

Part 3 - Vocational Component of Bar Training

3A: The BPTC and new Bar training courses

This section includes information on the Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC) and the new Bar Training Courses commencing in September 2020, including entry requirements, an overview of the application process, the course providers, and key statistics.

Overview - entry requirements

1 Applicants for a place on the BPTC or, from 1 September 2020, a new Bar Training Course must:

- a. have completed the academic component of Bar training (see [Part 2](#) of this Bar Qualification Manual);
- b. have passed the Bar Course Aptitude Test (BCAT) (see [Part 3C](#) of this Bar Qualification Manual);
- c. be a member of one of the Inns of Court (see [Part 5A](#) of this Bar Qualification Manual); and
- d. be fluent in English.

2 Please note that providers may impose additional selection criteria over and above the minimum requirements specified above. Please check the website of individual providers for more information about their entry requirements.

English language requirement

3 The [Professional Statement](#) describes the following Competence regarding English language, which should be demonstrated by students before they enrol on the BPTC/a new Bar Training Course.

The Professional Statement

Practical knowledge, skills and attributes

Barristers will:

1.8 Exercise good English language skills.

They will have an effective command of the language and be able to use it appropriately, accurately and fluently so as to handle complex and detailed argumentation. They will use correct English grammar, spelling and punctuation.

Barristers should:

1. Use correct and appropriate vocabulary, English grammar, spelling and punctuation in all communications.
2. Speak fluent English.

4 You must be able to demonstrate that your English language ability is at least equivalent to:

a minimum score of 7.5 in each section of the IELTS academic test, or

a minimum score of 73 in each part of the Pearson Test of English (academic).

5 On entry to the BPTC/a new Bar Training Course, your provider will require you to sign a statement that you are aware of the standard of English Language required, and that you consider that you have met it. If the course provider considers that any aspect of your language ability is not at the required level after you have commenced the course, your provider must (as soon as the issue is identified) require you to:

take one of the language tests above; and

provide a test certificate certifying that you have achieved the required scores within 28 days.

6 Certificates issued by an English language test provider verifying the score achieved by a candidate in one of the above tests must be current and valid by reference to the rules of that English language test provider.

7 If you fail to provide evidence that you have achieved the required scores within 28 days of being asked to do so, your provider must require you to:

withdraw from the course; or

intermit and improve your score prior to being admitted to a new vocational Bar Training Course (subject to meeting any additional entry requirements) in a subsequent year.

Making an application - BarSAS

8 The online application system for the BPTC was the Bar Student Application Service (BarSAS). For new Bar Training Courses starting in or after 1 September 2020, BarSAS will cease to exist. Information on how to apply for new courses will be published on our website in due course. For information about Authorised Education and Training Organisations who will deliver vocational Bar training from 2020, see our [page on AETOs from 2020](#).

BPTC Providers

9 The grid below includes contact details for the providers who delivered the BPTC. For information about Authorised Education and Training Organisations who will deliver vocational Bar training from 2020, see our [page on AETOs from 2020](#).

BPP Law School - Birmingham
34-36 Colmore Circus
Birmingham B4 6BN
T: 03331 228 179
[BPP website](#)

BPP Law School - Bristol
Grove Avenue
Bristol BS1 4QY
T: 0333 122 4347
[BPP website](#)

BPP Law School - London
68-70 Red Lion Street
London WC1R 4NY
T: 020 7430 2304
[BPP website](#)

BPP Law School - Leeds
Whitehall - 2 Whitehall Quays
Leeds LS1 4HR
T: 0113 386 8250
F: 0113 245 5177
[BPP website](#)

BPP Law School - Manchester
St. James's Building
79 Oxford Street
Manchester M1 6FQ
T: 0845 077 5566
[BPP website](#)

Cardiff Law School
Cardiff University
Law Building
Museum Ave
Cardiff CF10 3AX
T: 029 2087 6705
[Cardiff website](#)

The City Law School (formerly Inns of Court School of Law)
4 Gray's Inn Place
Gray's Inn
London WC1R 5DX
T: 020 7404 5787
[City Law School website](#)

The University of Law - Birmingham
133 Great Hampton Street
Birmingham B18 6AQ
T: 014 8321 6080
[University of Law website](#)

The University of Law - London
14 Store Street
London WC1E 7DE
T: 0800 289 997
[University of Law website](#)

The University of Law - Leeds
15-16 Park Row
Leeds
LS1 5HD
T: 0800 289997
[University of Law website](#)

Manchester Metropolitan University
School of Law
All Saints West
Lower Ormond Street
Manchester M15 6HB
T: 0161 247 3053
[Manchester Met website](#)

Nottingham Trent University
50 Shakespeare Street
Nottingham
NG1 4FQ
T: 0115 941 8418
[Nottingham Trent website](#)

The University of Northumbria at Newcastle
Northumbria School of Law
City Campus East One
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8ST
T: 0191 227 3939
[Northumbria website](#)

University of the West of England at Bristol
Faculty of Law
Frenchay Campus
Coldharbour Lane
Bristol BS16 1QY
T: 0117 965 6261 x3769
[UWE website](#)

10 For more information about each provider, please see the [BPTC Provider Information Table](#) or visit the provider's website.

Monitoring visit reports

11 As part of the annual monitoring programme of the BPTC, we carried out visits to BPTC providers. Reports from past visits can be viewed [on our website](#).

12 The overall aim of the review process was to secure a high quality of educational and academic experience for students. Its most important function was to assess the quality and standards of provision of the BPTC, by considering the academic management, content, teaching, learning, assessment and support for the BPTC.

13 This was based on a risk management approach, with a lighter touch where there was confidence in a provider, but there were mechanisms for 'triggered' visits if and when causes for concern arose. The review process also provided a mechanism for quality enhancement and the identification and exchange of good practice.

Key statistics

14 The [BPTC Key Statistics document](#) contains data on the make-up and performance of BPTC students across all providers.

15 Previous key statistics reports are available [on our website](#).

The BPTC Handbook and syllabi

16 Our [2019 BPTC Handbook](#) is available on our website.

17 For the syllabi for the BPTC and new Bar Training Courses, please see Part 3B of this Bar Qualification Manual.

Future requirements

If you have not yet completed the BPTC, you will have the opportunity to complete the course as normal, with three attempts at each assessment.

Spring 2021

If, after Spring 2021, you have extenuating circumstances which means you have to defer sitting one of the centralised assessments, then you may be affected by the transitional arrangements which we have put in place for centralised assessments.

We have published a statement which sets out what the [transitional arrangements will be for centralised assessments](#) on our website. If you are a current BPTC student, you should read this statement to find out how you may be affected.

3B: BPTC and Bar Training Syllabi

This section includes links to download the course syllabi for the Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC) and the new Bar Training Courses starting in September 2020.

1 The BPTC/Bar Training syllabi documents are for use by BPTC/Bar Training students and providers, and Bar Transfer Test candidates.

2 If you have any questions about the syllabi documents, you should contact your BPTC/Bar Training provider.

[BPTC Civil Litigation Syllabus 2020-21 \(Jun 2020\)](#)

[Bar Training Civil Litigation Syllabus 2020-21 \(Jun 2020 - White Book 2020 Version\) - updated 7 October 2020](#)

[BPTC/Bar Training Criminal Litigation Syllabus \(Jan 2021\) and Tracked Changes version](#)

3C: The Bar Course Aptitude Test (BCAT)

This section includes information on the Bar Course Aptitude Test (BCAT) including what the test involves, how to book a sitting, reasonable adjustments, extenuating circumstances, and complaints.

Overview

1 Candidates must pass the BCAT before they can enrol on a vocational component Bar Training Course in September. We strongly recommend taking the BCAT earlier rather than later in case a re-take is necessary. Also, in previous years the BCAT has been fully booked in the run-up to the closing date. If no slots are available, you will not be able to take the test and will not be admitted to a Bar Training Course, even if you meet all the other requirements.

2 More information about the BCAT can be found in the [BCAT Handbook](#). We also have a list of [frequently asked questions \(FAQs\)](#). If you cannot find the answer to your question, please email us at BCAT@barstandardsboard.org.uk.

Opening and closing dates

3 You can register for this year's BCAT from Thursday, 9 January 2020 to Monday, 22 March 2021. Next year's BCAT registration will open in approximately May 2021. (We close the test every year to refresh the bank and perform maintenance.) You register for the BCAT online via the [Pearson VUE website](#). Please read the Pearson Vue statement about [test delivery information in light of COVID-19 \(coronavirus\)](#).

4 The last date to sit this year's BCAT is Monday, 29 March 2021. Next year's BCAT will open in approximately May 2021. This website will be updated when the exact date is known. (We close the test every year to refresh the bank and perform maintenance.) You schedule the BCAT via the [Pearson Vue website](#).

What the test involves

5 The BCAT tests aptitude for critical thinking and reasoning. These are key skills required for the vocational component of Bar training. The aim of the test is to ensure that those undertaking Bar Training Courses have the aptitude to succeed on the course. The test consists of 60 multiple choice questions, lasts 55 minutes and is completed on a computer at an authorised Pearson VUE test centre. The test costs £150 in the UK and EU or £170 in the rest of the world. The test is in English and does not require any legal knowledge.

Practice test

6 To familiarise yourself with the BCAT, you should try the free [practice test](#). The practice test is the same length, difficulty and format as the actual test. At the end you will be told if you passed or failed.

7 On the practice test page there is also additional information regarding what the BCAT measures, why the BCAT is being used, the validity study carried out, and tips on how to improve your critical thinking skills.

How long is your BCAT pass valid for?

8 BCAT passes before 2016, or from 19 December 2016, are valid for five years.

9 For candidates who took the BCAT between April and August 2016:

BCAT passes scoring 45 or more are valid for five years.

BCAT passes scoring 44 or less were only valid to enrol on the BPTC in September 2016.

10 If you passed the BCAT between October 2014 and September 2015, the last BPTC you could have enrolled on with that pass started in September 2019.

Booking your test

11 You schedule and pay for the BCAT using the [Pearson VUE website](#). Pearson has test centres in the [following countries](#). For questions about test centres, registering for the test and payment queries, please contact the [Pearson VUE customer service](#) for your relevant region.

Reasonable adjustments

12 If you would like to request reasonable adjustments (accommodations), please [create an account](#) on the [Pearson VUE website](#) (this will give you a BCAT ID) then read the [reasonable adjustment policy](#) and finally complete the [reasonable adjustment form](#).

13 Do NOT book the BCAT online, this will result in you arriving at the test centre to find you are booked for a standard test with no reasonable adjustments.

14 For reasonable adjustments such as a reader, a recorder, or a braille test, both we and Pearson VUE require six weeks' notice to put these in place for your test. For reasonable adjustments such as extra time or a separate room, we and Pearson VUE require two weeks' notice to put these in place for your test. We and Pearson VUE will try and accommodate all reasonable adjustment requests but reserve the right to decline requests that do not provide the notice periods indicated above.

15 Once completed, please email the [adjustment form](#) to BCAT@barstandardsboard.org.uk, together with supporting documentation.

Extenuating circumstances

16 If you were prevented from attending a booked test due to circumstances outside of your control, you can apply for a free re-take under the [extenuating circumstances policy](#). Please read the [extenuating circumstances policy](#) before completing the [form](#).

17 [Forms](#) must be submitted no later than five working days after any scheduled test taking that was affected by extenuating circumstances.

Complaints

18 If you would like to make a complaint about the BCAT, please read the [BCAT Complaints Policy](#) before completing the [BCAT Stage 2 Complaints Form](#) or [BCAT Stage 3 Complaints Form](#), as directed by the policy.

Future requirements

If you have not yet completed the BPTC, you will have the opportunity to complete the course as normal, with three attempts at each assessment.

Spring 2021

If, after Spring 2021, you have extenuating circumstances which means you have to defer sitting one of the centralised assessments, then you may be affected by the transitional arrangements which we have put in place for centralised assessments.

We have published a statement which sets out what the [transitional arrangements will be for centralised assessments](#) on our website. If you are a current BPTC student, you should read this statement to find out how you may be affected.

3D: Centralised assessments

This section includes information on the vocational component centralised assessments including what subjects are covered by the exams, what to do before the exams and on the day of sitting, marking and results, and the results review process.

Contact: Exams@barstandardsboard.org.uk

Overview

1 Vocational component centralised examinations are set on our behalf by the Central Examination Board (CEB). The CEB consists of a group of senior examiners, including experienced legal practitioners and academics. Psychometric and examination experts support the work of the CEB.

2

Centralised examinations were introduced to ensure consistency across course providers, and closer regulatory oversight of standards in knowledge subjects.

The following Bar Training subjects are centrally examined:

Civil Litigation and Evidence; and

Criminal Litigation, Evidence and Sentencing.

Exam	Duration	No of questions	Marking
Civil Litigation (paper 1)	2 hours	50 Multiple Choice questions (MCQs)	Electronically – by the BSB
Civil Litigation (paper 2)	2.5 hours	40 Multiple Choice questions (MCQs) including rolling case scenarios	Electronically – by the BSB
Criminal Litigation	3 hours	75 Multiple Choice questions (MCQs)	Electronically – by the BSB

The following BPTC subjects are centrally examined:

Professional Ethics;

Civil Litigation and Evidence; and

Criminal Litigation, Evidence and Sentencing.

Exam	Duration	No of questions	Marking
Professional Ethics	2.5 hours	6 Short Answer questions (SAQs)	Centrally – by the BSB
Civil Litigation	3 hours	75 Multiple Choice questions (MCQs)	Electronically – by the BSB
Criminal Litigation	3 hours	75 Multiple Choice questions (MCQs)	Electronically – by the BSB

Standard Setting

3 The standard for success is determined at each sitting based on the difficulty of the questions (using a criterion-referenced [standard setting technique](#)) and so may differ between sittings.

Examination dates

4

The BPTC cohort sits its centralised examinations on the same day at the same time. The Bar Training cohort sits its centralised examinations on the same day at the same time. In light of COVID-19, please [see our statement](#).

BPTC students

Exam sitting	Exam	Date and Time
2021 - Spring	BPTC/BTT	Wednesday 31 March 2021
	Professional Ethics	
	BPTC/BTT	Thursday 22 April 2021
	Civil Litigation	
2021 - Summer	BPTC/BTT	Monday 19 April 2021
	Criminal Litigation	

Results will be sent to Providers in mid-June. Students should contact their Provider to find out the specific date on which the results will be released to them.

2021 - Summer	BPTC Professional Ethics	Please contact your Provider as this is not a BSB assessment
	BPTC Civil Litigation	Monday 16 August 2021
	BPTC Criminal Litigation	Friday 20 August 2021

Results will be sent to Providers in early October 2021. Students should contact their Provider to find out the specific date on which the results will be released to them.

Bar training students

Exam sitting	Exam date	Date and time
2021 - Spring	Bar Training Criminal Litigation	Monday 19 April 2021
	Bar Training Civil Litigation (paper 1)	Wednesday 21 April 2021
	Bar Training Civil Litigation (paper 2)	Friday 23 April 2021

Results will be sent to AETOs at the end of May 2021. Students should contact their AETO to find out the specific date on which the results will be released to them.

2021 - Summer	Bar Training Civil Litigation (paper 1)	Monday 16 August 2021
	Bar Training Civil Litigation (paper 2)	Wednesday 18 August 2021
	Bar Training Criminal Litigation	Friday 20 August 2021

Results will be sent to AETOS at the end of September. Students should contact their AETO to find out the specific date on which the results will be released to them.

Results for December 2020 Bar Training and BPTC exams

Bar training results will be released to AETOs on Wednesday 27 January 2021. BPTC Litigation results will be released to Providers on Wednesday 27 January 2021; BPTC Ethics results will be released to Providers on Wednesday 24 February 2021. Please contact your AETO/Provider regarding the date your results will be released to you.

About the exams

5 Although we regulate the content and delivery of the BPTC/Bar Training Courses, there are a wide range of issues that are addressed by the course providers. The majority of queries relating to Centralised Examinations are answered in this Bar Qualification Manual; however, there are times when you might need to contact someone should you not find the answer you need or if you require further advice.

6 Your course provider should be contacted about any queries relating to the following examination queries:

- Mitigating circumstances
- Overseas examinations
- Fit to sit queries
- Exam deferrals
- Where the provider has failed to address an examination query
- Mock examinations and revision materials
- Results release dates
- Clerical error checks
- Institution's policies and procedures relating to examinations

Please consult your course provider's website or your student advice centre for the relevant contacts at your provider.

7 We are responsible for, and should be contacted about, the following examination queries:

- Enhanced clerical error checks
- Requests for review

Quality assurance of exam papers

8 Centralised examination questions are written by experienced legal practitioners and academics contracted by us. The examining team meets to scrutinise and approve each question. These comprise an agreed exam paper, which is then tested under exam conditions, and is further reviewed to assess the validity and currency of any referenced law. Exam papers also undergo scrutiny by our syllabus team to ensure all questions comply with the current curriculum. Any recommendations made during these processes are then passed on to the Chief Examiner responsible for the relevant subject who will advise of the changes to be implemented in the paper. Our staff implement any required changes before the paper is proof-read by a professional proof reader.

9 To determine the pass mark of the centralised examination papers, we conduct standard setting. All pass marks are reported as 60% to providers.

10 After completion of the quality assurance processes, the paper is ready to be printed and delivered to the providers.

Sitting exams overseas

11 Some, but not all, providers allow candidates to sit exams overseas at their discretion. It is the responsibility of the provider to arrange overseas exams. You should contact your provider for further information.

Reasonable adjustments

12 If you have a disability and require additional arrangements to sit centralised examinations, you must contact your course provider. The provider will liaise with us on your behalf.

Mock examination paper

13 We provide a centrally set mock exam paper for each of the centralised examinations. Mock exams are administered by providers and they will advise when the mock exam paper will be available.

Fit to sit

14 Every provider operates a different "fit to sit" policy. Some providers require candidates to complete a "fit to sit" form at the time of an exam. Other providers will complete this process at time of enrolment where candidates will declare that if they are present at the time of the exam, they are fit to sit the exam.

On the day

15 At the Ethics examination, candidates will be given:

an exam paper

an SAQ answer booklet in which to record answers

16 At the Civil / Criminal examination, candidates will be given:

an exam paper

an optical mark read (OMR) sheet on which to record answers

17 All documents must be returned to the invigilator at the end of the exam. Only writing materials and an eraser are allowed in the exam room.

18 You are responsible for managing your time to complete the exam within the time allowed. Only answers given in the MCQ (OMR) sheet or SAQ answer book will be accepted. It is essential that the instructions on completing the SAQ answer booklet are followed correctly. It is your responsibility to ensure answers are legible and answer booklet/sheets are correctly identified with your candidate number.

Extenuating circumstances

19 Extenuating circumstances may prevent you from sitting an exam. You should contact your provider for further information.

Quality assurance of marking

20 Centralised examinations are marked by us. To ensure consistency and quality, the following processes are in place:

a. MCQs (Civil and Criminal Litigation)

After the exam, MCQ answer sheets are returned to us and scanned by an Optical Mark Recognition (OMR) machine which captures the answers selected by the candidate. This process removes the risk of errors associated with human input and enables accurate production of statistics and results analysis.

b. SAQs (Professional Ethics)

SAQ answer booklets are sent to us for marking by a pool of suitably qualified individuals (including academics working at providers, barristers and solicitors), following the mark scheme provided by the BSB. For a more detailed explanation of the marking process please read the latest Chair's Report.

Quality assurance of results

21 Once the marking is completed, statistical data is generated and presented at examination boards.

22 There is a Subject Exam Board (SEB) per examination. The purpose of each SEB is to review and moderate the overall cohort results of the paper and to make recommendations to the Final Exam Board (FEB).

23 The SEB uses a number of information sources, including statistical data both past and present, Chief Examiners' and invigilators' reports, and feedback from providers. In addition, a psychometrician attends to provide expert advice and an independent observer attends to provide oversight and report to us.

24 The SEB considers the performance of questions and recommends either accepting the results or intervening. For details of previous interventions, please read the relevant Chair's report.

25 The FEB considers the recommendations made by the SEBs and either agrees or amends them. We apply any agreed interventions and generates results per provider. The process involves a series of manual and electronic checks to ensure that providers receive accurate results.

Results review process

26 Examination answers are not re-marked but you may request:

- a clerical error check;
- an enhanced clerical error check; and/or
- a request for review

27 You may request a clerical error check if you believe that your marks have been captured incorrectly.

How to apply	Contact the course provider.
Deadline	Applications must be received within 10 days of results release (date of despatch, not receipt).
Outcomes	The Candidate Review Process policy details possible outcomes of reviews.
Fee	Contact your provider.

28 You may request an enhanced clerical error check if you believe there has been any error in the computation, scaling or transcription of marks by us that may have affected the outcome of an examination.

How to apply	Enhanced clerical checks may only be requested following an initial clerical error check. You should download, complete and return an Enhanced clerical error check application form to us.
Deadline	Applications must be received within 10 days of the result of the clerical error check.
Outcomes	An outcome will be communicated to you within 20 working days of receipt of the request or payment, whichever is later.
Fee	£60 per subject, paid on submission of application by telephoning the Exams team on 020 7611 1444 between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

29 The request for review challenges the decisions of the CEB. There is only one ground on which a request for review can be considered: breach of natural justice by the CEB. You should carefully consider whether you have the required evidence to challenge on this ground. You must consult the Chair's report to assist in the preparation of a submission. There is no further appeal process in place.

How to apply	Download, complete and return a request for review form to us.
Deadline	5pm on Tuesday 20 April 2021 for the December 2020 examinations.
Outcomes	The Results Review Process policy details possible outcomes of reviews.
Fee	£250 per subject, paid on submission of application by telephoning our Exams Team on 020 7611 1444 between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

30 Payment for the review processes undertaken by us must be submitted at the same time as your request. If your payment is declined, we will contact you to rectify the matter and a second payment attempt will be made. Should the second attempt be declined, your review application will be deemed void and therefore rejected.

Chair's report

31 To ensure the transparency of the centralised examinations, the Chair of the CEB publishes a report for each of the examination cycles, detailing statistical

data for each sit and interventions applied to each of the three knowledge areas: Professional Ethics, Civil Litigation and Criminal Litigation.

32 Request for Review applicants are advised to carefully read the data contained in the Chair's Report. These are available on our website. Recent Chair's Report can be found at:

- [December 2020 vocational Bar training course sitting](#)
- [December 2020 BPTC exam sitting](#)
- [August and October 2020 BPTC exam sitting](#)

33 Previous Chair's reports are available on request to our Exams Team.

Future requirements

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Report of the Chair of the Centralised Examinations Board (CEB) for the August and October 2020 examinations

Read more about the [Chair of the CEB's report for the August and October 2020 examinations](#) in our [COVID-19 vocational components FAQs](#).

See also:

- [The introduction of a Professional Ethics assessment during pupillage Work Based learning](#)
- [BPTC Ethics sample paper and mark scheme](#)
- [The 2020-21 BPTC and Bar Training syllabi](#)

3E: Exemptions and waivers (vocational)

This section includes information on exemptions and waivers from the vocational component of Bar training.

Overview

1 Formerly, the vocational component of Bar training was satisfied by completion of the Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC). New Bar Training Courses under a number of different titles will be introduced from September 2020. [Details of these courses](#) may be found on our website.

2 Bar Training Courses must be undertaken in their entirety. There are no partial waivers of these courses for prior learning or experience gained before starting the vocational component. However, you may be granted exemption from a Bar Training Course if you have qualified in another jurisdiction, or as a solicitor in England and Wales. This type of exemption will usually be conditional on passing sections of the Bar Transfer Test (see [Part 7D](#) of this Bar Qualification Manual).

3 The rules regarding exemption from any of the individual components of Bar training are set out in the [BSB Handbook](#) at Rules Q7-Q12.

4 More information for qualified lawyers who wish to transfer to the Bar of England and Wales can be found in [Part 7](#) of this Bar Qualification Manual.

5 More information on exemptions relating to the academic component of Bar training can be found in [Part 2E](#) of this Bar Qualification Manual.

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