

BAR STANDARDS BOARD

Change to Professional Ethics Exam Question Stems

The [Professional Ethics Exam in Pupillage](#) was introduced as part of our Bar Training Reforms, and the first three opportunities to sit the exam were in April, July, and October 2022. As part of our ongoing development of this new assessment, the Central Examination Board have decided that from the January 2023 exam onwards, all question scenarios will be followed by the standardised stem below:

"Identifying the relevant ethical principles and applying them to the facts, explain what ethical issues arise [for A] / [for A and B] in this scenario and how they should be resolved. You must give a full explanation supporting your answer."

This replaces the previous stems which were specific to each scenario (eg *"What must Suzie do in relation to the missing documents? Do Michael's comments amount to a breach of confidentiality?"*)

The Examiners may include in the stem the name(s) of the barrister(s) from the fact pattern whose ethical issues need to be addressed by candidates.

A full [practice test incorporating the updated stems](#) is available on our website, as is [the mark scheme and indicative content](#).

The reasoning behind this change is to better reflect the way that questions of professional ethics arise in practice—where barristers and pupils may be asked to identify and consider the ethical implications of a situation without such specific guidance as to what the relevant issues are. This change is also intended to allow candidates to give a broader range of acceptable answers.

The examination papers will continue to be subject to standard setting to ensure consistency and fairness in the identification of the required pass standard, and standard setters will be aware of the change to the question stems.

5 December 2022 (Updated 21 March 2023)