

BRIDGE THE GAP FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

If your question is not answered, please contact the SC Bar-CLE Division at (803) 771-0333 or (800) 768-7787 ext. 130, or visit www.sctbar.org/bridgethegap

What is Bridge the Gap?

Rule 402(c) of the South Carolina Appellate Court Rules sets forth the requirements for admission to practice law in South Carolina. Rule 402(c)(8) requires all South Carolina Bar applicants to successfully complete the *Bridge the Gap* program sponsored by the South Carolina Bar, under the directive of the South Carolina Supreme Court, prior to admission to practice law.

Bridge the Gap is a three-day (Monday-Wednesday) intensive course sanctioned by the South Carolina Supreme Court and coordinated by the SC Bar-CLE Division in conjunction with the University of South Carolina School of Law. The program focuses on practical nuts and bolts skills. It is designed to assist both the law student in transition from law school to the practice of law and the lawyer new to the practice of law in South Carolina.

What is the SC Bar-CLE Division?

The SC Bar-CLE Division is a non-profit provider of quality MCLE and LEPR seminars. We present live, video replay, online, webcast and teleseminar programs covering every major practice area ie: ethics, technology, law office management, and trial and practice skills. Most of our live presentations are held in the USC Law School Auditorium on Fridays and are broadcast to as many as 15 satellite locations around South Carolina. We also produce and publish outstanding books and software covering all major practice and skills areas.

Who Should Attend?

All candidates for admission to the South Carolina Bar must complete the *Bridge the Gap* program as set out in Rule 402(c). Bridge The Gap registrants will include current second and third year law school students, law school graduates, attorneys licensed to practice in other states, and may include *inactive* members of the SC Bar seeking to return to active status.* *Attorneys licensed and practicing in South Carolina are not eligible to receive CLE credit for Bridge The Gap unless they have received special permission from the S.C. Supreme Court Commission on CLE and Specialization.* ***An inactive bar member who has practiced law in South Carolina or another jurisdiction during the immediately prior twelve months may become an active member by paying the difference in license fees if that member is current with mandatory continuing legal education (MCLE) requirements. After the first twelve months an active member who has completed the equivalent of the mandatory continuing legal education requirement for the proceeding calendar year, and who has filed a compliance statement with the Commission on Continuing Legal Education and Specialization and paid the filing fee may become an active member upon payment of the difference in license fees.**

What Should I Expect?

The *Bridge the Gap* program offers substantive professional responsibility issues on Day One, a review of the South Carolina Court System on the morning of Day Two, and a review of arbitration and mediation on the morning of Day Three. The afternoon sessions of Day Two and Day Three offer three concurrent sessions. Registrants may choose one of two sessions per time slot which features a topic that relates to the area(s) of law in which they plan to practice i.e., Real Estate, Probate and Estate Planning, Family Law, etc. If you are a licensed practitioner in another state or an inactive member of the South Carolina Bar and have been admitted to practice for at least five (5) years, you are not required to participate in the afternoon concurrent sessions on Days Two and Three.

When is it Offered?

Bridge the Gap is offered four times a year, March, May, August and October. There are two live programs held at the USC School of Law, one in March during the USC School of Law Spring Break and the other following the USC School of Law graduation. The summer and fall *Bridge the Gap* programs are a videotape presentation of one of the two earlier live programs.

How Much Does it Cost?

Tuition for Bridge the Gap is \$300. This cost includes all written materials for the entire three-day program, the entire first year's CLE requirements, and morning and afternoon refreshments each day. *A typical one-day, six-hour South Carolina Bar CLE seminar costs approximately \$195. The handout materials provided during the program would cost over \$750 if purchased individually.*

How do I Register?

To register, please fill out the registration form and return it to the SC Bar-CLE Division. Please note the appropriate deadlines for each program. Please make certain that you complete the **ENTIRE** registration form and include your payment. If you are a licensed practitioner in another state or an inactive SC Bar Member and have been admitted to practice for at least five (5) years, you are not required to participate in the afternoon concurrent sessions on Days Two and Three. *To qualify for this exemption, you must provide your Bar membership number(s) and identify the state(s) in which you are admitted to practice.* If this information cannot be substantiated, you will have to attend the concurrent sessions as outlined on the registration form. **Licensed practitioners are required to participate in all other segments of the program.**

Who are the Faculty Members?

The faculty for the program features members of South Carolina's Judiciary, the SC Bar, and the SC Bar Foundation staff. These professionals offer a wealth of practical knowledge and experience to program participants, both in their presentations and in the written materials prepared for the course.

Bridge the Gap faculty members do not receive monetary compensation or special teaching credit for their participation. Faculty members speak and provide extensive written materials strictly on a voluntary basis.

What about Materials?

Most speakers provide written materials in conjunction with their presentation. Each day, you will receive a set of materials corresponding to that day's lectures. You **MUST** check in with the registration desk **EACH DAY** to pick up your materials and to receive credit for attending each session.

The handout materials are designed to give you a brief substantive overview and a practical nuts and bolts approach to South Carolina law.

How is my Attendance Reported?

Upon successful completion of the Bridge the Gap program, your attendance will automatically be certified to the South Carolina Supreme Court. In the calendar year of admission, a new attorney has no filing requirement for CLE and no courses taken will be counted. If you have questions about CLE credit hours, please contact the SC Supreme Court's Commission on CLE & Specialization at (803) 799-5578 or commcle@bellsouth.net. If you have questions about other requirements for admission to the SC Bar or being sworn-in, please contact the SC Supreme Court's Office of Bar Admissions at (803) 734-1080.

As a New Admittee, What are my MCLE/LEPR Requirements?

Your attendance at Bridge the Gap completely fulfills all of your MCLE/LEPR compliance requirements only for the calendar year you are sworn in. You may carry forward 8.0 hours of MCLE, 2.0 of which are LEPR for the next calendar year. You will be required to obtain 6.0 additional hours in the second calendar year in which you are admitted. No MCLE/LEPR credit hours obtained in your year of admission will count for CLE credit. Note: For November admittees, your second calendar year starts January of the next year.

What if I Miss a Session?

Pursuant to the South Carolina Supreme Court, if you arrive late, leave a session early, or miss a portion of the Bridge the Gap program, you will be required to make up the portion(s) you missed at a later date. This can be arranged to view the videotaped segment(s) through the South Carolina Bar's CLE Division **BEFORE** your attendance at Bridge the Gap will be certified to the Office of Bar Admissions. **Roll calls may be taken at any time during the course of the program.**

How Should I Dress?

Dress is business casual. You may wish to bring a sweater or a jacket for your comfort. Please keep in mind that for many of you this will be the first impression that you will make on members of the South Carolina Bar and SC Judiciary.

Where Should I Stay?

For those of you coming from out of town, the Courtyard Marriott Downtown at USC is the most convenient hotel to the USC School of Law. For additional information or to make reservations, please call the hotel directly at (803) 799-7800. If you need information regarding other hotels in the area, please contact the Columbia Metropolitan Convention & Visitors Bureau at (800) 264-4884.

Where Should I Park?

Free limited parking may be available in the parking lot located directly behind the old Carolina Coliseum. You may not use reserved or faculty only parking spaces or the faculty lot adjacent to the Law School. If you plan to park in the non-faculty parking lot, please display your mailed confirmation card in your rear window. You may be ticketed if you park in this lot and either do not display your parking pass in your rear window and/or if you back into your parking space.

If you do not receive a confirmation card in the mail, you may request a parking pass by calling the SC Bar-CLE Division or obtain one upon check-in on the first morning of the program.

You may also find metered parking available on Greene, South Main, Devine and Assembly Streets, next to the Law School. Most parking meters accept only quarters, please bring adequate change.

Eligibility for Swearing-in

The Supreme Court's policy provides that an applicant will be eligible to be sworn in if the Office of Bar Admissions has received all required documentation **ten days before** the scheduled swearing-in ceremony. **An applicant who completes Bridge The Gap as his/her requirement for admission will be required to attend a swearing-in ceremony scheduled for the regular term of court, which is at least ten days after Bridge The Gap.** In order to be eligible for the swearing-in, you must meet the following requirements:

- 1) You must complete all requirements for admission with the completion of Bridge the Gap.
- 2) The South Carolina Bar-CLE Division must certify your completion of Bridge the Gap.
- 3) You must be dressed in attire that would be appropriate for an appearance before the South Carolina Supreme Court.
- 4) You must be prepared to pay the required \$50 fee. Checks should be made payable to the South Carolina Supreme Court.

How Many MCLE/LEPR Credits do I Have to Obtain Per Year?

Every attorney licensed to practice law in South Carolina must obtain 14 Mandatory Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) credits per year. At least 2 of these hours must be Legal Ethics & Professional Responsibility (LEPR) credit hours.

If I Obtain More Than 14 Hours Per Year, How Many if any, Credits May Carry Forward to the Following Year?

For live programs and video replays, attorneys may carry forward a total of 14 MCLE credit hours, two of which may be LEPR credit hours.

When am I Required to Submit my MCLE/LEPR Credit Hours?

Attorneys are required to report credit hours on an annual calendar year basis (March-February). MCLE/LEPR Compliance Report must be postmarked no later than the last day in February. Failure to receive a Compliance Report does not excuse you from timely filing. Contact the South Carolina Supreme Court Commission on CLE & Specialization if you have not received a Compliance Report by January 1. (Note: In mid-October of each calendar year, the South Carolina Supreme Court Commission on CLE & Specialization will send to you an interim Compliance Report).

To Whom do I Report my MCLE/LEPR Credit Hours?

You must send your MCLE/LEPR Compliance Report to the South Carolina Supreme Court Commission on CLE & Specialization at 950 Taylor Street, Suite 120, Columbia, SC 29201.

How Can I Check my MCLE/LEPR Compliance Status?

Telephone the South Carolina Supreme Court Commission on CLE & Specialization at: 803-799-5578 or visit www.scbar.org/member/cle/commission.asp - Type in your last name and bar number.

May I Obtain any of my MCLE/LEPR Credit Hours through the SC Bar-CLE Seminars Direct Program (i.e. "Distance Learning")?

"Distance Learning" is defined as approved "audio-visual or media presentations, including telephone and online seminars." You may obtain up to 6.0 of your 14.0 annual required MCLE/LEPR credit hours per calendar year. You may take as many distance learning courses as you like, but current South Carolina Commission Rules state that CLE credit earned through audio-visual or media presentations and applied to the annual 14 hours minimum requirement shall not exceed 6 hours of credit per calendar year.

What do I do if I Have Questions about the MCLE/LEPR Rules, Compliance, or Reporting?

For answers to your MCLE/LEPR questions, visit the South Carolina Supreme Court Commission on CLE & Specialization at www.commcle.org or call **803-799-5578**.

How do I find out about the SC Bar-CLE Division's Programs, Products or Services?

For a complete listing of SC Bar-CLE products and services, visit the SC Bar website at www.scbar.org. Click on Continuing Legal Education and follow the prompts to view our live seminars calendar, teleseminars calendar, or the publications store. For further information, contact the CLE Customer Service Manager Jane Points-Brown at **803-576-3828** or **800-768-7787, ext 128**.

To whom do I report address changes?

You will need to report your address changes in writing to the following three entities: SC Bar, PO Box 608, Columbia, SC 29202 or email ljackson@scbar.org

South Carolina Supreme Court Commission on CLE & Specialization, 950 Taylor Street, Suite 120, Columbia, SC 29201 or email commcle@bellsouth.net

Supreme Court, P.O. Box 11330, Columbia, SC 29211