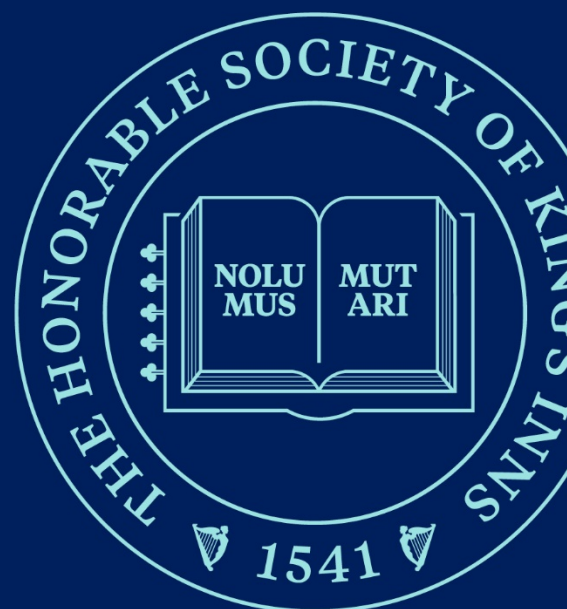


LEGAL SERVICES REGULATORY AUTHORITY

ANNUAL REPORT ON THE ADMISSION POLICIES OF THE LEGAL PROFESSIONS

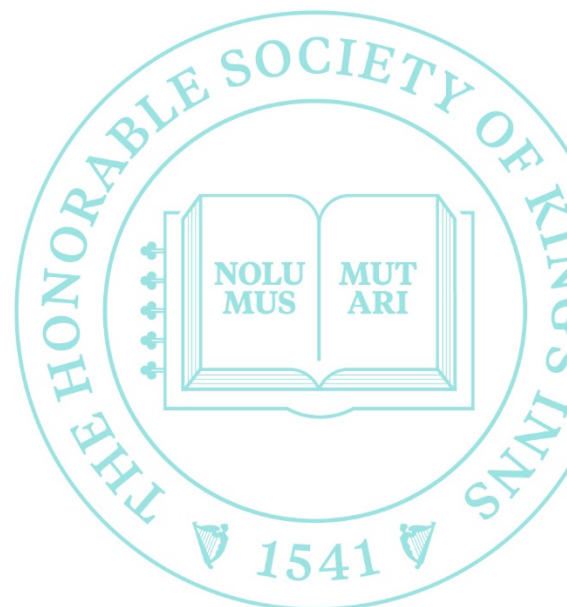
SUBMISSION OF BEHALF OF
THE HONORABLE SOCIETY OF KING'S INNS
12 FEBRUARY 2021

KINGS
INNS¹⁵₄₁



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INTRODUCTION

The Honorable Society of King's Inns ("*King's Inns*") makes this submission in response to a request for information and submissions from the Legal Services Regulatory Authority ("*LSRA*") in relation to the preparation of the annual report on the admissions policies of the legal professions. Part one of this submission sets out, where available, specific information requested by the LSRA. It also includes additional relevant information and comments to provide further context. Part two outlines the views of King's Inns on the overall question of the extent to which the admissions policies of the legal professions are consistent with the public interest in ensuring the availability of legal services at a reasonable cost, taking into account the demand for services and the need to ensure adequate education and training standards for persons admitted to practise.

I. INFORMATION REQUESTED BY THE LSRA

King's Inns provides the following information in response to specific queries raised by the LSRA in its letter dated 16 December 2020.

1. The number of persons called to the Bar in 2020, with a breakdown based on routes to admission

Table A

Call to the Bar – 2020	
Barrister-at-Law degree course	116 ¹
Solicitor transfers ²	3
Northern Ireland barristers ³	12
Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications ⁴	35
<i>Morgenbesser</i> eligibility ⁵	1
Total:	167

In relation to the first route of admission listed above, 118 students sat the Barrister-at-Law degree annual exams in 2020 with a pass rate of 76% (compared with 65% in 2019 and an average pass rate of 67% in the period 2015-2019). The pass rate in the supplemental exams, which 29 students sat, was 65% (compared with 76% in 2019 and an average pass rate of 79% in the period 2015-2019). The pass rate (i.e., the proportion of students who successfully complete the course in a given year, whether at the annual exams or by way of supplemental examination) in 2020 was 74% (annual) and 92% (supplemental) respectively (compared with 68% (annual) and 91% (supplemental) in 2019 and an annual average of 70% (annual) and 93% (supplemental) in the period 2015-2019).

1 109 students passed the Barrister-at-Law degree exams in 2020; the above figure includes the net effect of deferrals from earlier years less deferrals of students who passed the exams in 2020 but who have deferred their Call to the Bar.

2 A solicitor who has been in continuous practice in the State for three years or more immediately preceding an application to transfer and who has held a practising certificate from the Law Society of Ireland for the entirety of that period (or is exempted from the requirement to hold such certificate) may, having attended the four week Solicitor Transfer Course at King's Inns, be admitted to the degree of Barrister-at-Law and called to the Bar.

3 Pursuant to a mutual recognition regime, a member of the Bar of Northern Ireland who has been in practice for at least three years immediately preceding the application may be admitted to the degree of Barrister-at-Law and called to the Bar without taking any test or examination (applicants under Directive 2005/36/EC – an alternative route for barristers from Northern Ireland – may be required to sit an aptitude test).

4 Pursuant to the European Union (Recognition of Professional Qualifications) Regulations 2017 (S.I. No. 8), King's Inns is the competent authority in respect of the profession of barrister for the purposes of Directive 2005/36/EC.

5 Persons who are partly qualified in another EU Member State by virtue of holding legal qualifications of an academic and/or professional nature. Those qualifications are assessed and to the extent that there is any shortfall in knowledge or skills the applicant will be required to complete a number of assessments.. See C-313/01 *Christine Morgenbesser v. Consiglio dell'Ordine degli avvocati di Genova*.

- The number of trainee barristers who commenced the Barrister-at-Law degree course in 2020 and the route to admission (i.e. approved law degree or KI Diploma).⁶

183 students commenced the Barrister-at-Law degree course in September 2020, of whom 133 (73%) hold an approved legal qualification obtained at an institution other than King’s Inns. Table B sets out the relevant data from previous years for comparison purposes.

Table B

Year	Number sitting entrance examination	Number commencing degree course (full-time / modular)	Route of admission: approved legal qualification	Route of admission: King’s Inns Diploma in Legal Studies
2013	168	141 (87 / 54)	96 (68%)	45 (32%)
2014	157	140 (80 / 60)	91 (65%)	49 (35%)
2015	120	96 (58 / 38)	65 (68%)	31 (32%)
2016	133	119 (79 / 40)	74 (62%)	45 (38%)
2017	131	112 (51 / 61)	67 (60%)	45 (40%)
2018	143	120 (58 / 62)	85 (71%)	35 (29%)
2019	150	118 (57 / 61)	84 (71%)	34 (29%)
2020	195	183 (97 / 86)	126 (69%)	57 (31%)

The number of applicants who sat the entrance exam in 2020 was 195 which compares with an annual average of 135 between 2015 and 2019. The number of applicants who satisfied the entrance exam standard and student admission declaration criteria was 181, compared with an annual average of 113 between 2015 and 2019. 183 students commenced the 2020-21 Barrister-at-Law degree course (representing an increase of 62% compared with an annual average of 113 between 2015 and 2019). The number of students commencing the course takes account of the net impact of deferrals to a later year and returning deferrals from previous years.

- A breakdown by demographic and diversity data held by the King’s Inns of trainee barristers who commenced the BL degree course in 2020 (e.g. age, gender, location, professional background, academic record).

In relation to this request, it should be noted that information regarding members of the student body is largely obtained at the time of application to sit the entrance exam. Applicants must provide information relating to their legal education qualifications so as to satisfy the eligibility requirements. Applicants are not required to submit their academic record beyond this nor are they required to provide information relating to their occupation, their work experience or their professional background. Applicants are requested to provide a

⁶ The response of King’s Inns refers to “students” who commenced the Barrister-at-Law degree course rather than “trainee barristers” as, strictly speaking, there are no “trainee barristers” in the sense of “trainee solicitors” undertaking their apprenticeship. Having been admitted to the degree of Barrister-at-Law and called to the Bar by the Chief Justice, all barristers have a full right of audience before all Courts and are entitled to practise fully as a barrister. As a consequence, King’s Inns teaches and assesses the Barrister-at-Law degree course to a “fit to practise” standard.

correspondence address, a permanent home address, and their country and county of birth. However, these parts of the application form have not always been completed by all applicants. King's Inns is in the process of setting up an online application process that will require a completed application form.

As of the date of this submission, King's Inns has conducted the below analysis in respect of persons who were eligible to sit / persons who sat / persons who passed the entrance exam, as distinct from persons who commenced the Barrister-at-Law degree course. The breakdown within those groups is expected to be broadly similar to the breakdown within the specific group to which the above request relates:

- 54% of the 181 candidates who passed the entrance exam in 2020 were male and 46% were female (a similar ratio (53:47) was evident in 2017-2019);
- Of the 201 applicants who were eligible to sit the entrance exam in 2020, 47 (23%) were aged under 25 years, 48 (24%) were aged 25-29 years, 55 (27%) were aged 30-39 years, 25 (12%) were aged 40-49 years, and 26 (13%) were over 50 years of age; and
- Of the 201 applicants who were eligible to sit the entrance exam in 2020, 48% provided a Dublin *correspondence address* (this may differ from permanent home address). Cork and Kildare applicant addresses accounted for 6.5% each of the total; Meath 5%; Galway 4%; Waterford and Wicklow 3.5% each; Wexford and Carlow 3% each; Limerick and Laois 2% each. The balance of 13% (26 applicant correspondence addresses) is spread among 15 locations: Westmeath, Tipperary, Sligo, Roscommon, Monaghan, Mayo, Louth, Kilkenny, Kerry, Donegal, Cavan, Northern Ireland, England, Belgium and Zimbabwe.

4. The number of persons who sat the entrance exam for the 2020 BL degree course and the number who passed/failed.

195 people sat the entrance exam for the 2020-2021 Barrister-at-Law degree course. 14 people did not successfully complete the entrance exam.

5. A statistical breakdown of those who sat the entrance exam for the 2020 BL degree course based on King's Inns eligibility criteria (i.e. numbers with approved law degree, approved post-graduate diploma or KI Diploma).

Of the 195 persons who sat the entrance exam for the 2020-2021 Barrister-at-Law degree course, 67 (34%) held the Diploma in Legal Studies from King's Inns; 29 (15%) held an approved degree from University of Dublin (Trinity College); 19 (10%) held an approved degree from Griffith College; 17 (9%) held an approved degree from UCC; 14 (7%) held an approved degree from UCD; 11 (6%) held an approved degree from NUIG; 8 (4%) held an approved degree from DCU; 7 (4%) held an approved degree from UL; 6 (3%) held an approved degree from TUD; 5 (3%) held an approved degree from NUIM; 3 (1.5%) held an approved degree from DBS; 3 (1.5%) held an approved degree from Institute of Technology Carlow; and there was one candidate from each of the following institutions: WIT, Portobello College, Independent College, Athlone Institute of Technology, and 2 *Morgenbesser* applicants.

6. A statistical breakdown of those who passed the entrance exam for the 2020 BL degree course based on the King's Inns eligibility criteria (i.e. numbers with approved law degree, approved post-graduate diploma or KI Diploma).

Of the 181 candidates who passed the entrance exam in 2020, 61 (34%) held the Diploma in Legal Studies from King's Inns and the balance (120 (66%)) held approved degrees from a wide range of third level institutions.

It may be noted that the general age profile of successful candidates holding the King's Inns Diploma in Legal Studies is older indicating that it provides an avenue for more mature students and those who may not previously have had the opportunity to study at third-level to pursue legal studies and enter the profession.

7. The number of Denham Fellowships and other bursaries for 2020.

The three separate bursaries and fellowships available in King's Inns have at their core the aim of ensuring fuller and more open access to legal education and training for prospective barristers.

Denham Fellowship

The Denham Fellowship is aimed at encouraging diversity within the profession and is offered in association with the Bar Council. It provides for remission from Barrister-at-Law degree course fees and all related examination fees, an annual stipend of €6,000 for a period of 5 or 6 years, and a waiver of Law Library fees in the first four years of practice. Two Denham Fellowships were awarded to students commencing the Barrister-at-Law degree course in September 2020.

McCarthy Bursary

The McCarthy Bursary supports one student annually who might not otherwise be able to pursue the Barrister-at-Law degree course. It provides for full remission of fees and a limited maintenance grant in accordance with the terms of the Bursary. There was one recipient of the McCarthy Bursary in 2020.

Gaffney Fellowship

The Gaffney Fellowship is open to students who face exceptional hardship and who wish to attend the King's Inns Diploma in Legal Studies. It provides for remission of course fees payable. The course fees of nine students attending year 1 or year 2 of the Diploma were remitted in part or in full from the Gaffney Fellowship fund in 2020.

SUSI Grant

It may also be noted that the Barrister-at-Law degree course is eligible for postgraduate funding under Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI), Ireland's single national awarding authority for all higher and further education grants.

8. The number of pupillages secured by the BL degree graduating class of 2020, and the role of the King’s Inns in assisting trainee barristers to secure pupillages.

King’s Inns does not possess information regarding the number of pupillages secured by the Barrister-at-Law degree graduating class of 2020. Such information would be available from the Bar Council and from graduates who secured a pupillage but who are not members of the Law Library.

King’s Inns is not aware of any members of the Barrister-at-Law degree graduating class of 2020 who were unable to secure pupillage.

King’s Inns plays no formal role in assisting students to secure pupillages. However, students can avail of informal support from coordinators and tutors in relation to the process of identifying and approaching a master. Pupillage is also discussed in practice management sessions on the course. On several dining nights per academic year, students may sit with Benchers or with invited barristers (who practise within and outside the Law Library) and have informal opportunity to discuss career development, including pupillage. The King’s Inns student society (the LSDSI) also organises an event for students at which a number of practising barristers are invited to speak, *inter alia*, about their experience of pupillage. At this event, students are free to ask questions of the speakers, which questions may of course relate to the process of securing a pupillage.

9. The full costs of BL degree training including fees for exams and resits.

Table C

Entrance examination fee	€600 (€1,000 for late application submitted between 1 June and 1 July)
Barrister-at-Law degree course (modular and full-time)	€12,560
Supplemental examination fee (per subject)	€200

10. The number of admissions to practise at the Bar of Ireland in 2020 under the European Union (Recognition of Professional Qualifications) Regulations 2017 (S.I. No. 8 of 2017).

35 barristers were admitted to practise in 2020 pursuant to the 2017 Regulations. As seen in **Table A**, a further 12 barristers from Northern Ireland were admitted to practise in 2020 pursuant to the applicable mutual recognition regime (they could equally have sought admission pursuant to the 2017 Regulations).

11. Any other issues that you believe are pertinent to the preparation of our report under section 33(1)(c), including the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the King's Inns practices and policies in 2020 and the impact of Brexit.

Due to COVID-19, the annual exams for the Barrister-at-Law degree in 2020 were held for the first time remotely and online. They were for the most part closed book exams and were invigilated remotely using Zoom by King's Inns personnel. The 2020 entrance exams were held using the TestReach platform and were online, closed book, and invigilated by TestReach invigilators.

The 2021 Barrister-at-Law degree annual exams will be held in like manner as the 2020 annual exams. In addition to holding exams remotely, it has proven necessary to conduct the entirety of the Barrister-at-Law degree course remotely in 2020-2021. A decision on the format of the entrance exam 2021 to be held in August has yet to be made.

Regarding the impact of Brexit on admissions to the profession, as was noted in the submission on behalf of King's Inns last year, the number of barristers from Northern Ireland and England and Wales who have sought to be called to the Bar in Ireland has increased significantly in recent years. Between 2004 and 2016, there was an average of 9 such admissions to the profession each year. In 2017 there were 22; in 2018 there were 58; in 2019 there were 76; and last year there were 47.

II. ASSESSMENT UNDER SECTION 33(1)(C) OF THE LEGAL SERVICES REGULATION ACT 2015

The LSRA is required to make an assessment as to whether or not, having regard to the demand for the services of practising barristers and the need to ensure an adequate standard of education and training for persons admitted to practise, the number of persons admitted to practise as barristers in a given year is consistent with the public interest in ensuring the availability of such services at a reasonable cost. The LSRA has requested the view of King's Inns in this regard.

King's Inns wishes to make some general comments on the above before turning to the specific questions posed by the LSRA in its letter of 16 December 2020.

The mission of King's Inns is to excel in the provision of both professional and academic legal education and training and to develop and nurture lifelong relationships with its entire membership. In that regard, the core function of King's Inns remains the education and training of prospective barristers in Ireland. It fulfils this function through the provision of the Barrister-at-Law degree course.

King's Inns believes that consumers of legal services rightly expect barristers to be experts in navigating litigation and legal issues. Consequently, we are concerned at the LSRA's expressed "*need to ensure an **adequate** standard of education and training for persons admitted to practise*"⁷. Consumers rely on and trust barristers to deal with complex and serious issues relating to their lives, their liberty, their family or their business. This requires more than a merely "adequate" standard of education and training. In this regard, King's Inns echoes and adopts the comments of the Association of Judges of Ireland at paragraphs 9 and 10 of its submission to the LSRA pursuant to section 33 of the 2015 dated 20 January 2020.⁸

A student who successfully completes the Barrister-at-Law degree course at King's Inns is eligible to be admitted to the degree of Barrister-at-Law and called to the Bar with a full right of audience before all courts in the State and to practise as a barrister independently. As a result, King's Inns teaches and examines the Barrister-at-Law degree course to a "fit to practise" standard. We believe this to be the only appropriate standard in the circumstances. Any diminution in the standards expected would be detrimental to consumers and to the interests of justice. It is also submitted that it would be contrary to the objectives of the LSRA at set out in section 13(4) of the 2015 Act.

We now turn to the specific questions posed by the LSRA. Question 2 is omitted as King's Inns is not directly involved in the provision of legal services to consumers. We would note that the National Consumer Agency was invited to participate in the consultation process in relation to the Statement of the Required Competencies of a Barrister (which is discussed in our response to question 3) and it made a submission to King's Inns in that regard.

⁷ Emphasis added.

⁸ <https://www.lsr.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/AJI-S33-Submission-AR2019.pdf>

1. The level of demand for the services of practising barristers in 2020.

In relation to the demand for the services of practising barristers, it must first be understood that many barristers now operate outside of the traditional route of the independent referral Bar within the Law Library. Many practising barristers have fulfilling and rewarding careers in the full-time service of the State or in private employment. Others pursue careers outside of the law but enhanced by their legal expertise.

However, it is our experience that most students on the Barrister-at-Law degree course intend to enter the Law Library. This is supported by the consistency in the average numbers entering the Law Library each year, which have been provided by the Bar of Ireland in its submissions to the LSRA pursuant to section 33 of the 2015 Act, when compared to the overall number called to the Bar by the Chief Justice each year.

While this is not directly a matter for King's Inns, and we therefore do not maintain figures in this respect, it is well understood that many barristers find it difficult to establish a viable practice at the independent referral Bar and many leave the independent referral Bar and cease their membership of the Law Library within their first seven years of practice. This is not indicative of an unmet demand in the market for the services of barristers. It is, in fact, indicative of the opposite being the case and of there being a highly competitive market for the services of barristers. There is no indication that there is a shortage of suitably qualified barristers in any area of expertise or practice.

2. The standard of education and training for persons admitted to practise.

As stated above, King's Inns believes that the appropriate standard of education and training for a person admitted to practise as a barrister is "fit to practise".

This standard of legal education for prospective barristers is now underpinned by the Statement of the Required Competencies of a Barrister.⁹ This Statement was published by King's Inns in November 2020 following an extensive research and consultation process.

While it is to be recognised that a barrister in practice for a longer period of time will exhibit the competencies contained in the Statement at a more advanced or expert level, King's Inns believes that the Statement represents a comprehensive expression of the knowledge, professional skills and personal attributes required to be a competent practising barrister.

More generally, King's Inns view is that the education and training of prospective barristers involves two distinct phases: an academic or substantive law phase and a professional training phase. These are separate phases and they should be organised so as to avoid, to the greatest extent possible, duplication between them.

King's Inns primary focus is on the professional training phase. While the Society does offer an academic course in substantive law – the Diploma in Legal Studies – this is only one of many courses available in the marketplace for the provision of this phase of legal education and training. Many providers, including universities, institutes of technology, private colleges

⁹ Available at: <https://www.kingsinns.ie/cmsfiles/RULES/11.11.2020-STATEMENT-OF-THE-REQUIRED-COMPETENCIES.pdf>

and the Society itself, have the skills, experience and capability to design and deliver effective courses in this academic phase.

By contrast, King's Inns is firmly of the view that the delivery of the professional phase of legal education for prospective barristers is best done by King's Inns because it is uniquely focused on the objective of providing high quality professional education for prospective barristers. Education of future members of the profession was the reason why King's Inns was established in 1541 and has been its principal activity ever since. No other body or institution in Ireland has ever had, or will ever have, the education and training of barristers as its core and primary function.

Moreover, the governance structure of King's Inns ensures a strong level of interest and involvement of the practising Bar in the education and training of future members of the profession. This assists in ensuring that the education and training provided by the Society remains up-to-date and is aligned with current practice and procedure before the Courts and, in respect of the Barrister-at-Law degree course in particular, best prepares students for their career in practise. It also guards the consumer interest by ensuring that appropriate standards are maintained so that persons entering the profession are fit to practise and properly serve their clients and the wider interests of justice.

3. The extent to which the admissions policies of the legal professions are consistent with the public interest in ensuring the availability of legal services at a reasonable cost, taking into account the demand for services and the need to ensure adequate education and training standards for persons admitted to practise.

In examining this question, it is first necessary to examine and contextualise the cost of providing professional legal training to an appropriate standard.

King's Inns believes that the interactive, small group teaching method used on the Barrister-at-Law degree course is the only effective delivery method for professional training. Teaching in small groups, particularly when delivered by experienced professionals, inevitably comes at a cost.

The fees payable for a place on the Barrister-at-Law degree course are currently €12,560. The fees have remained unchanged since 2009. King's Inns believes that this compares very favourably with other types of education and training leading to a professional qualification. Comparative information in this regard was previously provided by King's Inns in Appendix B to King's Inns submission to the LSRA on education and training in June 2018.¹⁰

King's Inns is a not-for-profit institution and is registered with the Charities Regulator. **King's Inns does not operate the professional course at a profit and a conscious effort has been made to maintain fees at the lowest possible level.** Despite the vital role played by practising barristers in the administration of justice, the Society receives no funding from the State for its core education and training activities.

Turning to what the LSRA has termed "admissions policies", it is important to state that entry to King's Inns is fair and open. Every person who meets the entry requirements and passes

¹⁰ <https://www.lsra.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/S34-Submission-Honorable-Society-of-Kings-Inns.pdf>

the entrance examination may embark upon professional education and training at King’s Inns.¹¹ There is no “unmet” demand in the market.

Thereafter, every person who passes the Barrister-at-Law degree course is admitted to the degree and called to the Bar. Once admitted to the degree and called to the Bar, that person is a fully qualified barrister with a full right of audience in every court in Ireland.

This can be contrasted with the system in other jurisdictions. For example, in Northern Ireland, there is a cap on the numbers admitted to the professional training leading to qualification as a barrister. This is not the case in this State, as King’s Inns will admit and train everyone who meets the entry criteria in any given year.

In England and Wales, where rights of audience are limited, many students, having gone to both the effort and financial expense of obtaining professional qualification as a barrister, find themselves unable to obtain the pupillage that is required to enable them to complete the process to fully enter practice.

In this jurisdiction, any person who wishes to enter private practice as a member of the Law Library has the opportunity of doing so and can arrange a master with whom to undertake pupillage / devilling. There is no ultra-competitive chambers system, in contrast to the system in England and Wales, where non-traditional entrants and minorities are under-represented in obtaining pupillages and tenancies.

In the absence of any cap or quota, and in circumstances where the cost of the degree course has not increased since 2009, it is reasonable to conclude that the number admitted to the profession each year fluctuates in response to the demand for the services of practising barristers. If that demand were to increase appreciably, or indeed if those services were not available at a reasonable cost, King’s Inns would expect to see a commensurate increase in the number of applications to the Barrister-at-Law degree course. In such circumstances, it would also be reasonable to expect a commensurate increase in the number of persons seeking admission to the profession via other routes, including by way of transfer from the solicitors’ profession. In fact, that is not the case, as the number of barristers transferring to become solicitors is far greater than the number of solicitors transferring to be barristers.¹² Having regard to the respective sizes of the professions (there being many more solicitors than barristers in the State), this difference is even more stark.

The relatively short timeframe within which a solicitor may become a barrister and the ease with which barristers from other jurisdictions may practise in Ireland is an important factor to consider. Therefore, it is submitted that, from year to year, the number of barristers admitted to practise is reflective of and responsive to the demand for their services. King’s Inns has

¹¹ This is subject only to a satisfactory declaration being provided by the student that there are no other reasons, unrelated to academic or skills competency, why they should not be called to the Bar. This could include, for example, criminal convictions.

¹² The number of barristers voluntarily disbarred each year may reasonably be equated with the number of barristers transferring to become solicitors:

	Solicitors becoming barristers	Barristers becoming solicitors
2016	1	39
2017	3	24
2018	6	21
2019	3	40
2020	3	22

the capacity to facilitate, and places no numerical restriction on, the admission of greater numbers of barristers to the profession.

King's Inns strives to ensure that access to professional education and training for prospective barristers is open to people from all sections of Irish society in a real and meaningful way. In this regard it is significant that one may gain admission to the profession by pursuing the Diploma in Legal Studies offered by King's Inns, which is open both to those holding a third level qualification in a discipline other than law and to applicants with no previous third level qualification, and then the modular degree course. This allows a prospective barrister to pursue the entire course of study on a part-time basis, which facilitates access to legal education and training by a wider section of the community.

Many modular students travel from outside Dublin, or even from outside Ireland, to attend classes on their designated weekends [although it should be noted that, at present, all classes are being conducted remotely]. The purpose of the Diploma in Legal Studies from its inception has been to provide an alternative route to completing the academic phase of legal education and, thereafter, proceeding to the professional phase.

In assessing the admissions policies of the profession, it is respectfully submitted that the LSRA should also consider the bursaries and fellowships available to prospective barristers which have been outlined in Part I above.

4. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020 and Brexit on the above matters.

As set out in **Table A** above, 167 persons were admitted to practise as barristers in Ireland in 2020, 47 of whom were admitted having obtained their professional qualifications in England and Wales or Northern Ireland. This represents a decrease in the numbers admitted to the profession *via* this route in 2019 (76) but is still an increase on historic data. It can reasonably be surmised that this increase has occurred as a result of Brexit. However, the extent to which those 47 barristers actually intend on providing legal services in Ireland is unclear. Moreover, it remains to be seen how this route of admission will fare post-Brexit.

Four persons were admitted to practise as barristers in 2020 *via* solicitor transfer and *Morgenbesser* along with 116 who had completed the Barrister-at-Law degree course. King's Inns believes that this number (in addition to any barristers from Northern Ireland or England and Wales who are providing or who will provide legal services in the State) is consistent with the public interest in ensuring the availability of legal services at a reasonable cost.

Anecdotally, it is understood that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a severely detrimental effect on the practising profession due to court closures owing to public health regulations. The Bar of Ireland has published figures in that regard and, no doubt, will refer to those figures in detail in its own submission.

In respect of King's Inns provision of education and training during the pandemic, while it presented unprecedented challenges, King's Inns responded swiftly to move teaching and assessments online. This ensured that all students were able to complete their courses of study, that entrance examinations took place and that a new intake of Barrister-at-Law degree course students were able to commence their studies in October 2020.

CONCLUSION

For the reasons outlined above, King's Inns is of the view that the number of persons admitted to practise as barristers in 2020 is consistent with the public interest in ensuring the availability of legal services at a reasonable cost. Moreover, King's Inns is of the view that the "admissions policies" (insofar as that term is applicable in the circumstances) of the profession are appropriately rigorous without being unduly restrictive and are well-designed to meet the objectives contained in section 13(4) of the 2015 Act. King's Inns is happy to provide any further information or submissions that may be required by the LSRA in connection with its ongoing work.

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