Part 1 - Overview

1A: The Bar qualification rules and the Bar Qualification Manual

This section provides an overview of the Bar Qualification Rules within the Bar Standards Board Handbook and the Bar Qualification Manual.

Introduction

1 The Bar Standards Board ("BSB") is the regulator of barristers in England and Wales. We are responsible for setting the education and training requirements for those who wish to practise as barristers in England and Wales.

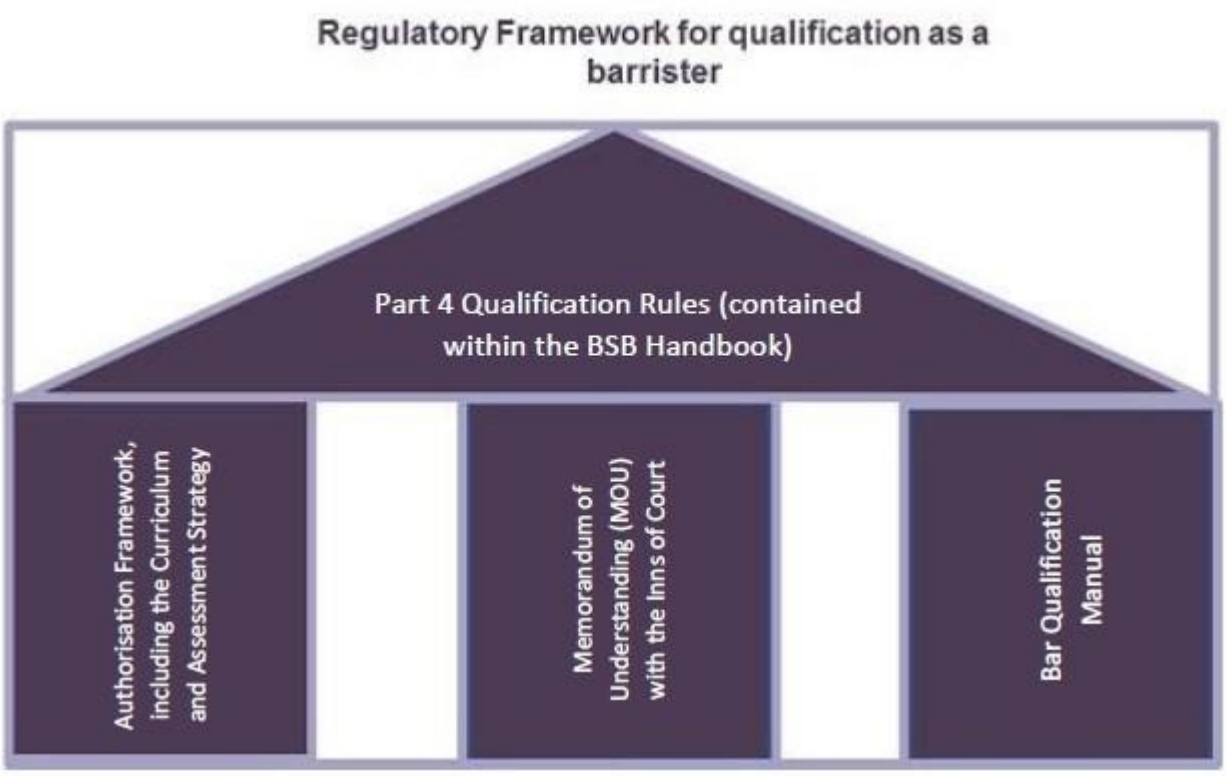
2 The Bar Qualification Rules came into force in April 2019, following a programme of reform which was known as Future Bar Training ("FBT"). The rules were designed to ensure that training to become a barrister became more accessible, affordable and flexible while maintaining the high standards of entry expected at the Bar. With the introduction of these rules, we developed a new regulatory framework to explain the process of qualifying as a barrister. This framework comprises:

a. the Part 4 Qualification Rules (contained within the BSB Handbook);

b. the Authorisation Framework and Curriculum and Assessment Strategy ;

c. a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the BSB and the Inns of Court; and

d. the Bar Qualification Manual



3 The diagram above sets out the relationship between the high-level rules within the BSB Handbook and the three supporting documents, including this Bar Qualification Manual.

4 This Bar Qualification Manual is intended for use by students, pupils, transferring qualified lawyers, Authorised Education and Training Organisations (AETOs), the BSB (as the regulatory body), and any members of the public who are interested to know how barristers are trained. It has been designed to provide further information relating to the Bar Qualification Rules (Part 4 of the BSB Handbook) and to bring together information held in the other documents mentioned above. It was also intended to provide greater clarity about what was and was not changing as we phased in the new system of education and training for the Bar.

How this Manual interacts with other documents

5 The Part 4 Qualification Rules in the BSB Handbook do not contain all the mandatory training requirements for individuals seeking to qualify, or for AETOs wanting to become authorised by us to provide Bar training. These detailed requirements may be found in the Authorisation Framework, the MOU with the Inns of Court and this Bar Qualification Manual. Compliance with the requirements specified in this Bar Qualification Manual is, therefore, compulsory.

The BSB Handbook

6 The new Part 4 Qualification Rules in the BSB Handbook set out, at a high-level:

a. the requirements for individuals to qualify as a barrister and receive a practising certificate;

b. the requirements for prospective Bar training providers to become AETOs in line with the Authorisation Framework; and

c. the minimum requirements for the Inns in admitting student members, carrying out fit and proper person checks and delivering Qualifying Sessions.

The Authorisation Framework

7 All organisations that offer the vocational and/or the work-based learning (pupillage) components of Bar training (either separately or in combination with another component) are subject to the Authorisation Framework .

8 The Authorisation Framework is used by us to set out the mandatory requirements for an organisation to become an AETO, including adherence to the four FBT principles identified in our 2016 consultation. These are:

a. Encouraging greater flexibility – so that the training system enables innovation in how education and training is delivered;

b. Improving accessibility – so that the best candidates can train as barristers and that the Bar better reflects the communities it serves;

c. Improving affordability – to bring down the cost of studying to students; and

d. Maintaining high standards – to ensure that any training pathways sustain current standards.

9 Both the vocational and the work-based learning (pupillage) component of all pathways must adhere to the Curriculum and Assessment Strategy and any additional guidance published by us as part of the Bar Qualification Manual.

10 The Authorisation Framework also helps us to assess training programmes/courses against the four FBT principles. It sets out the requirements for each mandatory component of Bar training in order to ensure that everyone who successfully completes one of the permitted pathways meets the requirements set out in the Professional Statement for barristers and is able to demonstrate that they have met the minimum standard to be allowed to start practising as a barrister.

11 Once authorised, AETOs are expected to follow any requirements set out in relevant supporting documents and will be subject to ongoing supervision by us.

The Memorandum of Understanding with the Inns of Court

12 The Bar Qualification Rules require us to set out a number of minimum requirements in relation to the activities of the Inns of Court. These, and any other activities undertaken by the Inns, are detailed in a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) between the BSB, COIC and the four Inns of Court. In particular, the MOU addresses:

a. Student membership of an Inn, including fit and proper person checks on admission;

b. Ongoing student conduct prior to Call to the Bar;

c. Fit and proper person checks at the point of Call to the Bar; and

d. The minimum requirements for the delivery of Qualifying Sessions.

1B: Components of Bar training

This section includes a description of each of the individual components of training for the Bar.

1 Previously, there were three stages of education and training for the Bar, which were completed in sequence. These were:

a. The Academic Stage – satisfied by completion of a Qualifying Law Degree (QLD) or a non-law degree plus the Common Professional Examination (CPE)/ Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL).

b. The Vocational Stage – satisfied by completion of the Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC) and the Inns' pre-Call requirements.

c. The Professional Stage – satisfied by periods of non-practising and practising pupillage.

2 Under the Bar Qualification Rules, the three stages of education and training are now known as:

a. The academic component – gaining knowledge of the law itself.

b. The vocational component – acquiring the core skills of a barrister, such as advocacy.

c. The work-based learning component (pupillage) – learning to be a barrister 'on the job'.

3 You can find detailed guidance on each of the components of training in **Part 2** of this Bar Qualification Manual.

1C: Approved pathways

This section includes information on the four approved pathways to satisfy the individual components of Bar training. These pathways came into effect from 1 September 2020.

1 The three components of Bar training can be achieved by following one of the four approved training pathways:

a. Three-step pathway – the academic component, followed by the vocational component, followed by the work-based learning component (pupillage).

b. Four-step pathway – the academic component, followed by the vocational component in two parts, followed by the work-based learning component (pupillage).

c. Integrated academic and vocational pathway – combined academic component and vocational component, followed by the work-based learning component (pupillage).

d. Apprenticeship pathway – combined academic component, vocational component, and work-based learning component (pupillage).

2 The Bar Qualification Rules enable the development of new training programmes for prospective barristers following the approved pathways. The focus of these training programmes will be on meeting the Threshold Standard and competences of the Professional Statement .

3 Appropriate transitional arrangements were in place to ensure that students were not adversely affected by changes to the old rules, disproportionately. The transitional period has now ended.