

Health Warning for prospective BPTC students

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR THOSE WISHING TO STUDY FOR THE BAR OF ENGLAND AND WALES

Is it right for you?

We are very glad that you are seriously thinking of pursuing a career at the Bar. However, you must think carefully about whether you have the potential to make a successful career as a barrister. A career at the Bar is very demanding, requiring high standards.

The Bar can offer an extremely rewarding career if you

- **have a high level of intellectual ability;**
- **are highly articulate in written and spoken English; and**
- **can think and communicate under pressure**
- **have determination and stamina and are emotionally robust.**

Statistics

Once you have satisfied yourself you have these qualities, and the potential to develop your knowledge and skills further, you should also consider some of the 'facts and figures' concerning a career at the Bar before you commit yourself.

In brief, approximately 1800 students take the Bar Course every year and, typically, the number of pupillages offered is about 550 each year. Some students who complete the Bar Course return overseas or turn to other professions. However, students are allowed to seek pupillage for up to 5 years after completing the Bar Course, so the competition for pupillages is extremely intense. Over 3,000 individuals may be applying for pupillage in any particular year, and some Chambers have over a hundred applicants for each pupillage placement, and at present there are only a limited number of pupillages at the Employed Bar.¹

Getting a Tenancy

You should also realise that, following pupillage, obtaining a tenancy in Chambers or a suitable position at the Employed Bar can also be very challenging. Each year there are normally fewer tenancies available than pupillages, and Chambers do not always offer tenancy to their own pupils.

Seek Advice

¹ Information is available about the number of students who take the Bar Course each year and the availability of pupillages. You are also strongly advised to read the Bar Council booklet 'It's Your Call', which is updated from time to time and which includes additional information about a career at the Bar.

Up to date and detailed statistics are on the BSB website - see below <http://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/news/statistics/>. The Providers of the Bar Course also publish their own statistics about the number of students they take on the Bar Course each year, and how successful their graduates are at obtaining pupillage or other appropriate positions. Details of the costs of the course at each provider are also given on their websites.

Do, therefore, check out the detailed information on the websites listed below. Remember that you also need to meet the formal entry requirements before you start the course: a second class honours degree in law (or in another subject plus a conversion course), Inn membership, and adequate language skills. The BSB is currently implementing an aptitude test for entry onto the Bar Professional Training Course. This is likely to be in place for students applying to start the course in 2011.

You should find out as much as you can and give the information serious consideration before committing yourself to the study - and financial and other expenditure that this requires.

So, to make a realistic assessment of whether you are suited to a career as a barrister you should:

- **Seek guidance from your university law tutors and careers advisers**
- **Go to the Inns and speak to their Education staff (they organise open days for university students)**
- **Find out more about the profession and look at the statistical information**
- **Try to gain relevant experience such as working for a law firm, doing a mini pupillage or marshalling for a judge**
- **Try to talk to people who have studied for the Bar, for example to a recently qualified barrister.**

If you have faith in yourself, your capabilities and your potential to succeed after hard work and effort this should not discourage you. For good candidates, from whatever background, financial support (for example from the Inns of Court, or loans) is frequently available, and the final rewards - both in terms of job satisfaction and financial remuneration - can make it a very worthwhile career.

Helpful advice

You will find helpful advice on the following websites:

The Bar Council (www.barcouncil.org.uk)

The Bar Standards Board (www.barstandardsboard.org.uk)

Lincoln's Inn (www.lincolnsinn.org.uk)

Inner Temple (www.innertemple.org.uk)

Middle Temple (www.middletemple.org.uk)

Gray's Inn (www.graysinn.org.uk)

BPP Law School, London and Leeds (www.bpp.com)

City University, London (www.city.ac.uk)

The College of Law, London and Birmingham (www.college-of-law.co.uk)

Cardiff Law School (www.cf.ac.uk)

Manchester Metropolitan University (www.law.mmu.ac.uk)

University of Northumbria, Newcastle (www.law.unn.ac.uk)

Nottingham Law School (www.ntu.ac.uk/nls/)

University of the West of England, Bristol (www.uwe.ac.uk)

Kaplan Law School, London (www.kaplanlawschool.org.uk)

This notice is issued jointly by the four Inns of Court and the BPTC Providers, and the BSB and Bar Council.