to the specialty committee.

(e) Examination - An applicant must pass a written examination designed to demonstrate sufficient knowledge, skills, and proficiency in the field of trademark law to justify the representation of special competence to the legal profession and the public.

- (1) Terms - The examination shall be given annually in written form and shall be administered and graded uniformly by the specialty committee.
- (2) Subject Matter - The examination shall cover the applicant's knowledge and application of trademark law and rules of practice, and may include the following statutes and related case law:
  - (A) The Lanham Act (15 U.S.C. § 1501 et seq.);
  - (B) Trademark Regulations (37 CFR Part 2);
  - (C) Trademark Manual of Examining Procedure (TMEP);

- (D) Trademark Trial and Appeal Board Manual of Procedure (TBMP);
- (E) The Trademark Counterfeiting Act of 1984 (18 U.S.C. § 2320 et seq.); and
- (F) North Carolina Trademark Act (N.C. Gen. Stat. Chap. 80).

*History Note: Authority G.S. 84-23;  
Approved by the Supreme Court March 8, 2013;  
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