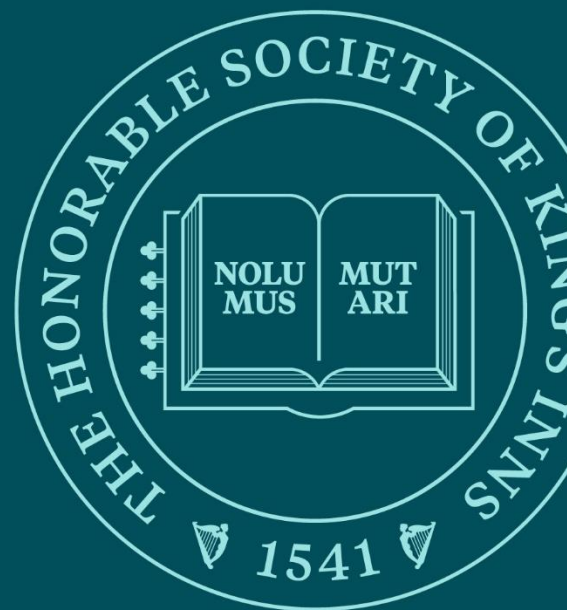


ANNUAL REPORT ON THE ADMISSION POLICIES OF THE LEGAL PROFESSIONS

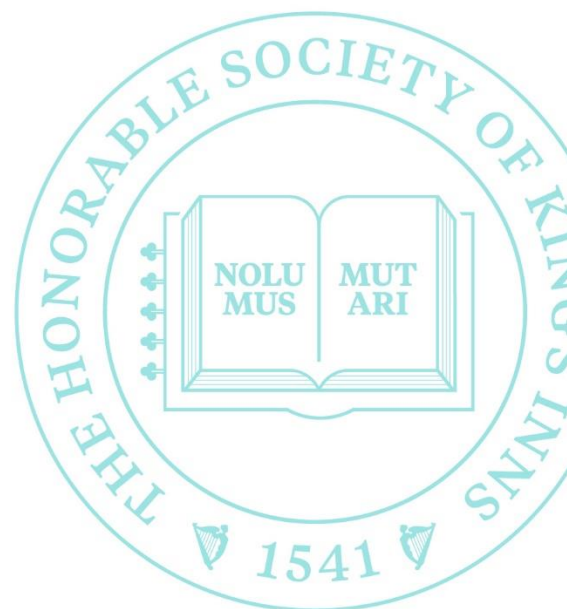
SUBMISSION OF THE
HONORABLE SOCIETY OF
KING'S INNS

FEBRUARY 2025



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INTRODUCTION

The Honorable Society of King's Inns ("King's Inns") submits this document in response to the Legal Services Regulatory Authority ("LSRA") executive's e-mailed request of 20 December 2024. The request is set out in *Questions for the King's Inns – S33 Annual Report*.

Under section 33 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015, the LSRA is required to prepare and submit to the Minister for Justice an annual report on the admission policies of the legal professions. Under section 33(1)(a) of the Act, the report must specify the number of persons admitted to practise as barristers during 2024. It must also, under section 33(1)(c), contain 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 2024 is consistent with the public interest in ensuring the availability of such services at a reasonable cost.

For the purposes of preparing the report, the LSRA is required under section 33(2) of the Act to consult the King's Inns, the other professional bodies under the Act, and such persons as the Authority considers appropriate.

The submission contains King's Inns response to the specific information requested by LSRA.

KING'S INNS RESPONSE TO LSRA QUESTIONS

Admissions to Degree of Barrister-at-Law and Call to the Bar 2024 and Routes of Admission

The routes of admission to the degree of Barrister-at-Law and Call to the Bar, and the requirements for eligibility to avail of each of the routes which are set out in King's Inns Education Rules ("Education Rules"), are summarised in Annex 1.

Barrister-at-Law Degree Students

1. The number of persons who sat, passed, and failed the entrance exam for the Barrister-at-Law degree course in 2024.
 - 145 candidates sat the Entrance Exam 2024, 117 (81%) passed and 28 (19%) failed.
2. The number of students who commenced the Barrister-at-Law degree course in 2024 with a breakdown by i) gender; (ii) age range (30 and under, 31 and over); (iii) route of admission (approved degree or KI diploma)

Please supply separate statistics for full-time and modular students

- 120 students commenced the Barrister-at-Law degree course in 2024.
- 50 (42%) students commenced the course on a full-time basis and 70 (58%) students commenced the course on a modular basis.
- Of the total of 120, 68 (57%) identify as female and 52 (43%) students identify as male.
- Of the 50 students who commenced the course on a full-time basis, 32 (64%) identify as female and 18 (36%) identify as male.
- Of the 70 students who commenced the course on a modular basis, 36 (51%) identify as female and 34 (49%) identify as male.
- Of the 120 who commenced the Barrister-at-Law degree course in 2024, 55 (46%) are in the 31 and over age category and 65 (54%) are in the 30 and under age category.
- Of the 50 students who commenced the course on a full-time basis, 16 (32%) students are in the 31 and over age category and 34 (68%) are in the 30 and under age category.
- Of the 70 students who commenced the course on a modular basis, 39 (56%) students are in the 31 or more, age category and 31 (44%) are in the 30 and under age category.

- Of the 50 students who commenced the course on a full-time basis, 19 (28%) hold the King's Inns Diploma in Legal Studies and 31 (62%) hold a King's Inns approved legal qualification from a third level institution and have sat and passed six core subjects for the purposes of eligibility to sit the King's Inns Barrister-at-Law Degree Course Entrance Exam.
- Of the 70 students who commenced the course on a modular basis, 27 (39%) hold the King's Inns Diploma in Legal Studies and 43 (61%) hold a King's Inns approved legal qualification from a third level institution for the purposes of eligibility to sit the King's Inns Barrister-at-Law Degree Course Entrance Exam.

Barrister Admissions

3. The number of persons called to the Bar in 2024 with a breakdown bases on the following: (i) route of admission; (ii) gender; (iii) age (30 and under, 31 and over).

- In 2024 there were 136 admissions to the degree of Barrister-at-Law and called to the Bar.
- Of these, 122 completed the King's Inns Barrister-at-Law Degree course.
- 12 Barristers of England & Wales were admitted to the degree of Barrister-at-Law and called to the Bar (Education Rules Rule 25)
- 2 Northern Ireland Barristers were admitted to the degree of Barrister-at-Law and called to the Bar (Education Rules Rule 20).
- 0 solicitors in practice in Ireland were voluntarily removed from the Roll of Solicitors and admitted to the degree of Barrister-at-Law and called to the Bar under Education Rules Rule 23 on Solicitor Transfer.
- Of the 136 called to the Bar in 2024, 62 identify as male and 74 identify as female.
- Of the 122 barristers admitted to the degree of Barrister-at-Law and called to the Bar in 2024 having completed the King's Inns Barrister-at-Law Degree course 65 (53%) students are in the 30 and under age category and 57 (46%) are in the 31 and over age category.

4. The number of barristers entering pupillage in 2024 that completed the (i) King's Inns full-time BL degree course in 2024; (ii) King's Inns modular BL degree course in 2024.

- (i) King's Inns full-time BL degree course in 2024.
Of the 53 that completed the Barrister-at-Law full-time degree course in 2024 31 entered pupillage in October 2024
- (ii) King's Inns modular BL degree course in 2024.
Of the 69 that completed the Barrister-at-Law degree course in 2024 21 entered the entered pupillage in October 2024

5. The number of barristers who were disbarred in 2024 and the reasons for this

- 19 barristers were voluntarily disbarred in 2024 on becoming solicitors.
- 1 barrister was voluntarily disbarred in 2024 for work reasons,
- 0 barristers were disbarred in 2024.

Admissions Developments & Breaking Down Barriers Information

6. Existing King's Inns initiatives to further increase flexible routes for barrister training and their impact in 2024

King's Inns is committed to ensuring that the composition of its student body, and by extension of practising barristers, reflects the make-up of modern Ireland. A key element of the strategy to achieve this aim is to ensure that there is flexibility in routes to training.

Flexibility in this context includes flexibility in accessing both the academic phase and professional phase of barrister training.

This can be contrasted with the system in other jurisdictions. For example, in Northern Ireland, there is a cap on the numbers admitted to professional training leading to qualification as a barrister and professional training must be undertaken on a full-time basis. King's Inns has no such cap on numbers and adopts a flexible, hybrid learning approach to the delivery of training programmes.

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. This is achieved in the following ways:

Flexibility in the academic phase of training:

The Diploma in Legal Studies is open to graduates of disciplines other than law and, crucially, to mature entrants with no third level educational background of any kind. The purpose of the Diploma in Legal Studies is to provide an alternative route to completing the academic phase of legal education and, thereafter, proceeding to the professional phase. Places for candidates who do not hold a third level degree and are least 23 years of age on the date of the examinations in year 1 of the course are awarded by reference to the candidate's academic and professional qualifications and / or occupational and work experience. This route of access for "mature" applicants ensures that candidates from a wide variety of backgrounds and with diverse experiences form part of the student body. 33% of the Diploma year 1 course 2024/25 are Mature students.

Of the 139 Diploma 1 applications, 98 satisfied the entry criteria and 98 students commenced Diploma 1 in 2024. 89 students commenced the course in 2023 and 80 in 2022,

The Diploma in Legal Studies allows entrants to obtain a qualification in substantive law that leaves them very well placed to sit and pass the entrance examination to the professional course while continuing to engage in full-time employment.

The course timetable is intended to work around standard full-time working hours, with lectures and tutorials taking place in the evenings and on a set number of Saturdays per academic year. Some examinations also take place on Saturdays, reducing the need for most students to take time off work in order to attempt examinations.

The Diploma in Legal Studies course is an entirely hybrid course. King's Inns has been using e-learning software since 2014, long before the pandemic, and the facilities, IT and teaching staff are well-versed in the requirements of hybrid learning.

The course is comprised of lectures and tutorials. Students have a free choice to attend any lecture in person, at King's Inns; or online, synchronously; or online, asynchronously.

The course also includes a very high percentage of interactive tutorials, which may be attended either in person or online. Students choose whether they would like to attend tutorials in person or online at the start of the Autumn Term and have the opportunity to revisit that choice at the end of that term, before the second half of the academic year, switching to the other learning mode if it suits them better.

Hybrid delivery ensures that the course is accessible to learners from a wide range of backgrounds and locations across Ireland and beyond.

Students must complete both coursework and examinations. Coursework is completed remotely (and is subject to an online viva voce interview system, to ensure academic integrity). Examinations take place in person at King's Inns, in order to ensure that appropriate student supports are in place and to protect the integrity of the process. The assessment timetable is published at the beginning of each academic year, which is earlier than examination timetables are typically published by the leading universities and which allows students to plan ahead.

Excellent course materials and online resources are provided to students via the King's Inns Virtual Learning Environment (Moodle). These resources are accessible from anywhere, provided a student has Internet access.

Flexibility in the professional phase of training:

The professional phase of training takes place on the Barrister-at-Law degree course. This course is available in a full-time format, running from September-May each academic year, for students who are in a position to participate in training on a full-time basis. The same course, with the same learning outcomes, content, and assessment methodologies, is also available on a part-time / modular basis. The modular version of the professional course takes place primarily on weekends, over two academic years. The dates for each year of the course are set and published several months in advance of each academic year. They are also typically notified to entrance examination candidates before they sit their examinations.

On both the full-time and modular courses, a certain proportion of classroom sessions take place in online format, as part of a hybrid timetable. When designing the hybrid timetable, King's Inns considered the differences between modular and full-time cohorts. Modular (part-time) students often have full-time jobs, family commitments, and live outside Dublin or Ireland. Full-time students are generally younger, based in Dublin, and prefer a traditional student experience. Despite these differences, both cohorts cover the same skills and competences, aiming for identical learning outcomes. In order to balance the needs of both cohorts, King's Inns has designed a timetable in which modular students attend a higher level of synchronous online sessions than the full-time cohort does. Modular students can also attend a limited number of sessions (notably on practice management) asynchronously.

The hybrid timetable is reviewed annually by key staff within the School of Law and is the subject of regular student feedback in surveys. In 2023-2024, King's Inns also carried out extensive surveys of staff (as well as students) and a focus group in order to ensure that the correct balance has been struck.

During the professional phase of training, therefore, students have a choice between a greater level of in-person training over a shorter period, or an increased level of online learning over a longer period.

Flexibility in accessing training - financial barriers

King's Inns is acutely aware of the financial burden on anyone wishing to qualify as a barrister. While there are invariably costs involved in undertaking a professional or vocational qualification in any discipline, King's Inns attempts to alleviate financial pressure on prospective barristers in the following ways:

- The provision of part-time courses of education, ensuring that a person can complete the academic phase and the professional phase while continuing to work full-time.
- The option to pay fees in two annual instalments, rather than one.
- The provision of bursaries and fellowships, i.e. the Gaffney Scholarship; open to students on the Diploma in Legal Studies course In 2024 King's Inns received 14 applications, 10 were shortlisted. Seven applicants were awarded full or part scholarships for remission of course fees on the Diploma Course 2024/25, 2025/26.
- The McCarthy Bursary; open to students on the professional course; and the Denham Fellowship; also open to students on the professional course. The latter scheme is run jointly with the Bar of Ireland, who ensure that the Denham Fellows will benefit from mentoring, remission of Law Library fees and a maintenance grant in order to alleviate financial pressures during their first few years in practise as a barrister. It is a specific aim of the Denham Fellowship, in particular, to encourage diversity within the profession. All three bursaries and fellowships have at their core the aim of ensuring fuller and more open access to legal education.

Application processes for each of these schemes have been thoroughly reviewed and King's Inns is satisfied that they are as open, transparent and well publicised as possible. The application and interview timeline for the McCarthy Bursary has been changed over the past two years, moving it to an earlier date before the entrance examination takes place, so that students are informed if they have been successful before they sit the entrance examination.

Information on each of these financial assistance schemes is freely available on King's Inns' website (and, in the case of the Denham Fellowship, also on the Bar of Ireland's website). King's Inns also makes every effort to publicise the existence of the financial assistance available via its social media platforms, at open days and during group visits to King's Inns and visits by King's Inns staff to various third level institutions.

7. Existing King's Inns access initiatives at second and third level and outline of King's Inns plans to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of these initiatives

King's Inns engages with students in second-level education in the following ways:

- Upon request from secondary schools, King's Inns staff facilitate tours and information sessions with secondary school cohorts and their teachers
- King's Inns provides tours and information sessions as part of the Bar of Ireland's annual Transition Year Program
- King's Inns hosts conferences on opportunities for students holding law and Irish qualifications, some of which are aimed at secondary school students (the next of which occurs in February 2025).

King's Inns engages with students in third level institutions in the following ways:

- The Registrar's team makes presentations at events organised by other Law Schools on King's Inns courses, primarily about the Barrister-at-Law degree course, and attends Law Fairs at third level institutions across the island of Ireland;
- The Registrar's team liaises with staff from the Bar of Ireland to provide information about King's Inns courses, to ensure cooperation and the dissemination of the correct information for potential applicants at third level institutions;
- King's Inns holds an in-person open day every Spring for all programs, which is open to third level students (and to members of the public) and is heavily publicised on King's Inns website and social media channels;
- King's Inns holds a "Be a law student for a day" event online, annually; this is primarily aimed at adults who may be interested in undertaking the Diploma in Legal Studies, whether currently in third level education or not; the online format maximises the opportunity for people to attend;
- King's Inns holds conferences on opportunities for third level students on opportunities for students with law and languages qualifications (the next of which occurs in March 2025).

King's Inns plans to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of these initiatives by asking participants to complete a short online survey, at the end of each event

8. Changes to the admission policies of King's Inns during 2024.

There have been no changes to the admission policies of the King's Inns during 2024. However, we are currently working on a new draft policy on Access, Transfer and Progression and Recognition of Prior Learning.

ANNEX 1 ROUTES OF ADMISSION TO DEGREE OF BARRISTER-AT-LAW

1. Barrister-at-Law Degree Course

Students on the Barrister-at-Law degree course are student members of King's Inns. Students are not trainee barristers in the sense of trainee solicitors with a training contract / apprenticeship.

“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 of Ireland 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.” - King's Inns Statement of the Required Competencies of a Barrister, November 2020

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

Entrance Examination to Barrister at Law Degree Course

To become a student member of King's Inns and attend the Barrister-at-Law degree course, it is necessary to pass the King's Inns Entrance Examination. All candidates that pass the Entrance Exam are offered a place on the degree course.

To be eligible to sit the Entrance Exam, an individual is required to hold a legal qualification and must show that, in the course leading to the legal qualification, that the following core subjects have been passed: Equity & Trusts, Jurisprudence, Irish Land Law (including the Law of Succession), Administrative Law, Company Law, Law of the European Union.

The legal qualification must be one approved by King's Inns for eligibility to sit the Entrance Exam. King's Inns has approved 88 legal qualifications awarded by 19 institutions for that purpose.

King's Inns Diploma in Legal Studies

King's Inns Diploma in Legal Studies is one of the legal qualifications approved for eligibility to sit the Entrance Exam. There is no limit to the number of places available on the course. An individual applying to attend the Diploma in Legal Studies course must show that they:

- (i) Hold a degree from a third level institution other than a degree approved by King's Inns for the purpose of the Entrance Exam; or
- (ii) are a mature applicant of at least 23 years of age on 1 May in the year in which they sit Diploma Part I examination; and

- (iii) have the capacity to undertake the course. Consideration will be had to
 - (a) academic and professional qualifications and
 - (b) occupational and work experience.

King's Inns Education Rules set out in detail the course content of the full-time and modular Barrister-at-Law degree course and exams, the Diploma in Legal Studies course and exams, and the Entrance Exam - [EducationRulesEditionMay2024.pdf](#)

2. Qualified Lawyers from Other Member States

Rule 24 of the Education Rules provides for application by a qualified lawyer from other EU Member States. King's Inns is the competent authority in respect of the profession of barrister for the purposes of European Union (Recognition of Professional Qualifications) Regulations 2017.

3. Admission of Barristers qualified in England & Wales (post Brexit)

Since 2021, Education Rules Rule 25 applies to the admission of Barristers qualified in England and Wales (post Brexit). Rule 25 provides that a member of the Bar of England and Wales who is fully qualified to practise in that jurisdiction having undertaken a full pupillage as required by the Bar Standards Board of England and Wales may, at the discretion of the Benchers of the Society, be admitted to the Society and to the degree of Barrister-at-Law on compliance with requirements set out in the Rule.

4. Northern Ireland Barrister

Rule 20 of the Education Rules provides that 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, upon submitting documents set out in the Rule.

5. Solicitor Transfer

Rule 23 of the Education Rules provides that 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) and who satisfies other requirements set out in Rule 23 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.

6. Morgenbesser

A national of an EU member state who is partly qualified in another EU Member State by holding legal qualifications of an academic and/or professional nature may apply to have those qualifications assessed by King's Inns for eligibility to make an application to be admitted as a Barrister-at-Law. To the extent that there is any shortfall in knowledge or skills, the applicant is required to complete assessments.