

BAR STANDARDS BOARD

REGULATING BARRISTERS

Part 1 - Public**Minutes of the Bar Standards Board meeting****Thursday 30 January 2025 (5.00 pm)****Hybrid Meeting, Rooms 1.4-1.7, BSB Offices & MS Teams****Present:**

Kathryn Stone OBE (Chair)
 Gisela Abbam
 Jeff Chapman KC – via Teams
 Emir Feisal JP
 Ruby Hamid
 Tracey Markham
 Andrew Mitchell KC
 Ruth Pickering
 Irena Sabic KC
 Stephen Thornton CBE

By invitation:

Malcolm Cree (Chief Executive, Bar Council)
 Barbara Mills KC (Chair, Bar Council)
 Lucinda Orr (Treasurer, Bar Council)
 Andy Russell (Director, Council of the Inns of Court) – via Teams

Press:

Neil Rose (Legal Futures) – via Teams

BSB Executive

Graham Black (Interim Head of Communications)
 Julie Carruth (Supervision Manager) – via Teams
 Michael Carter (Senior Casework Officer)
 Laura Cassidy (Stakeholder Engagement Officer) – via Teams
 Rebecca Dawson (Casework Officer)
 Rebecca Forbes (Head of Governance)
 Teresa Haskins (Director of People and Culture)
 Charlie Higgs (Examinations Manager) – via Teams
 Saima Hirji (Director of Regulatory Enforcement)
 Oliver Jackling (Research and Evaluation Manager) – via Teams
 Sara Jagger (Senior Legal and Regulatory Consultant) – via Teams
 Rupika Madhura (Director of Standards)
 Hayley Langan (Supervision Manager) – via Teams
 Mark Neale (Director General)
 John Picken (Governance Officer)
 Natasha Ribeiro (Assessment Lead) – via Teams
 Maddison Sears (Project Lawyer) – via Teams
 Debbie Stimpson (Director of Planning, Programmes & Engagement)
 Adelita Thursby-Pelham (Head of Authorisations) – via Teams
 Julia Witting (Head of Supervision) – via Teams

Item 1 – Welcome / Announcements

1. Kathryn Stone welcomed those present and made the following introductions:
 - Ruby Hamid (barrister Board member);
 - Tracey Markham (lay Board member);
 - Ruth Pickering (lay Board member).
2. She also welcomed the following guests and colleagues who were attending the Board meeting either in a new capacity or for the first time:
 - Barbara Mills KC (new Chair of the Bar Council);
 - Lucinda Orr (new Treasurer of the Bar Council);
 - Rebecca Dawson (Casework Officer, BSB);
 - Maddison Sears (Project Lawyer, BSB).

3. **Item 2 – Apologies**

- Leslie Thomas KC
- Ewen Macleod (Director of Strategy, Policy and Insights)

Item 3 – Members’ interests and hospitality

4. None.

Item 4 – Approval of Part 1 (public) minutes (Annex A)

5. The Board **approved** the Part 1 (public) minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2024.

Item 5a – Matters arising & Action List

6. The Board **noted** the action list. Mark Neale updated this as follows:
 - a) Chambers web pages (min 26b – 26/09/24)
These will be published on 4 February 2025 and will set out regulatory requirements of barristers’ practice management in chambers.
 - b) Market study on intermediaries (min 16d – 23/05/24)
Work on intermediaries is continuing and will be reported to the Board in the context of our five-year strategy in due course.
 - c) Authorisation applications from transferring overseas lawyers (TQL) (mins 16c – 30/11/23 & 16d (30/11/23/))
There have been successive changes to the timetable for implementation of change on TQL administration. This reflects the complex nature of the issue. What had been anticipated as a straightforward update on fees in fact required a much more detailed analysis of the process itself to check cost recovery levels. This has now been completed and revised fees for TQL applications will apply from 1 April 2025.

Item 5b – Forward agenda

7. The Board **noted** the forward agenda list.

Item 6 – Annual Report on Diversity at the Bar

BSB 001 (25)

8. Mark Neale highlighted the following:
- following earlier feedback, this Annual Report now includes a longer-term perspective on changes at the Bar (rather than just comparisons with the previous year's data);
 - it shows continuing progress both in terms of representation of women and those from minoritised ethnic backgrounds;
 - notwithstanding that, there remains less diversity at KC level (20% women; 12% minoritised ethnic backgrounds);
 - this points to a need for a continuing focus on progression - an issue that Barbara Mills KC underlined in her inaugural address to the Bar.
9. The Chair thanked the BSB's Research Team for its work in producing the report. She noted that this will inform our discussions later in the year about the Equality Rules consultation.
10. **AGREED**
to note the report and to approve it for publication on the website.

Item 7 – Annual Report – Bar Training

BSB 002 (25)

11. The Board received the Annual Report on Bar Training covering the period December 2023 – November 2024. Following an invitation for comments, Emir Feisal JP referred to paragraph 73 of the report. This related to a decision to authorise, on a conditional basis, a pupillage provider based outside England and Wales (the first occasion this has happened). He asked if there is scope to do more of this in future, given the rising numbers of qualified lawyers who are seeking Call to the Bar for England and Wales.
12. In response, the executive commented as follows:
- the BSB is open to proposals for new models of working, though the same training standards and controls always need to apply. The Supervision and Authorisation Teams are checking the progress of this application, and it will be a useful test case for the future;
 - we are already looking at other ways to expedite the authorisation process for transferring qualified lawyers (TQLs). One option is to compare the training requirements of different jurisdictions to identify, if and in what circumstances, block exemptions might be possible;
 - we also intend to review the authorisations framework, and this, and other cases, will help inform our vision for the future.
13. Barbara Mills KC highlighted the mutual interest of the Bar Council and the BSB to protect the title of "barrister". With that in mind she expressed some caution about the concept of a pupillage provider that was based in a jurisdiction other than England and Wales. She therefore asked the BSB to carefully consider the implications of this.
14. Irene Sabic KC referred to paragraph 5 which said that key stakeholders had expressed concern that the BSB was not doing enough to maintain high standards. She asked for clarification of that statement.

15. Mark Neale confirmed that there is a perception within the Inns of Court that the increase in the number of students in Bar Training could dilute the standards that apply to it. The BSB's view is that this is not the case (paragraph 6 of the covering report refers).

Note: the Chair also emphasised that the Board would not tolerate any diminution in standards at the Bar.

16. Mark Neale added that, providing students have met the academic standards and are properly informed about their prospects of obtaining pupillage (and the BSB already makes the challenges around this very clear), then we should not seek to restrict entry levels.

17. Gisela Abbam noted this point but referenced paragraph 8 of the covering paper ie that in respect of the 2020/21 cohort of home-based course graduates, less than half had moved on to pupillage. She asked what options are available to increase this figure.

18. The Chair agreed that this is a concern and, though it is not the BSB's role to limit ambition and demand, we should, nevertheless, take note of these concerns, which other stakeholders have also expressed. In response, Mark Neale highlighted the earlier report on diversity at the Bar 2025 which shows a significant increase in the number of pupillage places.

19. Stephen Thornton referred to the recent increase in requests for reasonable adjustments in respect of vocational and pupillage training (para 12c of the covering report). He asked whether any guidance is available from the BSB which it could then publish.

20. In response, the executive commented that:

- there has been a general growth in the number of students making requests for reasonable adjustments across the education sector;
- we shall continue to work with Bar training providers so that students can be appropriately supported. As part of this engagement, we shall consider the case for formal guidance documents to promote a consistent approach.

21. Andy Russell suggested a need for guidance was urgent following a number of requests from students

22. He also asked about the proportion of students with minimum entry requirements (a 2.2 degree) who secure pupillage. In response, the executive referred to the supporting statistical analyses in Annex 2 of the paper (Charts 22 onwards).

23. **AGREED**

- a) to note the report and to approve it for publication on the website.
- b) to request the executive take on board the comments made by the Chair of the Bar Council, the Director of COIC and Board Members about the need to maintain standards at the Bar.

**RM to
note**

Item 8 – Director General’s Report – Public Session

BSB 003 (25)

24. The Board **noted** the report.

Item 9 – Chair’s Report on Visits and External Meetings

BSB 004 (25)

25. The Board **noted** the report.

Item 10 – Any Other Business

26. None.

Item 11 – Date of next meeting

27. • Thursday 27 March 2025, 5.00 pm.

Item 12 – Private Session

28. The Board resolved to consider the following items in private session:

- (1) Approval of Part 2 (private) minutes – 25 November 2024 & 28 November 2024.
- (2) Matters arising and action points – Part 2.
- (3) Reform Programme
- (4) Director General’s Report – Private Session.
- (5) Appointment of Committee Members
- (6) Any other private business.
- (7) Chair’s Appraisal

29. The meeting finished at 2.30 pm.