

Frequently Asked Questions about the FYLSX

As 1L students at Irvine University College of Law (IUCOL) you have a lot on your plate for this first year of study. The faculty and administration know this and are there to help you go through it successfully. However there are some things that only you can do for yourself. First and foremost, you must spend time outside of the classroom to read your assignments, memorize legal rules, and learn how to write the IRAC way. Facing you are the immediate challenges of your course final exams each semester and then the First Year Law Students' Examination - often called the "baby bar" - at the completion of your initial year of studies. This is not an easy year facing you - embrace the challenges with personal determination to balance your work, family obligations and study. Find the time to study! For every hour in class you must spend at least two hours studying the materials assigned to you. If you carry three courses, this means no less than 18 hours each week outside the classroom for study.

Q: So what is the "baby bar"?

A: It is a State Bar required examination given twice per year to students throughout California who are enrolled in law schools similar to IUCOL to test their competence in torts, criminal law, and contracts after one year of law studies. Students who study law in distant learning - correspondence - in law office or judicial office settings, as well as, from some other law schools take it as well.

Q: How is it administered?

A: The State Bar announces the date and location and gives other particulars related to the taking of the exam such as fees, computer use, and how disabled students might obtain

accommodations. The State Bar (calbar.xap.com) lists all of the information and registration materials needed to take the examination; Posted also are prior examination questions and successful student written responses. The State Bar provides study materials for a fee. You can find statistics from prior examination results posted on the State Bar's website. Making regular visits to the State Bar general website (calbar.ca.gov) is important for law students to stay on top of all information related to their educational journey on the way to becoming lawyers.

Q: How is the "baby bar" exam organized?

A: There are two parts of this single day examination. There is the hypothetical question part and there is the multiple choice question portion. In the "hypo" portion, the student must read and write an essay response to the "call of the question." There are four "hypo" questions on the exam's three topical areas: contracts, criminal law, and torts - on one of the topical areas there will be an additional "hypo" involving a contract UCC, torts, or perhaps criminal law - all "hypo" questions have one hour for preparing an answer - or in other words four hours to write the first part of the examination. The remaining part of the exam consists of 100 multiple choice questions which you must answer by selecting the best answer from among several options provided. The topical areas are the same - so generally, there will be one-third contract, criminal law, and torts questions in the mix of 100 multiple choice questions.

Q: How can I be prepared for it?

A: Your preparation started on the first day of class this semester in your three first year subjects - torts, contracts, and criminal law. The steady study of these subjects during the year should be the foundation for your knowledge of the law on which you will be tested. It is very important to attend classes regularly, prepare your assignments, participate in classroom dialogue, and

take notes of what is presented by the instructor. But wait - you say - is that it - I heard that I need to buy supplementary study materials, take a "baby bar" prep course, and learn time management techniques. The simple answer is that most students indeed do all of that to maximize their competitive edge on the exam. This is a difficult examination as the statistics consistently show. Nonetheless, there have been IUCOL students who have passed on their first attempt without taking the bar prep course. Based on your own self-knowledge you make the decision on your bar prep course needs.

Q: When will I learn IRAC writing style?

A: IUCOL faculty have determined from experience that for many students their ability to write a clear cogent response to a hypo question is challenging. This is why every instructor incorporates in the body of their first year courses opportunities for students to write during their first year of study. Additionally, the 1L writing course was revised in content and focus. It is now given in the second semester of the first year to reinforce the IRAC method of writing prior to the June or October administration of the FYLSX. Consistent practice over the year should be sufficient to get your habit established of responding in the IRAC way when presented with a hypo. Most of the bar prep courses reinforce the IRAC approach during their training as well. For those whose first language is not English, additional personal emphasis in vocabulary building and grammatical usage is necessary.

Q: What bar prep course should I take?

A: Cost, time, and reputation should be your benchmarks for selection of a bar prep course. You are in the best position to know what you can afford, how much time you can devote to a prep training module, and the last item you can determine from talking to others who have gone before on this journey. There are

a number of established commercial bar prep courses in the Los Angeles/Orange County area. Most of the prep course leaders have visited Irvine University College of Law to give information on their offerings, their bulletins are posted on the Student Board - as well as - their hand-outs. Some have student representatives from among the student body here. In short, there is plenty of information. By the early part of the second semester of your first year you should make a decision regarding taking the prep training. IUCOL provides a tuition credit for the 2L first semester student who successfully passes the FYLSX on the first try after taking a bar prep. This is limited to the basic prep course expenditure spent by the student provided he or she fully takes the prep training as required by the prep course provider.

Q: Do any IUCOL professors tutor students facing the FYLSX?

A: Yes some do. However, such availability varies from year to year. Professors are not required to do so. Students who seek tutoring should ask the instructor or administrative staff regarding such services. Generally, if such tutoring is provided, it is limited in scope, without cost or by a personal services contract, and not done in facilities under the administration of the College of Law or as part of its educational program.

Q: What happens should I not be successful on my first try?

A: Invest your efforts and determine to be successful! Yet some students do miss the necessary score to pass despite their best preparation. As with any missed success, you will experience personal disappointment and frustration. This is a normal reaction! But if viewed in the larger framework of your overall goal to achieve the JD, take the Bar Examination, and become a lawyer this may simply be one more "speed bump" in the road. Most students continue to take classes and maintain their normal study routine pending the next time when they take the FYLSX. The experience of that first time, brings with it some learning insights

as to what needs to be honed more in your preparation tool kit for the next go round.

Q: How many times may I take the FYLSX?

A: There is no limitation on the number of times you may sit for the FYLSX. Nevertheless, there is a consequence of not passing it by the third try. Should you be unsuccessful on your third attempt the Bar rules require disenrollment from the study of law pending your future passing of the FYLSX. Additionally, upon passing on the fourth or later try you will get credit only for the first year courses completed.

Q: What can I do to reduce my anxiety?

A: Without trying to go into an area more properly suited for psychologists or psychiatrists, the general apprehension of this important examination may serve as a driver or brake for you. Try to approach it as any serious matter facing you. You know the consequences of passing or not: So instead of freezing up and suffering negative thoughts, take the anxiety as your signal to invest more into active personal scholarly preparation to face your challenge armored-up with the needed skills to move past this barrier to your goals.

Q: Are study groups helpful?

A: Definitely yes. You will learn more about what you need to know of the subject matter by studying with your peers who likewise will learn what they lack in understanding from your knowledge of the subject under study. The interaction is supportive of your mutual educational understanding of the subject matter. It also develops good study habits, friendships, and potentially future working relationships.

Concluding thought to the FAQ:

The FYLSX is not as formidable as Mount Everest but as any beginning hiker going up to Mount Wilson will tell you, the proper equipment, determination, and training is necessary for either climb.
