



Your career
as a barrister



The Bar Council
Integrity. Excellence. Justice.





'Choosing to become a barrister opens up the possibility of embarking upon one of the most dynamic and challenging careers available.'

Introduction

Choosing to become a barrister opens up the possibility of embarking upon one of the most dynamic and challenging careers available. This brochure will introduce you to life as a barrister. It will provide you with the information you need to help you decide whether or not a career at 'the Bar' (as the profession is commonly known) would be the right choice for you. It will explain the necessary steps towards this career path, how and when you need to take them, and where you can find support along the way.

On the Bar Council website you can download an electronic version of this brochure and see profiles of a range of barristers, who explain why they decided to join the profession. Visit www.barcouncil.org.uk/becoming-a-barrister.

Whatever you decide, we wish you the best of luck with your chosen career path, and we hope that this brochure provides you with the information you need to make that choice.

What is a barrister?

Barristers are probably best known for wearing wigs and gowns and presenting legal arguments in court. But there is much more than that to a career as a barrister. Many barristers hardly ever appear in court and, in some courts, wigs and gowns are no longer worn.

Barristers are specialist legal advisers and advocates who, providing they have undertaken the necessary training, can appear in all courts, including the High Court, Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court. They play an extremely important role in helping individuals and institutions understand, pursue and defend their legal rights.

In England and Wales, the legal profession is split into two main groups: barristers and solicitors, with legal executives making an increasingly important contribution. There are over 15,000 practising barristers, but over 120,000 practising solicitors. Whilst there is some overlap between the work of barristers and solicitors, barristers

'The work I do affords me the opportunity to see how a vast range of people work and live. Whilst often stressful, the academic side of my work is extremely stimulating; and the independence I have gives me a very satisfying sense that I am truly master of my own destiny.'

Thomas Crockett,
1 Chancery Lane, London

still mainly undertake work which has been referred to them by solicitors.

The majority of barristers are self-employed and work independently. They provide specialist legal advice and advocacy in various courts and tribunals. As well as court work, many barristers specialise in advising individuals, companies and a wide variety of institutions on legal documents, company structures and broader business issues relating to the law.

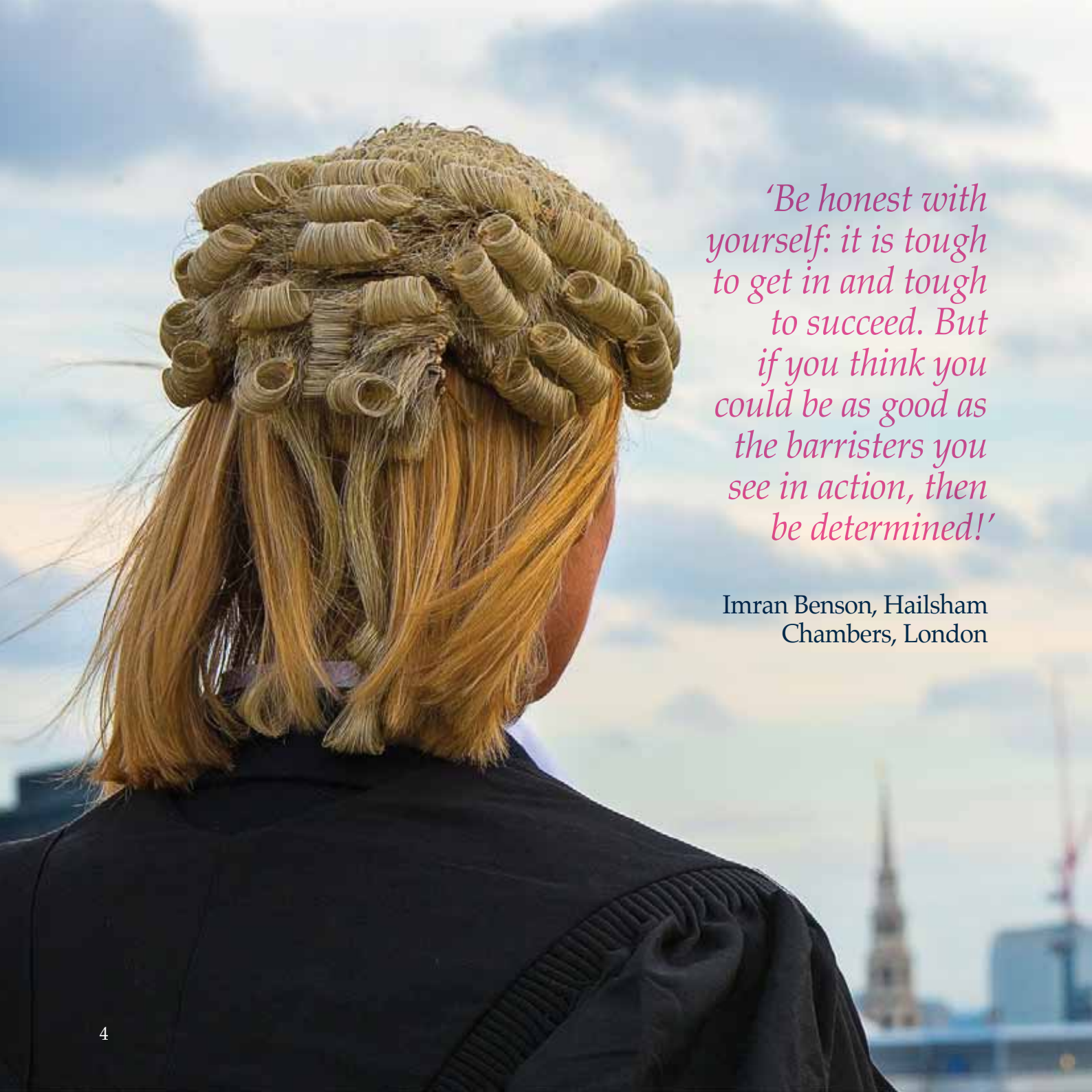
Many barristers specialise in just one area, or a small number of areas, of law. Others have more general practices and will provide advice and advocacy across a wide range of areas of law. The range of issues and problems on which barristers work might include crime, divorce and access to children, personal injury, company or commercial disputes, immigration, welfare benefits and housing.

Although most barristers are self-employed, they don't work in isolation, but tend to group together in offices known as 'chambers', to which they pay 'rent' to cover the cost of the building and its staff. Chambers' colleagues and staff can be a key source of professional support and friendship for barristers at all levels of their career.

Traditionally, barristers had to be instructed by solicitors, and most of the Bar's work still comes from this source, although it is now possible for non-lawyers to access suitably trained members of the Bar directly.

There are also around 3,000 employed barristers, who work for organisations, rather than for themselves. Employers of barristers include the Government Legal Service, the Crown Prosecution Service, financial services institutions, industry and commerce and the Armed Forces, where they work as in-house advocates or advisers. The type of work they do depends on their employer, but requires them to possess the same abilities in specialist legal advice and advocacy as any other barrister.





'Be honest with yourself: it is tough to get in and tough to succeed. But if you think you could be as good as the barristers you see in action, then be determined!'

Imran Benson, Hailsham
Chambers, London

Who is the Bar looking for?

Despite popular misconceptions and stereotypes, there is no such thing as a 'typical' barrister. Barristers come from a wide range of social, academic and professional backgrounds. There are, however, a number of skills and abilities common to most of those who succeed at the Bar. In the first place, academic ability is vital, coupled with strong communication skills.

It is often thought that you need a first class degree from Oxford or Cambridge to become a barrister but this is not the case. Regardless of where you study, you will need to apply yourself to your studies and gain good marks at school and university. This will demonstrate that you have the intellectual ability and the determination to work hard, sometimes for long hours, in a challenging role.

It goes without saying that you should also possess strong communication skills. Over the course of your studies, you should have developed the ability to express arguments and ideas clearly in writing, with careful attention to detail. Whilst many barristers appear in court only rarely, you should be confident at speaking in public. You should also be able to communicate effectively with a wide variety of people – from judges and court staff to clients and members of the public.

The Bar is looking for trustworthy, independent-minded and flexible problem-solvers who are always open to new challenges, ready to adapt to changing circumstances and who will maintain high standards of ethics and integrity, both inside and outside of the courtroom.

The Bar Council, the Inns of Court and many barristers are committed to widening access to the Bar, and to creating a diverse and inclusive profession. To encourage access to the profession, the Bar Council has been involved in a number of initiatives, such as the Bar Placement Week. This is run in conjunction with the Social Mobility Foundation (SMF) and provides a programme of training and shadowing in chambers for high achieving sixth formers from less advantaged backgrounds. Visit the SMF's website for more information: www.socialmobility.org.uk.

The Pegasus Access Scheme, administered by the Honourable Society of the Inner Temple, is a co-ordinated work experience programme for university students that aims to support those from diverse backgrounds to consider a career at the Bar. It is part of the work of the Inns of Court to encourage and support diversity and social mobility in the profession. For more information, visit: www.pegasus.me.



Why should you become a barrister?

The Bar can offer one of the most stimulating, varied, challenging and exciting careers available. Whether delivering a closing speech to a silent courtroom, negotiating the terms of a new contract, cross-examining a witness, mediating between a divorcing couple, arguing against the removal of a client's welfare benefits or delivering complex legal arguments to a High Court Judge, no two days as a barrister are the same.

Whilst the criminal Bar is arguably most visible to the general public, many barristers gain as much satisfaction from a complex business negotiation as others do from a successful criminal prosecution. The issues concerned may vary vastly between different areas of the law, but the core challenges are alike. A career at the Bar is focused primarily on solving problems and resolving disputes, so if you relish winning an argument, reaching logical and reasoned conclusions, and producing solutions to difficult issues, then you could thrive at the Bar.

Many barristers also value the independence that the job can offer, particularly for the self-employed, who make up the majority of the profession. Whilst employed barristers are able to access rights such as paid holiday, sick leave and maternity leave, being self-employed brings its own benefits.

Self-employed barristers are their own boss, can often work flexibly and choose their own 'work/life balance', taking on a range of different clients and responsibilities, making for a more varied working life. Self-employment brings its own risks, however, including the lack of a fixed wage and no sickness or holiday payments.

Due in part to its small size, the Bar is a very sociable and close-knit profession. Many value the camaraderie of chambers, the social events run by the Inns of Court and other organisations, and the friendships which they form through shared challenges and interests.

How do you become a barrister and when do you need to make the key decisions?

If you are interested in becoming a barrister, it is never too early to start thinking about what qualifications and experience you might need in order to succeed.

The Bar is a small profession and there is very high competition for training places, known as 'pupillages'. Good GCSEs, A-levels and a degree are minimum requirements.

There are three main stages involved in becoming a barrister: an academic stage, comprising an undergraduate degree or the Graduate Diploma in Law; a vocational stage, comprising study for the vocational qualification (the Bar Professional Training Course); and a practical stage, consisting of professional training (pupillage).

GCSE years

If you are already considering a career as a barrister, then this is the perfect time to start gaining experience which will bolster your CV and to find out as much about the profession as you can. You may also be able to secure work experience with a local firm of solicitors or with a local court, to give you a closer insight into a career in the law.

As well as concentrating on achieving good grades, it is important to remember that chambers will be looking for other skills and experiences which make you stand out. Start to think about what impressive or unusual outside interests you enjoy which might make you a more desirable and rounded candidate.

A-level years

There are no firm rules about which subjects you need to study for A-level. You should try to make sure that they are subjects which you enjoy, and in which you have a natural interest. It is usually better to study subjects which are more traditionally academic and which involve

an element of writing, so that you can demonstrate your communication and analytical skills from an early stage. You may wish to look at university admission requirements and preferred A-level subjects for certain degree courses.

There is no requirement for you to study law at A-level. It will be helpful for you to think about the types of subjects which might equip you with some of the skills you would require at the Bar, such as the ability to argue a point in a logical, reasoned and articulate manner.

Your A-Level years are a good time to start to gain some experience of public speaking, such as debating, and to consider applying for short periods of work experience, not usually longer than a week, with sets of chambers. There are a limited number of chambers which offer this type of experience and you will need to check their websites for details of how to apply.

'The independence. The notion of wanting to help people. I like the fact that in some way it feels as though we are trying to help them at a difficult period in their lives.'

Naomi Madderson,
37 Park Square, Leeds

What to study at university

At some point during your A-Level studies, you will have to choose whether to undertake an undergraduate law degree or a non-law degree. If you choose a non-law degree, you will need to undertake an additional one-year conversion course, called a Graduate Diploma in Law ('GDL'), after completing your undergraduate degree. This conversion course will incur additional costs so it is important to factor this into your decision.

You do not have to study law at university in order to become a barrister. It is very common for barristers to have completed degrees in other subjects and then have 'converted' to law afterwards. For the right person, this can be a very helpful step in choosing a career, as it allows them to defer their decision on whether or not to go into the law whilst studying a subject in which they have a strong interest, and through which they might later choose to pursue a different career path. Some areas of practice, such as intellectual property (which relates to the protection of ideas and designs) and medical law, value undergraduate degrees in science, for example. It is important to keep in mind that whatever subject you do choose to study, almost all pupils will have achieved either a first class or upper second class degree.

'When you come to choose a practice area, bear in mind that the subjects you study for a law degree don't map directly onto areas of practice.'

Tamsin Cox,
Falcon Chambers, London

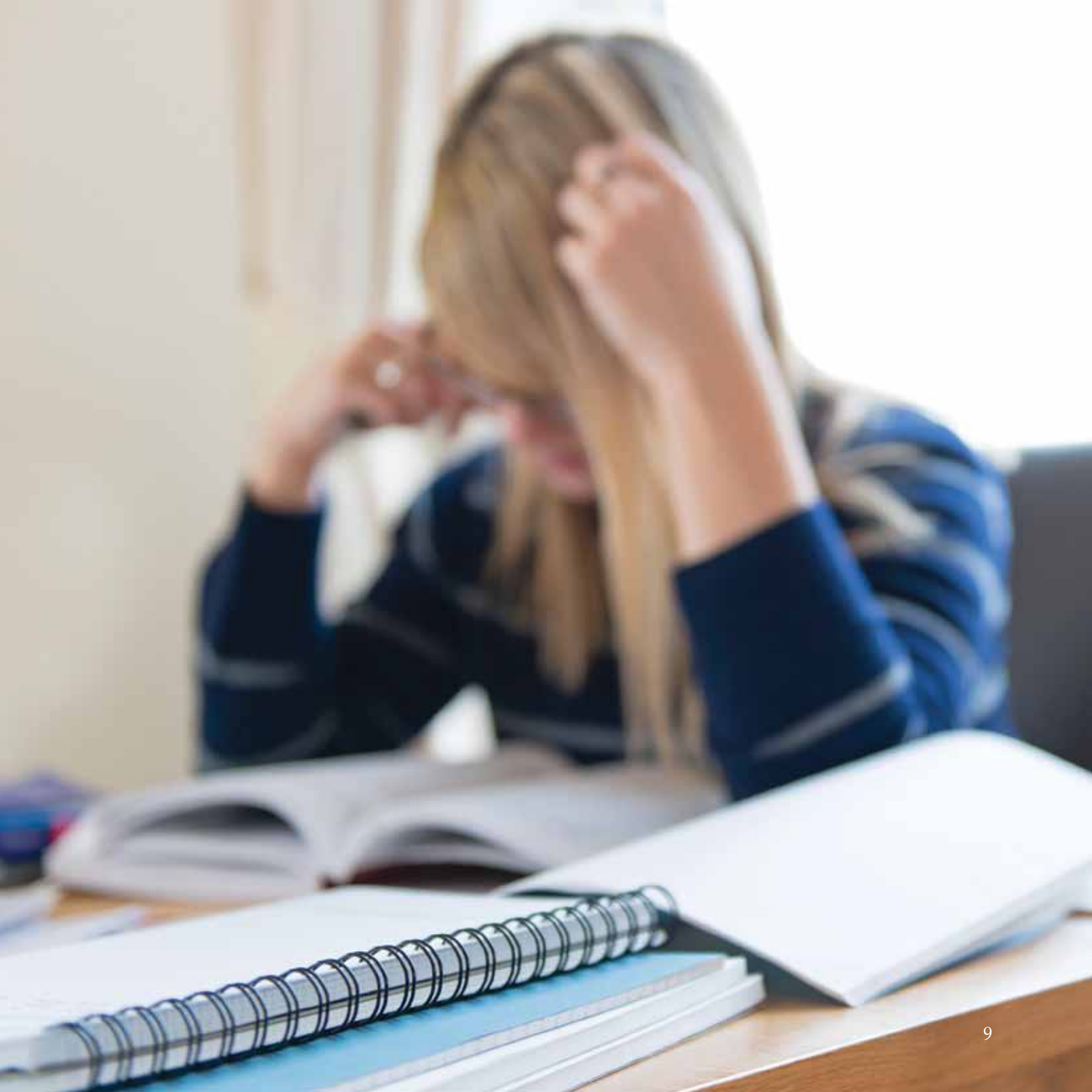
University – first and second years of a law degree and third year of a non-law degree

This is the period during which you should start to think much more seriously about a potential career at the Bar. The rewards can be great in certain areas for those who are truly committed to becoming a barrister and have the ability to succeed. But it is also important for you to be aware that the path to the Bar is long, competitive, challenging and expensive. You might have been thinking about becoming a barrister for several years before you get to this stage. It is vitally important that you do not move on to the next stages of the process without first investigating thoroughly all of the facts and options available to you.

You should certainly be applying for three or four 'mini-pupillages' (short structured sessions of work experience), to get practical experience of different areas of law and life in chambers and other organisations, undertaking as many public speaking opportunities as possible and volunteering with organisations which provide free, or 'pro bono' legal services. That might already seem like a lot to take on, but you should be careful not to neglect sports or other activities which might not seem directly relevant. It is not unusual for chambers to receive hundreds of applications for a single 'pupillage' (the practical training year); an outstanding sporting achievement or interesting pastime might make your application stand out.

If you are studying for a non-law degree, now is also a good time to consider where you want to undertake the law conversion course (GDL), making sure that you are aware of the deadlines for applications. If you are certain at this stage that you wish to go to the Bar, you should investigate the Inns of Court GDL scholarship deadlines, normally the first Friday in May in the year you intend to begin the GDL.

If you did not achieve either a first or upper second class degree, that is not necessarily the end of your path to becoming a barrister but you should be aware of the high level of competition before registering for the Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC). It will make things more difficult, but you should concentrate on gaining as much relevant experience as possible to demonstrate that you are still a strong candidate who should be considered.



University – final year of law degree, GDL or equivalent

By now, you will have a fairly strong ambition to join the legal profession, though you may not have decided whether to become a barrister or a solicitor. This is an opportunity for you to try to take the final steps towards ensuring that your CV stands out, including seeking as much relevant work experience as possible.

If you did not study for a law degree then you need to complete the GDL. The GDL is effectively a law degree completed in one year (or over two years if you study part-time). You will cover all of the core legal subject areas, and some providers offer additional modules (at an extra cost). A list of course providers is available on the Bar Council website at www.barcouncil.org.uk/becoming-a-barrister/how-to-become-a-barrister/academic-process.

Attending events for university students interested in a career at the Bar is essential – whether these are organised



through your law / Bar student societies, local chambers or the Inns of Court. You will need to consider which of the four Inns of Court you would like to join: Lincoln's Inn, Inner Temple, Middle Temple or Gray's Inn. All four Inns undertake a number of activities for university students who are not yet members which allow you to meet practitioners and judges to learn about a career at the Bar.

The BPTC scholarship deadline at the Inns of Court is the first Friday in November the year before you intend to commence your course but you will want to start preparing early in the academic year if not before. You must join an Inn of Court by 31 May in the year you commence the BPTC.

Applying for pupillage

Your final year of a law degree or GDL year will be your first opportunity to apply for pupillage, the practical element of your training to become a barrister. Each year BPTC graduates apply for pupillage and additionally those applicants are joined by those who did not obtain pupillage the year before. Graduates of the BPTC can apply for pupillage for up to five years from the date they pass the course.

The application process varies according to the set of chambers or organisation, with many using the Bar Council's Pupillage Gateway online application system and others choosing to manage their applications independently. Make sure you research your chosen chambers / organisation in advance to ensure that you are aware of all requirements and deadlines.

Take as much time as you can to research different sets of chambers and organisations, and take care in preparing your application(s) and, if relevant, your CV and covering letters (which you may need to provide if a set of chambers or organisation to which you wish to apply does not use the online application system). A single set of chambers might receive hundreds of applications for just one or two pupillage places. Make sure that your application is tailored to that specific opportunity. Remember that barristers value attention to detail, so it is vital that you proof read everything very carefully to pick up any typographical or grammatical errors.

Pupillage interviews might involve problem-solving tasks and mock advocacy exercises, as well as the sort of questions you would expect in any job interview. Some sets of chambers sift applicants by inviting a relatively large number for a short, ten-minute interview. Needless to say, regardless of the length of the first interview, first impressions are very important.

Please see the 'Pupillage' section below for further details on what this stage of training involves.

Bar Professional Training Course

Once you have completed your academic legal studies (i.e. your law degree or GDL), you will need to learn how to put that knowledge and understanding to practical use. You will have to undertake a one-year vocational course (which can also be completed over two years on a part-time basis) called the Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC). You will be taught civil and criminal procedure, advocacy skills, research methods, ethics and practice management. The Bar Council website provides details of where you can study the BPTC across England and Wales: www.barcouncil.org.uk/becoming-a-barrister/how-to-become-a-barrister/vocational-training.

It is important for you to make sure that you consider all of the options before you choose a BPTC provider. Bear in mind that course fees and accommodation outside London may be cheaper. You may already have given some thought to where you wish to undertake your pupillage and eventually practise geographically, which may help to guide your choice.

If, as is quite common, you are not successful in gaining pupillage during the final year of your law degree or during the GDL, you will have another opportunity to apply during your BPTC year. During this time, you should have opportunities to improve the quality of your applications by obtaining further relevant experience.

At the same time, you will take part in the social life and training courses provided by your Inn, in order to qualify to be 'Called to the Bar'. The process of being 'Called to the Bar' culminates in the graduation-style ceremony at which you formally become a barrister (although you will



not be permitted to practise unsupervised until you have completed pupillage).

Having joined an Inn, you should take the opportunity to ask your Inn for a 'sponsor' or 'mentor': a practising barrister who can provide practical advice and can help to introduce you to life at the Bar. Most Inns will not allocate sponsors to students until they are taking the GDL or BPTC.

You need to have completed 12 'Qualifying Sessions' with your Inn (which might include residential training weekends, skills-based workshops or attending lectures followed by formal dinners with barristers and judges) and must have passed the BPTC in order to be Called to the Bar by your Inn. This ceremony takes place in March, July, October or November. You can invite guests, and it is a memorable occasion for those taking part.

A full list of BPTC providers is available at www.barcouncil.org.uk/becoming-a-barrister/how-to-become-a-barrister/vocational-training.



Post-BPTC

Because chambers recruit pupils well in advance, if you apply successfully for a pupillage whilst undertaking the BPTC, you will probably have a year-long gap before your pupillage starts. There are still lots of useful things you can do with that year to harness your legal skills. If you are unsuccessful in your pupillage applications, you can still apply to commence pupillage up to five years after completing the BPTC. If you wish to reapply again for pupillage, regardless of what you choose to do in the meantime, make sure that you continue to improve your CV and seek experience which will strengthen future applications.

Pupillage

Pupillage is the practical stage of training to be a barrister, which you can commence up to five years after completing the BPTC. This is either completed in a set of chambers or

with another approved organisation. Pupillages usually start in September or October, one year after you have been accepted by the chambers (so successful April 2014 applicants will commence pupillage in autumn 2015).

Pupillage is a bit like an apprenticeship. You will be assigned pupil supervisors – barristers in the same set of chambers or organisation – who you will shadow, and for whom you will undertake supervised work.

Pupillage lasts for 12 months and is broken up into the ‘first six’ months and the ‘second six’ months. In your ‘second six’, you will be eligible to undertake cases on your own, albeit under close supervision.

Chambers are required to fund your pupillage with a minimum award of £12,000 (split into £6,000 for each six months). Some chambers provide considerably larger awards; particularly chancery and commercial chambers, which are competing with the large commercial law firms for applicants. In addition, most chambers allow you to keep the money which you earn in your second six.

Recruitment methods vary between chambers, but decisions about ‘tenancy’ (long-term places in chambers) are usually made about ten months into pupillage. Competition for tenancy can be strong, with some chambers taking on several pupils but only retaining one as a tenant. Appraisal might be based simply on your pupil supervisor’s assessment of your abilities, or you might have to take part in a formal mock advocacy exercise. Other sets of chambers take on every pupil with a view to making them a tenant if they perform well.

Further information on pupillage is available at www.barcouncil.org.uk/becoming-a-barrister/how-to-become-a-barrister/pupillage.

Third six

If you do not gain tenancy at the chambers at which you completed your pupillage, you can apply for a ‘third six’ at another set. This might allow you to gain exposure to other types of work, and will give you another chance to apply for tenancy.

Tenancy

Once you are a tenant, your income will come entirely from the work you take on, either in your own right or, at the start of your career, when acting as the junior member of a team of barristers. With the support of the chambers' clerks (who are responsible for assigning work to the barristers in their chambers and, in many cases, generating new business), you will need to build up a reputation amongst potential clients and a network of solicitors who will 'instruct' you (essentially paying you to provide specialist services) on a regular basis.

Once you are a tenant, most chambers will require you to pay a proportion of your earnings ('rent') to cover the costs of chambers' employees and other shared overheads.

The employed Bar

A proportion of those Called to the Bar complete their pupillages with, or later go on to gain jobs with, organisations which employ them as permanent or contracted members of staff. This might give them more job security and access to benefits such as paid sick leave, paid holiday and parental leave. Their work will vary greatly depending on their employer. Employers of barristers include the Crown Prosecution Service, the Government Legal Service, the Armed Forces, local Government and private companies.

Some employed barristers, particularly those employed by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), undertake frequent advocacy in their roles. It is increasingly common for barristers to move from self-employment, and vice versa.

Professional conversion

In some cases, it might be possible to qualify as a barrister in an alternative manner to the conventional path. For example, qualified solicitors may be exempted from some of the usual training requirements by undertaking the Bar Transfer Test (BTT).

Silk and judicial appointment

Many of those barristers who have developed a good practice choose to apply to become Queen's Counsel later in their career. If they are successful, they will become Queen's Counsel (and can add the much-coveted letters 'QC' after their surname) and gain the right to wear a silk gown in Court, for which reason they are often known as 'silks'. This title recognises that they have achieved excellence in their field, and is awarded by the Lord Chancellor at a high-profile ceremony. QCs appear in the most serious and important cases.

Many barristers choose to apply to become judges later in their career; in fact, the majority of higher court judges are former barristers. Many barristers also sit as part-time judges (for example, as Recorders, Deputy District Judges or Tribunal Chairs) whilst still practising at the Bar.



Finance

One of the greatest concerns for most aspiring barristers is the cost of entering the profession. It is important to understand, before you make any long-term commitments, exactly what that cost might be for you. You should factor in the tuition fees for your undergraduate degree (which are only re-payable once you start earning), the GDL (if you studied a non-law degree) and the BPTC, as well as living costs. Costs for all of those courses will vary depending on where you study them and you should try to find out as much as possible in advance. The Bar Standards Board website provides information on the various BPTC providers www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/qualifying-as-a-barrister/bar-professional-training-course/bptc-providers and GDL and BPTC providers list the cost of courses on their websites.

Whilst funding your path to the Bar is a daunting prospect for many applicants, there is a range of assistance on offer, from the Inns, from banks and from a number of bursaries, as set out below.

Between them, the four Inns of Court (see page 16) make scholarship awards of about £5 million every year, the majority of which is for the BPTC, but awards are also available for the GDL and pupillage.

All the Inns award their scholarships and grants on merit, with financial need being taken into account. It is important to note that candidates may apply for a scholarship to one Inn only, and must be a member of that Inn to take up any award that is offered.

For further information on the scholarships and grants available from the Inns, on the criteria that are used to determine awards, and application procedures and deadlines, please visit their respective websites. Details can be found at www.barcouncil.org.uk/becoming-a-barrister/finance-and-funding/funding-and-scholarships.

Other sources of financial help include:

- A number of high street banks offer graduate loans, which can be large enough to cover the costs of a substantial portion of your studies and accommodation.
- Professional and career development loans, which can be used to help pay for work-related learning. You can borrow between £300 and £10,000 from a bank to help support the cost of up to two years of learning (or three years if it includes one year's relevant unpaid practical work). The Government will pay the interest on the loan while you are learning and for one month afterwards. The loan can be used to pay course fees or other costs such as travel and living expenses. You can also use the loan to supplement other forms of support such as grants or bursaries. Because the Professional and Career Development Loan is a commercial loan product, it should only be considered as an option once all other student funding options have been investigated. For further information on financial assistance to support your learning, please visit www.gov.uk.
- The Kalisher Scholarship Trust, which covers the BPTC course fees for at least two aspiring barristers each year, and provides a variety of smaller bursaries and awards including an annual £5,000 essay prize. The aim is to encourage and support talented students who would otherwise not be able to pursue a career at the criminal Bar. For more information, please visit the Trust's website: www.thekalishertrust.org.
- If you are successful in obtaining a pupillage before undertaking your BPTC, some chambers will allow you to receive part of your pupillage award in advance of pupillage.

You may also need to consider part-time work and paralegal work. As well as assisting you financially, the right experience could help your search for pupillage.



Where the Bar is based

Chambers

Most self-employed barristers group together in sets of chambers, enabling them to share office space, staff costs and other overheads. Chambers will usually be headed by one or two experienced barristers. As well as their tenants (permanent members), some chambers will also allow 'squatters' (barristers without tenancy) to base themselves there on a temporary basis.

A large number of chambers are based around the four Inns of Court in London. About two thirds of all self-employed barristers are members of London chambers, although they may also travel throughout England and Wales to conduct cases in regional courts. There are also many chambers based outside London, mostly clustered around the larger cities.

The employed Bar

Employed barristers provide legal advice within numerous organisations and will usually be based in the corporate headquarters of that organisation. Some of these organisations are based in the public sector, such as the Government Legal Service, local authorities or the CPS. Barristers employed by the Armed Forces or the Foreign & Commonwealth Office may find that there are opportunities to work abroad. Other employed barristers work in private practice in law firms or in-house for national and international companies.

Inns of Court

There are four Inns of Courts: Lincoln's Inn, Inner Temple, Middle Temple and Gray's Inn. Although the Inns are all located in London, they have strong links across England and Wales and all over the world (partly because so many international students are also Called to the English and Welsh Bar). Every barrister must join an Inn before they start the BPTC.

One of the formal functions of the Inns is to Call new barristers to the Bar, once their training is complete. Once you are Called at a particular Inn, you will have a relationship with that Inn for the rest of your career at the Bar or the judiciary, if you become a judge. They are also one of the major sources of financial assistance to students who are training for the Bar.

The Inns are historic institutions, steeped in tradition, although they provide modern and first-class educational and training activities in a supportive and inclusive environment. They also provide extensive library and IT facilities, support for barristers and student members and other forms of ongoing training, particularly extensive advocacy coaching, throughout your career.

Before you can formally become a barrister, alongside passing the BPTC, you need to complete 12 'Qualifying Sessions', which are run by the Inns. These Sessions range from lectures and advocacy training to formal dinners with educational components. These provide a good opportunity to meet fellow students or barristers and to socialise, as well as to learn.





The Bar Council and the Bar Standards Board

The Bar Council represents barristers in England and Wales, and comprises a council of barristers who meet regularly, supported by an executive of employed staff. The Bar Council is responsible for promoting the Bar's high quality specialist advocacy and advisory services, fair access to justice for all, the highest standards of ethics, equality and diversity across the profession, and the development of business opportunities at home and abroad.

In order to practise, all barristers must be registered with the Bar Council and prove every year that they have developed professionally through training and other learning opportunities. The Bar Council is the Approved Regulator of the Bar, but it discharges these functions through the independent Bar Standards Board (BSB). The BSB is responsible for setting the educational and training requirements for becoming a barrister, continuing training requirements and codes of conduct for barristers, monitoring the services provided by the Bar, handling complaints against barristers and taking disciplinary actions against them.

For further information on the Bar Council, please visit www.barcouncil.org.uk. For the BSB, please visit www.barstandardsboard.org.uk.

Circuits

England and Wales are divided into six regional 'Circuits', which act as local hubs for barristers outside London, running training and social events. The Circuit Leaders

are practising barristers who represent the Bar in their regions and, as well as performing a number of roles, act as communication channels between the Circuits and the Bar Council in London.

For further information on the Circuits, including contact details, please see www.barcouncil.org.uk/about-the-bar/what-is-the-bar/circuits.

Specialist Bar Associations

The Specialist Bar Associations (SBAs) are membership organisations for barristers, usually targeted at those practising in a specific area of law, such as crime, chancery, commercial, family or personal injury. They provide representative services to their members, run training and other events and often respond to Government legislation.

As well as those SBAs focused on particular areas of law, the Young Barristers' Committee of the Bar Council represents the interests of barristers who completed their training less than seven years ago. The Employed Barristers' Committee represents the interests of employed barristers, some of whom are also represented by the Bar Association for Commerce, Finance and Industry (BACFI).

For a full list of SBAs and a link to their websites, please visit www.barcouncil.org.uk/about-the-bar/what-is-the-bar/specialist-bar-associations.

To read more about the Young Barristers' Committee, please see www.barcouncil.org.uk/about-us/constitution-and-structure/committees.

Jargon buster

Bar Council – the Bar Council represents barristers in England and Wales. It is also known as the General Council of the Bar and is the Approved Regulator of the Bar of England and Wales. It discharges its regulatory functions through the independent Bar Standards Board.

Bar School – the informal name for a provider of the BPTC.

Bar Standards Board – the Bar’s independent regulator.

Bench – the judge/judges.

Bench – a senior member of an Inn of Court, also known as a Master of the Bench.

Brief – the documents setting out case instructions for a barrister to argue a case in court.

BPTC – the ‘Bar Professional Training Course’, which is the vocational stage of academic training for the Bar. This course is available at various providers and teaches procedure, advocacy, ethics, research methods and practical skills. This is the final academic stage of training for the Bar.

Call to the Bar – a formal graduation-style ceremony, where the Head of an Inn of Court officially entitles a graduate of the BPTC to be called a ‘barrister’ (although the term cannot be used in a professional capacity until pupillage has been completed).

Circuits – the six geographical areas into which the courts of England and Wales are divided: North Eastern, Northern, Midland, South Eastern, Western and Wales & Chester Circuits.

Chambers – the collective name for a group of self-employed barristers (often referred to as a ‘set’) who share premises, a corporate identity, staff and overheads.

Clerk – chambers’ staff responsible for generating and assigning work and managing barristers’ diaries.

Counsel – this is simply another way of referring to a barrister.

CPS – the Crown Prosecution Service, the primary body responsible for the prosecution of criminal offences in England and Wales.

Devilling – completing paid work for other members of chambers.

Employed barrister – most barristers are self-employed and practise from chambers. The remainder are employed to act as in-house barristers by law firms, companies and the Government, including the Crown Prosecution Service.

GDL – ‘Graduate Diploma in Law’: the law ‘conversion’ course which aspiring barristers who do not have a law degree must undertake before commencing the BPTC.

Head of Chambers – a senior barrister in a set of chambers who is elected or appointed as its head.

Inn of Court – the four historic institutions with the exclusive right to Call barristers to the Bar. In addition to the provision of scholarships for training for the Bar, the fundamental role of the Inns of Court is the education and training of students and barristers. The Inns also have societies dedicated to mooted, debating and social events. As membership organisations, they retain strong relationships with their members throughout their careers.

Junior – a barrister who is not Queen’s Counsel (QC).

Junior brief – a case on which a junior barrister is led by a more senior barrister, usually a QC, in a big case which would be too much work for one barrister alone. The more senior barrister will usually conduct the advocacy.

Marshalling – work experience shadowing a judge.

Mini-pupil – the name given to someone undertaking work experience in a set of chambers. Some sets of chambers may expect potential pupils to have completed a mini-pupillage at that set.

Moot – a legal debate in which participants conduct a case in a mock appeal court.

Pupil – the name given to barristers undertaking the practical element of their training, which is essentially an apprenticeship.

Pupillage – one year of apprenticeship in chambers or another approved organisation. In chambers, for the first six months, the pupil will not be practising and will shadow their pupil supervisor. In the second six months they will continue to shadow a pupil supervisor, but may also undertake their own cases, with supervision.

Pupillage Gateway – the Bar Council’s online application system for pupillages (to which some, but not all, chambers subscribe).

Pupil supervisor – a barrister who acts as a pupil’s mentor during pupillage.

QC/Queen’s Counsel – a senior barrister who has been appointed by the Queen as ‘one of Her Majesty’s Counsel Learned in the Law’ (following a rigorous and transparent process, operated by the QC Selection Panel). QCs are senior members of the Bar, and the appointment is a mark of excellence. They appear in the most serious and important cases.

Qualifying Sessions – to qualify to be Called to the Bar, prospective barristers must pass the BPTC and attend 12 qualifying sessions at their chosen Inn of Court. These Sessions may include advocacy training, skills-based workshops or attending lectures followed by formal dinners with barristers and judges.

Recorder – a part-time judge, who is often also a practising barrister.

Set – informal term for chambers.

Silk – informal term for a QC – so-called because they are entitled to wear a silk gown in court.

Squatter – a pupil not invited to become a tenant may be offered the opportunity to become a ‘squatter’ in chambers. They are allowed to remain and to continue to take on their own cases for a period, without having a permanent place in the chambers.

Tenant – a member of a set of chambers.

Tenancy – towards the end of their pupillage, an individual may be offered a tenancy, which is the entitlement to continue to practise from a set of chambers as a self-employed barrister.

Third six – a pupil not invited to become a tenant may be offered a ‘third six’; essentially another six months as a pupil in another set of chambers, usually with a view to gaining tenancy if completed satisfactorily.

Further information

For the most recent statistics on the profile of the Bar, please check the Bar Barometer, an annual publication which analyses statistical trends across the profession. The 'Barristers' Working Lives' survey provides an insight into barristers' views of both their life at work and their profession. The Bar Council has produced several reports on the profile of BPTC applicants and students, online pupillage system applicants, and of registered pupils which should assist you when considering a career at the Bar. You can access these reports here: www.barcouncil.org.uk/about-the-bar/facts-and-figures/publications.

Please consult the Bar Council, Inns of Court or Bar Standards Board websites for further information.

www.barcouncil.org.uk

www.barstandardsboard.org.uk

www.barcouncil.org.uk/about-the-bar/what-is-the-bar/inns-of-court



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